



THE
TEACHING OF ST. BENEDICT.

Presented to

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by

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26/8/06

THE

TEACHING OF ST. BENEDICT.

BY THE

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“O grata colloquia,
Cum cœlorum gaudia,
Benedictus explicat.”

LONDON : BURNS & OATES, LIMITED.

NEW YORK : CATHOLIC PUBLICATION SOCIETY CO.

Nihil obstat.

RR. DD. T. A. BURY, O.S.B.

Abbas S. Edmundi in Buriâ.

R. A. D. G. R. WOODS, O.S.B.

Canon. Theolog.

Imprimatur.

RR. DD. EDWARDUS ANSELMUS O'GORMAN, O.S.B.

Abbas S. Albani, Præses Generalis.

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¹ In the Rule, Chapter XXXIII. is, "Whether Monks ought to have anything of their own;" Chapter XXXIV., "Whether all ought to receive what is needful." We have joined together, under the heading printed above, our remarks on both chapters. Therefore all references to chapters, from this place to the end of the volume, indicate the number of the chapter as it stands in the Rule.

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CORRIGENDA.

Page 2, line 11, *for* hermit Monk, *read* Monk.

„ 14, „ 2, „ liturgical, „ liturgica!.
„ 69, „ 3, „ 88, „ 8.

PREFACE.

AS the germs of all the lessons taught by St. Benedict are stored up in the various enactments of his world-famed Code, any work of which the purpose is to explain that admirable piece of legislation may with justice be called the "teaching" of the great patriarch of the West. It is for this reason that we have ventured to give what may appear to be a somewhat ambitious title to the present volume, the object of which is to make more generally known the wealth of ascetical, liturgical, disciplinary, and administrative lore which is locked up in the pages of the Rule. In order to do this in an efficient manner, the works of some of the most celebrated commentators have been consulted, their various opinions carefully collated, and no views advanced which cannot be defended on the authority of scholars, whose learning and ability are so well known that their judgment is accepted with unwavering faith. Some brief account of the chief among these will not, we think, be out of place in the preface to a work which has been inspired by a perusal of a few of their voluminous writings.

Of these commentators, the first, not in order of time nor in excellence of literary merit, but in the

sublimity of personal sanctity, is St. Hildegarde, who was born in the diocese of Mayence, towards the end of the eleventh century. For many years she led the life of a recluse ; but seeing that very little good could be effected by such utter separation from the world, and that a wider sphere of influence would be opened to her if she were to gather round her those of her own sex and condition, she founded the monastery of Mount St. Rupert, near Bingen on the Rhine, and became its first Abbess. Only persons of noble or of gentle birth were admitted to make profession of religious life within its enclosure. This law was established in order to remove from the abode of peace every cause of bickering and of strife, and to take away occasions which might give rise to that lofty disdain with which the ladies of those feudal times, even when clad in penitential weeds, were accustomed to look down upon those who were of a lower social standing than themselves. During the period of her cloistral life St. Hildegarde was favoured by Heaven with many wonderful revelations and visions, which, by the command of Pope Eugenius III., were closely examined in 1147 at the Council of Trèves, and their publication sanctioned by the assembled Bishops. Her fame, both for learning and for sanctity, was so great and widespread, that during her lifetime there was scarcely any man of eminence who did not correspond with her on subjects relating to the mystic life, to morals, and to theology. These letters, together with several other works, among which is a commentary on the Rule, were published at Cologne. One of the most remarkable opinions put forward by

her, when explaining St. Benedict's legislation with respect to the use of flesh-meat, is that he does not prohibit the eating of fowl, but only of the flesh of quadrupeds. She died in the year 1178, with a great reputation for sanctity of a very exalted character.

Fully three centuries before the birth of St. Hildegarde, there lived and flourished in Gaul, during the reign of Louis the Pious, a celebrated Monk named Hildemar. His brilliant talents, his holy life, and his natural aptitude for ruling others, and guiding them with more than human prudence and discretion in the paths of perfection, soon drew towards him the eyes of his contemporaries. Rumour carried the fame of him across the Alps into Italy, and the report of his many excellences so wrought upon the mind of Angelbertus, Archbishop of Milan, that he wrote to him, earnestly beseeching him to cross over the barrier which separated them, and help him to fan into a brighter glow that Benedictine fire which had been first kindled on the hillside of Subiaco. Overcome by the earnestness of this appeal, Hildemar assented to the wishes of the Archbishop, and joined him in his cathedral city. But this was not to be the field of his labour. Another centre of influence which offered a wider scope for his zeal was elsewhere awaiting him. Angelbertus accordingly sent him to Rampertus, Bishop of Brescia, in which city there was a monastery dedicated to SS. Faustinus and Jovita. Over this Rampertus appointed him Superior, with an injunction to introduce there a method of more strict observance than had hitherto been maintained. It was while engaged in this work of reform that Hildemar

drew up his famous commentary, which Martène pronounces to be, without exception, the best ever produced. Like many another excellent work, this of the Gaulish Monk Hildemar was claimed by many writers for a variety of authors. Leo Marsicanus and Peter the Deacon attribute it to Paul the Deacon ; Trithemius assigns it to Ruthard ; Martène, however, proves well-nigh to demonstration that it is the genuine work of Hildemar.

Contemporary with this famous Monk there was another learned, pious, and illustrious man, who, though not himself a Religious, has, by his liturgical works, thrown great light upon that part of the Rule which treats of the Church services and the Divine Office. This is Amalarius Symphosius, who was born at Metz, and served that church, first as its deacon and afterwards as its priest. Care must be taken not to confound him with Amalarius Fortunatus, who lived at the same time, and was Archbishop of Trèves. Under Louis-le-Debonaire, the Amalarius of whom we write, was director of the Palatine school, Abbot of Hornbac, Chorepiscopus¹ of the diocese of Lyons, and afterwards of Trèves. In all matters pertaining to the Liturgy he was, without exception, the most learned man of his age. His first work on this

¹ Those who held this office were not Bishops, but priests to whom the Bishop gave more ample jurisdiction than to the ordinary clergy. Their duty was to oversee and to visit certain districts. Power was given to them to confer minor Orders, and even the subdiaconate. The office is first mentioned in the year 314. It appeared in the Western Church about the year 500. After 1050 it began to die out, and soon became extinct.

subject, entitled *Ecclesiastical Offices*, was published in 820. Seven years afterwards he reproduced the volume with many important additions and corrections, which were the result of all that he had seen and learnt in Rome, whither he had gone in quest of further information concerning that branch of ecclesiastical learning which was the favourite study of his life. The object of both these works is to explain and to give reasons for the prayers and the ceremonies used in the public worship of the Church. Many of these elucidations are unquestionably very beautiful, and calculated to fill the soul with the deepest reverence for the mysteries of our holy faith ; but in striving to give a mystical meaning to them all, Amalarius carries his readers into depths, whence they emerge puzzled indeed, but not by any means enlightened. Some of his expressions about the Holy Eucharist drew down upon him the wrath of Agobard, Archbishop of Lyons, and of Florus his deacon. They attacked him with voice and pen, and finally carried their accusations against him before the Council of Thionville. The Bishops who were there assembled narrowly examined the objectionable words and phrases, and after giving the question their attentive consideration, pronounced his teaching to be orthodox. Not satisfied with the verdict of the Fathers of Thionville, his accusers next carried their suit against him to the Council of Quierci. Here also the points in dispute were once more submitted to the consideration of competent judges, who, although they did not condemn his propositions, yet declared them to be dangerous. This little episode in the

history of his interesting book has not in any degree detracted from the high esteem which it has always enjoyed among lovers of liturgical lore. On the publication of his second work, *The Order of the Antiphonary*, Agobard once again took up arms, and attacked him for having asserted that the Church of Lyons had introduced certain novelties into the Roman rite. His third literary effort is a treatise explanatory of the ceremonies of Holy Mass. Besides these, we have from his pen many letters, and a rule of life which he drew up for the guidance of canons. He died in 837, at St. Arnoult-de-Metz, where he is honoured as a Saint.

The name of the next commentator of whom we have to speak is one which is hateful to English ears. The mere mention of Torquemada is enough to conjure up before the mental vision of our countrymen the racks, the fires, the dungeons, the chains, and all the other paraphernalia which Protestantism has connected with the word "Inquisition." Yet, though bearing the same name, and belonging to the same family, Torquemada, the commentator on St. Benedict's Rule (or Turrecremata, as he is most generally called), is not the same personage as Torquemada the arch-inquisitor. The former was born at Valladolid in the year 1388, of one of the noblest families of Castile, and named John; whereas the latter was not born for fully thirty years afterwards, and was called Thomas. At the age of fifteen John entered the Order of St. Dominic, and with all the energy and the zeal of his ardent nature threw himself into the many and difficult duties of his cloistral life, and the profound

theological and philosophical studies for which that Order has ever been renowned. His mental abilities, which were of no ordinary calibre, very soon attracted the notice of his Superiors, who, in their anxiety to afford him every opportunity for their proper cultivation and further development, sent him to the University of Paris. There he won his Doctor's cap, and, according to some of his biographers, taught with great applause in the schools. When recalled to Spain, he held the office of Prior, first at Valladolid, and afterwards at Toledo. In these and in other positions of trust he showed so great capacity for the transaction of difficult and delicate negotiations, that Pope Eugenius IV. summoned him to Rome, made him Master of the Sacred Palace, and sent him as his own theologian to the Council of Basle.² There his vast learning, his untiring energy, and his persuasive eloquence found ample scope in the defence of sound doctrine and of the rights of the Holy See. But in spite of all his efforts to win over its enemies, and to appease their anger against the Sovereign Pontiff, he did not succeed in extinguishing the fire of their hate, and therefore left Basle for other scenes where his labour would not be spent in vain. He soon, however, returned, but only to use his influence to persuade both princes and Bishops to proceed to the new Council convoked by the Pope at Ferrara, and afterwards transferred by him to Florence. Though prevented by press of business from attending all the sessions of this last-named Council, he yet did good service in those which immediately preceded its close, and so

² 1431.

materially contributed to end the schism between the Greek and the Roman Church, that the Pope conferred upon him the title "Defender of the Faith," and shortly afterwards made him Cardinal, as a reward for his successful legation to Charles VII. of France. The death of his patron Eugenius did not in any way diminish the influence which he possessed in the Roman Court, for Calixtus III., who succeeded to the chair of St. Peter, raised him to the bishopric of Palestrina, from which see he was translated by Pius III. to that of Sabina. Though Turrecremata's life was a very busy one, and spent for the most part in the transaction of business, yet he contrived amid his many and weighty duties, to steal some few moments which he devoted to the pursuit of his favourite studies. The fruit of these furtive hours spent amongst his beloved books were many literary works, chiefly of an ecclesiastical or of an ascetical nature. Among these is his commentary on our Holy Father's Rule. He died at Rome in 1468, in the eightieth year of his age.

Six years before the death of Turrecremata—that is to say, in 1462—there was born in the little village of Trittenheim, which is about six miles distant from Trèves, another famous commentator on the Rule.³ He adopted the name of his native place, and is known as John Trithemius. His early days seem to have been blessed with but very little sunshine; for he was left an orphan while yet a mere infant, and at seven had the ill-luck to be put under a stern step-

³ This commentary goes no farther than the first seven chapters.

father by his mother. During the days of her second wedded life she had several children. These absorbed all the love and the attention of their parents, while John was left to shift for himself as best he could. One of the consequences of this neglect was, that although the boy was consumed with a devouring thirst for learning, yet at the age of fifteen he could scarcely read. By the aid of a neighbour, to whose house he used frequently to retire for the purpose of study, he also learnt to write, but that only indifferently well. At last, seeing that it was impossible to acquire at Trittenham that which was so easily to be obtained elsewhere, he determined to abandon his home, such as it was, and to go in search of wisdom at one of those fountain-heads of which he had already heard so much. Of these, the nearest to his home was at Trèves, and thither he went like many another poor scholar, with no other dower than a bright intelligence and a pure heart. Between Trèves and Heidelberg he spent the next five years, at the end of which time he had made so great progress in every branch of letters that he was on all hands considered to be a remarkably apt and clever scholar. Now that he had acquired some repute, thoughts of home began to stir within his brain, and made him once again turn his face towards Trittenham. On his way thither, he arrived one evening, towards the end of January 1482, at Spanheim. The snow had fallen heavily all day long, night was fast coming on, and, well-nigh worn out with the fatigue of his journey, he found himself compelled to ask for shelter at the Benedictine monastery. He knocked at the great

gate, and to the cheery "Benedicite" of the porter uttered a heartfelt "Deo gratias." The doors were thrown open, and he was admitted into the guest-house. As he entered, a sort of inspiration seemed to flash into his mind, and an internal voice to say to him, "Here must thou fix thy abode." For a whole week the severity of the weather made it impossible for him to advance any farther on his homeward way; but during those days of repose there was ample time for much deep cogitation, the result of which was that Trithemius came to the conclusion that he had at last found his home, and in the words of the Psalmist could exclaim: "Hæc requies mea in æternum." Falling at the feet of the Abbot, he humbly asked to be admitted to the brotherhood. His petition was acceded to, and on March 21, the feast of St. Benedict, he was clothed in the holy habit. As it was not necessary in those days to spend a full year in the state of probation, he was solemnly professed on November 21 of that same year. Some idea may be formed of the high esteem in which he was held by those with whom he had thrown in his lot, from the fact that though last in the community, and a mere tyro in religious life, he was chosen by them to be their Abbot. It was with fear and trembling that the recently-professed Monk accepted the weighty charge which his brethren thus thrust into his hands; for, young and inexperienced as he was, he yet had quite enough worldly wisdom to see that the task before him was neither a light nor an easy one. Even Abbot Samson at St. Edmundsbury had not a gloomier outlook when he first took up the reins of office, than was that which

met the view of Trithemius when the suffrages of his brethren seated him in the abbatial chair. The temporalities were in utter confusion; the buildings crumbling into ruins; the community was burdened with debt, and in a state of religious discipline very far from that which a fervent religious man would like it to be. Looking with clear and penetrating eye into all these things, like the brave man that he was, he did not suffer himself to be dismayed by them; but understanding clearly what he had to do, and knowing well what he himself meant to do, he at once vigorously set to work to make the crooked straight, the rough plain, the chaotic orderly. For this purpose he first laid hold of the monastic purse, and, to the wonder of his Cellarer, succeeded by strict economy in keeping it tolerably well filled—a condition to which it had been for years a stranger. Having thus driven the wolf from the door, he next directed the full power of his energetic mind and the strength of his iron will to expel ignorance and idleness from the cloisters. By word and by example he infused a spirit of study into his Monks, and gave every unemployed hand abundant work to do. The forty-eight volumes which constituted the whole wealth of their library were cleared of their dust. Monks were now seen poring over their pages. Some were busily engaged in preparing parchment sheets, others were employed in drawing on these the lines which were to guide the hands of the copyists, and these in their turn were slowly and carefully writing and making fresh tomes to fill the empty shelves. Those who possessed any artistic skill painted and illuminated the initial letters,

and those who were capable of doing nothing else stitched together the written sheets and bound them into goodly volumes. Before Trithemius ceased to be Abbot, the forty-eight books had swelled into 1646 ponderous tomes. The whole face of the abbey was changed. Both materially and spiritually it had renewed its youth, and could now lift up its head before the world without any fear of being put to confusion. The reputation of the man who had effected all this soon spread throughout Germany, and attracted to the Abbey of Spanheim many of the most illustrious men of the time. They came to visit and to confer with him upon various knotty problems which they thought that his vast learning might enable them to explain. Close and familiar intercourse with him, instead of diminishing their admiration of, and their esteem for him, served only to heighten these the more ; and they left him charmed with his unaffected piety, and astonished at the wide range of his knowledge. But in spite of his great attainments, his holy life, and his unblemished orthodoxy, there were envious hearts and narrow, uncultured minds which accused him both of heresy and of the practice of the black art. These men, as well as their silly asseverations, he treated with that good-humoured contempt which they deserved. Yet there cannot be any doubt that the foolish chattering of these empty-headed busybodies, backed by the smouldering discontent of some of those who were smarting under his reform, eventually led to his abandonment of Spanheim and of the ungrateful brethren for whom he had done so much. This misfortune occurred in 1505, while he was at Heidelberg, whither Philip,

Count Palatine of the Rhine, had invited him, to hear his views upon some monastic questions in which he himself was deeply interested. It was while confined to his sick-bed that he learnt of the revolt of his Monks against his authority. As soon as he was able to rise he hastened to Cologne, to see whether he could gather any authentic information about the cause of this outbreak. Failing to obtain this at Cologne, he hastened to Spire, and there learnt that the only complaint which they could bring against him was that he had obliged them to apply themselves to mental culture, and had enforced strict discipline with too firm a hand. This so disgusted him that he turned his back upon them for ever. He was not long without a home and loving subjects who could appreciate his worth; for the Abbey of Wurtzburg was conferred upon him, and there he peacefully spent the last decade of his life in prayer, in study, and in the composition of learned works which fill several folio volumes. Here also, in the midst of his weeping children, he breathed forth his pure soul into the hands of his Maker, on the day after the festival of Christmas, in the year 1516.

Earlier than Trithemius, by well-nigh two centuries, lived the next commentator of whom we have to speak. This was Peter Boherius, who was born at Narbonne, and in early youth embraced the monastic profession. After some years of a most exemplary life, he was raised to the dignified position of Abbot of the monastery of St. Anian. Here his brilliant virtues, his great learning, and the skill which he displayed in the administration of his temporalities, marked him out as one who, in a

wider field of action, would develop all the capacity of an able ruler of the Church of God. Nor did his after years belie the promise of his early manhood. The germs of his great qualities budded forth and increased with his years, till at last they drew upon him the eyes of those who were anxiously looking out for a good shepherd to grasp and wield the pastoral staff of the widowed see of Civit  Vecchia. He was therefore drawn by them from the comparative obscurity of his abbey, and seated in the episcopal chair of that city. As a Bishop, he displayed before the admiring gaze of his contemporaries all those excellences which St. Benedict requires in those who, in his opinion, hold the place of Christ.⁴ He was kind, considerate, prudent, discreet, merciful; manifesting towards every member of his flock the love of a father as well as the magisterial dignity, the firmness, and the authority of a ruler. It was during this period of his life that he published his second commentary on the Rule. The first had dealt with the Benedictine code from a legal and administrative point of view; the second was devoted exclusively to the explanation of its ascetical and spiritual side, which leads men to perfection. The work was published in 1316, and speaking of it, the author says: "With fear and trembling I wrote this commentary by the light of the lamp which burns in the cave in which our Holy Father spent the first years of his religious life."

One of the most famous and voluminous writers

⁴ "Abbas, enim, Christi agere vices in monasterio creditur." Regula, cap. ii.

on the Rule of St. Benedict was born at Utrecht in 1588. This was James van Hæften, whose twelve books of *Monastic Disquisitions* fill a huge double-columned tome of more than one thousand pages. It is a work which is a veritable mine of ascetical and of monastic lore; and though some of the views advanced by its author did not please Martène, we have no hesitation in saying that anything better on the Benedictine Rule and method of life it would be impossible to find. At a comparatively early age, Hæften entered the Order at the Abbey of Afflighem, in Brabant. By a life of laborious study and the practice of the strictest asceticism he there became one of the most erudite and most holy men of his age. It is not, therefore, surprising to learn that he soon acquired so great an ascendancy over the minds and the hearts of his brethren as to induce them to accept a severe reform, and to adopt the constitutions of the congregation of SS. Viton and Hidulphus. Practical experience, however, has, since that day, proved that these were so rigid and so austere as to be a hindrance rather than a help in the practice of Christian perfection. The Holy See had therefore to interfere, and, with that wisdom which characterises all her actions, to soften the asperities of these enactments and make them tolerable to human nature, which they would otherwise have discouraged and broken down by their unbending sternness. After a most holy and exemplary life, Hæften died calmly and peacefully in his monastic cell at Afflighem, on July 31, 1648.

Little more than six years after the above-men-

tioned date—that is to say, on December 22, 1654—there was born at St. Jean-de-Lône, in the diocese of Langres, one who was destined to win for himself a reputation for learning, second only to that of Mabillon himself. This was Edmund Martène, who, at the age of eighteen, took the habit of St. Benedict among the Religious of the congregation of St. Maur. His abilities were so extraordinary and his ardour for study so intense, that it was deemed advisable to send him to some monastery in which he would find those facilities which would enable him to do ample justice to the bright intelligence with which God had endowed him. His Superiors accordingly placed him in the Abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés at Paris. There he met with an appreciative master in the person of Dom D’Achery, under whose direction he began to work that vein of monastic learning at which he laboured with such unflagging energy for the next sixty-five years. At the instance of his Superiors, he undertook in 1708 that famous journey of which the result was a learned work entitled *Gallia Christiana*. In the course of his travels he visited all the principal abbeys and cathedral churches of Touraine, Poitou, Berri, Nivernois, and Burgundy; ransacked their archives, and rescued from dust and from oblivion every document which could throw ever so faint a light upon the ecclesiastical history of the kingdom. After a time he had the good fortune to meet with a kindred spirit in the person of Dom Durand, who for the next six-and-twenty years laboured by his side with so great diligence, that there was not in France any note-

worthy collection of books or of manuscripts through which their eagle glance had not searched. These two admirably matched companions set out in 1718 upon a second voyage of discovery through the Low Countries and through Germany, to collect materials for a civil history of France. This in due time appeared; but their wanderings, in addition to the history, produced also another work, called *Le Voyage Littéraire*, in which were described all the objects of interest which they had seen in the abbeys of France and of Germany. A *lettre-de-cachet* launched against Dom Durand separated him from Martène, who thus lost his ablest coadjutor in the many literary works upon which he was engaged. This loss, however, instead of discouraging him, added only fresh vigour to his efforts and to his untiring industry. True to the law of labour which he learnt from his Rule, he wrought at his appointed task unto the very end. Yet, though deeply engrossed in the absorbing pursuits to which his whole life was devoted, Dom Martène was every whit as good a Religious as he was a profound and enthusiastic scholar. No study was ever allowed to interfere with his daily cloistral duties. At the midnight Office the stall of Dom Edmund was never vacant; at the early meditation his ardent piety was a source of edification to his brethren; at his daily Mass his childlike faith enkindled into fresh fervour the devotion of those who felt themselves growing cold in the service of God. Towards his Superiors he was as obedient and as submissive as the most recently clothed novice, and on every point of Rule and of monastic

discipline few were more exact and none more unsparing of self than he was. His commentary on the Rule is one of the most learned that has ever yet appeared. There is scarcely an author of any note who has treated of it with whose work he is not acquainted, and from which he has not drawn something to elucidate and to confirm the views which he himself adopts. His own published works fill fourteen folio, seven quarto, and seven smaller volumes. After a long life of most exemplary religious observance, and of literary labour we might almost say unexampled in the annals of our Order, this true son of St. Benedict died a sudden, but not an unprovided, death on June 20, 1739, in the eighty-fifth year of his age.

While Dom Martène was just beginning his religious career, and preparing himself for those vast literary labours in which his days were afterwards to be spent, there was born in 1672, at Mesnil-le-Horgne, near Commercy, in Lorraine, Augustine Calmet, who almost equalled him in the extent of his vast erudition. As soon as he had attained his sixteenth year he entered the Benedictine monastery of St. Vannes, and very early began to display for the acquisition of Oriental languages that talent which, in his more mature years, did him such excellent service in explaining the sacred text. His growth in religious perfection seems to have kept pace with his steady advance in secular science; for so highly did his Superiors esteem him for it, that at the early age of two-and-twenty they made him Sub-prior of the Abbey of Munster. In his new abode the youthful

Superior was happy to find several Religious with tastes similar to his own, and with abilities admirably adapted for the pursuit of those very branches towards which he felt himself specially drawn. These he gathered round him, and formed into a sort of literary academy, consisting of from eight to ten members, who devoted themselves with the utmost ardour to those studies which tended to throw light upon the obscurities of Sacred Scripture. It was during his residence at this abbey that he wrote his well-known commentaries upon the Bible. His original intention was to have published these in Latin, inasmuch as they were addressed chiefly to the learned world; but on the urgent persuasion of Mabillon and the Abbé Duguet, he at last consented with much reluctance to give them to the public in the vulgar tongue. This was then, and is now considered to have been, a grave mistake. For though possessed of a treasure of erudition equalled by few of the learned men of his time, Calmet was yet wanting in that critical faculty which would have made him reject much that his simplicity of character and his childlike faith caused him to accept without either doubt or question. Hence his great and noble work is somewhat disfigured by an overgrowth of legends and of fables, which, though graceful and beautiful in themselves, are yet like ivy twining round a splendid monument, obscuring its grand proportions and its exquisite carvings. Making but little account of the many excellences of his book, scoffers and unbelievers lay hold of these its defects, and employ them as missiles to hurl against the teaching and the practice

of the Church. To the devout, the reverent, and the believing portion of mankind, his commentaries are a never-failing source of instruction and of edification. So highly were they thought of by his brethren that, as some slight token of their appreciation, they made him Abbot of St. Leopold's at Metz in 1718, and of the Abbey at Sens in 1728. It was at this last-named place that he died in 1757, full of virtues and of years. His commentary on the Rule is in two quarto volumes. His complete works fill twenty-six similar volumes.

Besides the writings of these authors, we have had access to an unpublished commentary on the Rule written by Father Baker, Monk and Priest of our own Congregation. He was born in 1575, and died in 1641. This work seems to be a digest of the commentaries of St. Hildegarde, Turrecremata, Smaragdus, Trithemius, and Perez, and is written in a garrulous sort of style, very different from that of his best production, *Sancta Sophia*. It is so wordy that the venerable father apologises for it to the good nuns of Cambrai, for whose use he wrote, saying: "I know that I am oftentimes long and tedious, if not superfluous, in some of my discourses; but it is my manner, and I can do no better." Yet, though one is forced now and then to wade through pages of long, round-about sentences, which ever seem to be on the point of conveying some information and yet never convey it, there are nevertheless to be found in these pages many shrewd observations and much rare and useful knowledge.

Supporting ourselves upon the learning and the authority of these holy and erudite men, we have,

while following the order observed in the Rule itself, endeavoured to make clear everything which, in its various chapters seems to call for explanation. In this way there has been brought together concerning the teaching of St. Benedict a mass of antiquarian, ascetical, administrative, and disciplinary information, which will, perhaps, be all the more acceptable to the reader because it is not encumbered with the lengthy disquisitions, with the discussion of collateral questions, and the pursuit of side issues to be found in a kind of almost reckless profusion in the ponderous tomes of the great commentators.

As the illustrious patriarch of Western Monachism is said by St. Gregory to have been "full of the spirit of all the just," as he gathered from the practice and the writings of all who preceded him the very essence of their religious teaching, and as most of the founders of Orders since his day have profited by the wisdom of his world-famed Code, there is every reason to hope that laymen, as well as Priests, and Religious of every Order, will find in this little work something which will instruct and edify.

St. Michael's Priory, Hereford,
1st March, 1887.

THE
TEACHING OF ST. BENEDICT.

A SHORT LIFE OF OUR HOLY FATHER
ST. BENEDICT.

IN the year of our Lord 480, St. Benedict and his twin sister, St. Scholastica, were born in Nursia, a town in Southern Italy. Their father's name was Anicius Eupropius, their mother's name, Abundantia, who died in giving them birth. At the age of seven years, Benedict, under the care of his nurse Cyrilla, was sent to school at Rome, and there, for the space of six years, applied himself to the rudimentary studies which usually occupy the minds of youth during the early days of boyhood. As his reason developed, and he began to be conscious of that which was evil, the immoral conduct of his schoolfellows gave so rude a shock to his upright, delicate conscience, that he resolved to flee from the contamination of their evil example, and devote himself to the pursuit of that wisdom which is as a garland of joy upon the brows of youth, and as a crown of glory upon the head of old age.

Accompanied by his faithful nurse, he turned his

back upon the schools of the city, and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, lifted up his eyes towards those mountains, among which he was to be trained and prepared for the accomplishment of those mighty deeds which God intended to be wrought by his hands. As he journeyed on, he was given to understand that, like the Baptist, he must retire into the desert ; therefore, bidding farewell to Cyrilla, he made for the mountainous district of Subiaco, which lies at the distance of about forty miles from Rome. At Subiaco he met with a holy hermit Monk named Romanus, to whom he communicated his design, and from his hands received the religious habit. When thus enrolled among the soldiers of Christ, and clad in the armour of the Gospel of peace, he retired to a cave in the side of the mountain ; and there, unknown to all save God and Romanus, he gave himself up to the rigorous exercises of a penitential life. He was scarcely fourteen years of age when he thus turned away from all that the world could offer to him, and embraced that which, to the men of his time, must have seemed to be a living death. For the next fifteen years his life was, for the most part, hidden with Christ in God. At the feet of the great Master and Model he was learning to know himself, to despise himself, to tame and bring his flesh into subjection, that he might stand before the world, in God's good time, as a leader and teacher of men in the paths of Christian perfection.

His sanctity did not long escape the notice of those who dwelt in the neighbouring valleys. Rumour soon carried his fame far and wide, and those who

were wearied and disgusted with the wickedness of a corrupt and decaying age, began to flock to him, and to consult him about their eternal wellbeing. Among those who were desirous of learning the science of Christian asceticism, from one so well qualified to impart it, were the Monks of the monastery of Vico-Varro. These men seem to have been living in anything but the odour of sanctity ; for the youthful hermit, whom they wished to choose for their Abbot, had evidently heard of their scandalous lives. When they besought him to go with them, and undertake their guidance and their government, he told them that as his life was not their life, and his ways were not their ways, they would speedily weary of his presence among them, and would gladly rid themselves of his company. To all his warnings and forebodings they turned a deaf ear, and, yielding at last to their importunity, he left his beloved cave at Subiaco, and assumed the government of the monastery.

But soon the prophetic words of the man of God were verified. When the pressure of his monastic rule began to gall their necks, they chafed under it and murmured against it, and would have cast it from them. They had, however, set over themselves a man of fixed purpose and of indomitable will. He disregarded their murmurings, and held steadily on his course of reform. At last they plainly saw that they could not bear it any longer, and, as it was impossible to depose him from the position to which their suffrages had raised him, they determined secretly to make away with him. For this purpose they mingled poison with his drink ; but when the

man of God had lifted up his hand over the cup, and had blessed it, the vessel broke, as if it had been shivered to atoms by the well-directed blow of a stone, instead of being blessed by the saving sign of the Cross. Perceiving by this the wicked designs of the Monks, and seeing that labour bestowed on them would be labour spent in vain, he retired from their midst, and returned to his much-loved solitude of Subiaco.

Thither men soon began to flock to him for direction and guidance in the ways of God, and, having learnt from his lips the science of sciences, were unwilling ever again to leave him. They preferred to await with him in the peace and the retirement of the mountain, and in the exercise of every Christian virtue, the summons of the Great Master. To accommodate all such as these, St. Benedict, during the next nineteen years, had to construct among the hills which surrounded his cavern no fewer than twelve monasteries. Though giving to the world such a brilliant example of every virtue, yet he could not escape the persecution of the wicked. A neighbouring priest, named Florentius, maddened with envy at the thought of the great reputation for holiness which the Saint had acquired, and at the widespread influence which he had gained over the people, did everything in his power to blacken his reputation, and to break the spell by which he held captive the hearts of all. St. Benedict, with unalterable patience, endured this man's unmerited persecutions, hoping thus to soften the wickedness of his heart, and to win him over to a better life; but to no purpose. Therefore, seeing

that all the enmity of Florentius was directed against himself, he resolved to withdraw to some other place, in which he would be beyond the reach of this wicked priest's envenomed tongue, and the malice of his unregenerate heart. Accordingly, in the year 529, he bade farewell to the beloved spot in which he had so long and so lovingly served our Lord, and, travelling for about fifty miles in a southerly direction from Subiaco, came upon the ruins of an old Roman fort, perched high up the side of Monte Cassino. There he determined to fix his abode, and thither men soon began to gather round him, as they had already previously gathered round him at Subiaco. They came in so great numbers, that he was forced to build for their accommodation a monastery, which afterwards became a centre of piety, of virtue, and of learning for the whole world. Here he spent the last thirteen years of his life; and here, on the 21st March, in the year 543, standing before the altar of God; supported in the arms of his spiritual children, and with the words of prayer upon his lips, he breathed forth his pure soul into the hands of his Maker.

THE RULE OF ST. BENEDICT.

IT is very probable that our Holy Father began to write his Rule at Subiaco, about the year 510, at the time when men were flocking to him in such numbers that he was forced to found twelve monasteries for their accommodation. But internal evidence, which is furnished by the Rule itself, puts it beyond a doubt that it was not completed till St. Benedict had founded the famous monastery of Monte Cassino. For if we remember that there were in each of the twelve monasteries only twelve Monks, it will be evident that there could not be any necessity for the appointment of Deans, of which he speaks in the twenty-first chapter. That and several others must, therefore, have been inserted by him about the year 536, when he sent St. Placid into Sicily, and gave him a copy of the Rule for his guidance, and for the government of the monastery which he was sent to found in that island.

This was the first monastic code which was written for the West. Eastern ascetics had been trained and disciplined by the legislation of St. Basil, and all those who in the West had up to this time devoted themselves to a cenobitical life had formed themselves to virtue either by the enactments of his Rule, or by those of which Cassian had made such an ample collection.

With the works of both these illustrious men St. Benedict was well acquainted, and from them took all that he deemed useful and necessary for the government of those who had gathered round him ; nevertheless, he did not limit himself to such legislation as he had found in force among the Cenobites of his time, but drew from his own sage experience most of those broad, far-reaching enactments which have made his Rule famous for its more than human prudence and discretion.

A glance at that Rule will reveal to the most casual reader that its two guiding principles are obedience and labour. Illuminated by the Holy Spirit, St. Benedict chose them out to remedy the evils of the day in which his lot was cast. For he had in very truth fallen upon evil times. Not one ray of light or of hope broke in upon him from north or from south, from east or from west. Decay, confusion, disintegration, and death were everywhere. In the West, the vast structure of the Roman Empire was crumbling into dust ; in the East, the discord and the disunion consequent upon theological strife made desolate the sanctuary, and blinded the eyes of the rulers, so that they saw not the advent of the terrible storm which was about to burst upon them. The Church was rent and divided by heresy and by schism. The clergy were lax and dissolute ; the laity had practically given up truth, justice, and morality. The fresh young nations from the northern forests were bursting in wave upon wave of barbaric invasion upon the effete civilisation of the West. Men had broken loose from control, and were rioting in their

liberty ; the sword was in every man's hand, so that the labourer could not apply to his toil, and the skilful forgot their cunning in the years of confusion and of darkness which succeeded the overthrow of the tottering Empire of the West. St. Benedict had fled into the mountains from the vice and the corruption of that wicked age. But he carried with him in his heart those two grand principles which were to save the world. He took with him the principle of obedience, to cement together the scattered elements of human society ; and the law of labour, by which man accomplishes the task marked out for him by God, both as a punishment of his rebellion, and as a remedy of the ills which sprang from that primal revolt against authority.

He imbued all those who, like himself, had fled from the world, and had gathered round him as their teacher, with the same spirit with which he himself was animated. He taught them to obey ; he taught them to labour ; and the vigour, the life, the energy, which flow from these principles permeate through and pervade all the legislation which he drew up in order to enforce his teaching, and to make it useful as a method of spiritual training for others. This admirable code is divided into seventy-three chapters. Of these, nine treat of the general duties of the Abbot and of the Monks ; thirteen regulate the public service, of the Divine worship ; twenty-nine are concerned with discipline, with the faults which are usually committed against it, and with the penal code by which those faults are to be punished ; ten have reference to the internal administration of the monastery ;

and twelve are devoted to miscellaneous subjects, such as the reception of guests, and the conduct of Monks when travelling.¹ Its excellence, as an implement of spiritual training, soon became apparent ; for not only did those who came to submit themselves to St. Benedict eagerly adopt it, but also those who had heretofore been under the guidance of other Rules gladly accepted this new legislation, which bore upon it the impress of a wisdom more than human, and of a fatherly compassionate love which reminded them of the charity of Christ.

The fruit of the teaching which it imparted, and of the discipline which it enforced, very speedily made itself manifest in the Church of God. Communities of men and of women began to be formed, to spread themselves far and wide throughout the land of Italy, and to pass thence into other nations. Full of the Spirit of God, adorned with every virtue, learned, laborious, and animated with zeal for the advancement of righteousness, they speedily began to gather round them the scattered people, and to exert over them a most beneficial influence. They became missionaries, carrying the light of truth to those who either had never known it, or had forgotten it ; they taught those whom war and the miseries of the times had impoverished, and changed into vagabonds, to till the ground, and to live by the labour of their hands ; they gathered the demoralised populations round them, and formed them once again to social and political life ; they preserved the literature of the ancient world, and imparted their knowledge, their

¹ Montalembert, *Moines d'Occident*, tom. ii. liv. iv.

culture, and their science to the youthful generation ; they were, in one word, the apostles, the civilisers, and the teachers of the world. Their services to the Church cannot be over-estimated ; and these they were enabled to bestow through the character which the Rule impressed upon them. That character is holiness, which is the outcome of a spirit of interior recollection, engendered by the various ordinances of the Rule. To the casual reader this will not, perhaps, reveal itself, and he will be astonished that we should ascribe to any system of legislation, which, like the Rule of St. Benedict, deals for the most part with external observances, the growth of an internal spirit, always alive to, and eagerly on the watch to comply with, the inspirations and the movements of the Holy Ghost. But if he take the trouble to examine the drift of these external observances, and the purpose for which they are prescribed, he will begin to see that they are not a mere piece of ceremonial, the purpose of which is to procure external decorum, but a systematically organised code of laws, devised for the express purpose of removing from the soul all worry, all turmoil, and all else that would blind its eyes to the gracious presence of the Paraclete, and deafen its ears to the sweet whisperings of His low, soft voice. Hence, by an exact and careful observance of these various precepts, which remove from their path all hindrances to the acquisition of sanctity, they were enabled to advance in perfection, to become Saints, and, by becoming Saints, to further God's cause, which is one with the cause of the Church.

It is principally owing to this, and to the many centuries during which it was the sole guide and the master of all who embraced the monastic life, that the Rule of St. Benedict brought forth so many Saints, doctors, enlightened rulers, wise and experienced guides, who prayed for, and taught, and governed the people of God. The historians of the Order reckon upon its roll of honour no fewer than 55,700 Saints ; they tell us that from the cloisters of St. Benedict there have gone forth 4600 bishops, 1600 archbishops, 200 cardinals, 51 patriarchs, and 46 popes ; so that the government of the Universal Church was in the hands of the children of our Holy Father for more than five hundred years. Emperors, kings, philosophers, artists, and poets ; poor peasants and pale thought-worn students ; rough soldiers and men of the world, have taken that Rule as their guide, and it has made them Saints.

This is not to be wondered at ; “ for it is an epitome of Christianity, a learned and mysterious abridgment of all the doctrines of the Gospel, all the institutions of the Fathers, and all the counsels of perfection. Here prudence and simplicity, humility and courage, severity and gentleness, freedom and dependence, eminently appear. Here correction has all its firmness, condescension all its charm, command all its vigour, and subjection all its repose ; silence has all its gravity, and words have their grace ; strength has its exercise, and weakness its support ; and yet always St. Benedict calls it but ‘ a beginning,’ in order to keep his children in holy fear.”²

² Bossuet, *Panégyrique de St. Benoît.*

A rough division may be made of all its various laws, into statutes or precepts, and into counsels. By a *statute* or *precept*, we mean those laws which either command or prohibit in an absolute manner. They may be known by such formulas as "It is not lawful; Let no one presume; Let him be corrected." By a *counsel*, we mean all such injunctions as are not ordered in an absolute manner, and for which, if they are carried out, those who obey them are praised. Of this class we consider the following to be instances: "That obedience will then be acceptable to God," &c.³ "The sixth degree of humility is, if a Monk be content with all that is meanest," &c.⁴ "Let those upon whom God bestows the gift of abstinence," &c.⁵ "Let us add something over and above to our wonted task," &c.⁶

The Rule binds under the penalty of mortal sin in all grave transgressions against the three vows. In all statutes or precepts, the probability is that it binds under the penalty of venial sin, as is taught by St. Thomas, Hœften, Turrecremata, and St. Antoninus. The counsels of the Rule do not bind under the penalty of even venial sin.

The obligation of Superiors with respect to the Rule is to observe it, and to cause their subjects to observe it. It is their office to explain or to interpret those things in it which are obscure; *e.g.* what matters are to be considered of great moment and what of little moment, what clothes are suitable for the climate in which they live, &c.; unless, of course, all these and

³ Chap. v.⁴ Chap. vii.⁵ Chap. xl.⁶ Chap. xlix.

similar matters are determined by the legislation of Constitutions. They have the power to dispense their subjects from the disciplinary enactments of the Rule whenever there is a legitimate cause.

THE PROLOGUE TO THE RULE.

As St. Benedict's purpose in writing his Rule was to draw up a code of moral, liturgical, and disciplinary laws, by which to guide the daily actions of all who should seek to serve God in his Institute, he very wisely prefaced the various enactments which he deemed necessary for this purpose with a few words of exhortation and of encouragement. He tells them that he is about to establish a school, in which the science of salvation is to be taught; he hopes that no ordinance which he may think necessary will be either too rigorous or too burdensome; and that even if it should prove to be so, those who find it somewhat severe will not, on that account, straightway give up the pursuit of that which is of such vital importance to all, but will persevere until they have mastered the difficulties which block the way of every beginning.

In order to reassure all who might be afraid that he was about to make the path to heaven more narrow and strait than it really is, he tells them that he wishes to lead them to God by no other way than by that which is pointed out to all by Jesus Christ, and is described in the pages of the Gospel. In that Gospel, we see that all Christianity rests upon three principles—self-denial, patient endurance of the ills of life, and imitation of Jesus Christ—all which our Lord expresses in these well-known words: "If any

man will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." On these same principles St. Benedict founds his Rule, and tells those who are willing to submit themselves to his teaching that its aim is to impart the science which lies hidden under these three pregnant principles. In the first place, he states, in as many words, that his teaching is directed to, and is meant for, only those "who, renouncing their own will, take upon themselves the strong and bright armour of obedience, to fight under the Lord Christ, our true King;" secondly, he tells them that they must carry their cross, when he exhorts them "to share by patience in the sufferings of Christ;" thirdly, he teaches them to follow Christ, when he bids them "never to depart from the school of Christ, but to persevere in the monastery in His doctrine until death, that they may deserve afterwards to be partakers of His kingdom."

Therefore, the scope of his Rule is identical with the scope of the Gospel; it is meant to make the way unto eternal happiness a secure and easy way. By a close observance of its precepts, the holy legislator himself was able to obtain great graces and to reach a very eminent degree of glory. St. Bernard very beautifully expresses this when he says: "What is the way by which Benedict, the beloved of the Lord, so gloriously ascended to heaven, except the Order which he instituted and the Rule of life which had its origin in him? That is the way which the beloved of the Lord ascended; for the holy man could not teach a doctrine different from the life which he led. This is the greatest source of the confidence of those who

follow his footsteps by keeping the Rule which he wrote for their instruction." Therefore, as St. Benedict, and, after him, so many hundreds of thousands who have observed his Rule, found that it made the way unto heaven a sweet and secure path, so also, without doubt, will all those find it to be, who are treading in their footsteps, and are endeavouring to observe its precepts as best they may. "To those who shall do these things," he says at the end of the Rule, "there shall be thrown wide open the gates of the kingdom of heaven."¹

From that which has been said, it will be seen that the spirit which animates the whole legislation of St. Benedict is altogether similar to the Spirit of Christ. Now, what is that which the Divine Master requires as the very foundation of the spiritual life? Is it not abandonment of and flight from that world, in which He declares that He has no part, and for which He would not pray, saying: "I am not of the world; I pray not for the world"? Also, did He not wish that His Apostles and all His followers should entertain the same sentiments with respect to it? Speaking to them, He says: "I have chosen you out of the world; you are not of the world;" and therefore He insisted upon their giving up all the tastes, the affections, the occupations, and the desires of the world, in order that they might be able to live soberly, justly, and in a godly manner here below, awaiting the blessed hope and His own most glorious advent at the end of time. This is precisely what St. Benedict teaches

¹ This sentence is found at the end of many editions of the Rule.

his followers to do. He wishes them to be foreign to the affairs of the world ; to withdraw themselves from it ; not to mix themselves up with its pursuits ; not to take part in its politics ; not to be busied about its aims ; not to adopt its views, its fashions, its way of speaking and of acting. He desires, on the contrary, that they should live apart from the world, in solitude, in silence, in humility, in poverty, being well aware that such is the Spirit of Christ, and that he who is not animated with a like spirit is not one of His, is not a Religious, is not even a Christian, in the true sense of the word.

The Prologue to the Rule opens with the words :

HEARKEN, MY SON.—St. Benedict requires us to give to the teaching of the Rule the attention of our bodily sense ; the attention of our intellect, “*incline the ear of thy heart ;*” the affection of our will, “*willingly to hear ;*” and the obedience of our performance, “*effectually to accomplish.*”

MASTER : FATHER.—By these terms, St. Benedict does not designate himself, but the Holy Ghost ; or, as some interpreters think, our Divine Lord.

ARMOUR OF OBEDIENCE.—In this virtue our Holy Father wishes that the spirit of his Order should consist ; for its scope is to lead back to God, by the labour of obedience, those whom the sloth of disobedience has caused to stray from the path of His commandments.

WHATEVER GOOD WORK THOU DOST BEGIN.—It is God who gives the grace both to will and to accomplish. St. Benedict, who drew much of his monastic

legislation from the teaching of Cassian, in this, and in several other passages, guards his disciples against the semi-Pelagian doctrine about divine grace, with which that famous man was somewhat infected.

WITH WONDERING EARS.—To listen in this way is to have the whole man so absorbed in attention, as to be deaf to everything else.

HATH DASHED THEM AGAINST THE ROCK CHRIST.—This is to drive away evil thoughts by the memory of the Passion and the death, the blood and the wounds, of Christ.

MOTIVES.—In this Prologue five motives are put before us to induce us to undertake that spiritual life which is set forth in the Rule. (1) The love of God for us: "That He who hath now vouchsafed to reckon us in the number of His children may not hereafter be saddened by our evil deeds, . . . nor disinherit us." (2) The severity of God: "Lest as a dread Lord, He may deliver us up to perpetual punishment; . . . and, if we desire to avoid the pains of hell, we must hasten now to do that which will be expedient for us for ever hereafter." (3) God's sweet invitation to us: "Come, ye children, and hearken unto Me. What can be sweeter than this voice of the Lord inviting us?" (4) The patience of God awaiting us, prolonging the days of our life, that we may amend our evil deeds. (5) The sweetness of the religious life, which, though difficult in the beginning, yet in process of time grows sweet and easy.²

² If the reader examine the Latin text of the Rule, he will find that St. Benedict does not quote the Vulgate, but the old Roman Psalter and Testament. This will account for the differences which he will find between these quotations and the text of the Vulgate.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE SEVERAL KINDS OF MONKS.

BECAUSE St. Benedict is called the Father of Western Monachism, it must not be supposed that he is the parent of it in such a way as that there never were any Monks previously to his time. The most cursory reading of his life and of his Rule will at once dispel any such notion. It was from a Monk that he received the monastic habit and that he was supplied with food, during the first period, when he led a hermit's life in the cave at Subiaco; it was at the request of a community of Monks that he unwillingly abandoned his beloved retreat in order to govern the monastery in which they dwelt; it was to escape their resentment, and their evil designs against his life, that he returned to his cave, and that he there began to gather round him the men who had fled from the contamination of a corrupt age, in order to be instructed in the ways of God. All that is meant by calling him the Father of Western Monachism is that his Rule so speedily superseded well-nigh all other enactments and methods of Monasticism, as to be almost universally adopted and employed everywhere in the West as the instrument for forming into Monks those who sought to lead a life of perfection.

CENOBITES.—As there were many Monks and many monasteries in existence when St. Benedict

began to write his Rule, it is but natural that he should first say something about the kind of men for whom it was his intention to legislate. According to him, Monks may be divided into four classes, or rather the Monks of whom he had familiar experience may be so divided. First, there are those whom he calls Cenobites, and who, in his opinion, are the best and most perfect kind of Monks. These are they who live together in community, with a fixed Rule, according to which they are willing to abide, under the guidance of a Superior, who is vested with authority to administer that legislation to which they have chosen to submit themselves.

ANCHORETS.—The second are Anchorets or Hermits. These, as their name implies, are those who have gone apart from the fellowship of men, to lead a solitary life. These hermits are of two kinds: first, those who undertake this life without having any previous training in monastic discipline, and without passing through any intermediate state; secondly, those who, after being first tried in all the obedience and the stern asceticism of monastic life, then go forth with the permission and with the counsel of their Superiors, to live, indeed, alone, but still to remain under the government of the monastery whence they came. To undertake the eremitical mode of life without any previous training is a matter full of deadly peril, unless a person is invited to do so by a special vocation from God. Then it is expected that He who has given the call will likewise bestow all the graces which are necessary to shun the dangers and to overcome the difficulties which beset a life of solitude. It

is evident, from the Rule, that our Holy Father considers that the solitary life is prudently undertaken only by those who enter upon it after a long trial of a life spent in fellowship with others, whose example has imparted strength and courage, and that spiritual science which, with the aid of God's grace, enables them to engage in single combat with the enemies of their souls.

SARABITES.—In the third class St. Benedict places those who resemble Cenobites, in that they live together in twos or in threes, and form a sort of community, but differ from them in that they have neither a Rule upon which to shape their lives, nor a Superior to guide them in the path of obedience. Their only law is the pleasure of their unruly desires; and their standard of right and of wrong is their own perverse will. These false Religious, who had nothing of the Monk save the tonsure and the habit, were called by their contemporaries *Sarabites*, a word of Egyptian origin, signifying a rebellious, disobedient Religious; one who has not been moulded into the fashion of religious life by the influence of the Rule, nor tried by the sage experience of a skilful master; who is full of the base alloy of his unregenerate nature; soft as lead to take the impress of all that is evil; a living contradiction, wearing the trappings of those who have renounced the world, but in affection and in act cleaving to it with a tenacity engendered by inveterate habit.

GYROVAGI.—The fourth class of Monks were called *Gyrovagi*, from the fact that they had no fixed abode, but wandered about from one province to

another, from one monastery to its neighbour, seeking for and obtaining hospitality from men who were either too simple to discredit their stories or too charitable to suspect them of hypocrisy. These were a species of monastic "tramps" or vagabonds, who, if we may judge of their character from that which is recorded of them in monastic writings, had all the effrontery, all the disinclination to work, all the restless, roving disposition of their modern representatives, only masked under the pretence of a search after a perfect way of life. Their method of proceeding was to come to a monastery as pilgrims, or as men who were out on some errand, from a distant community, or who were bent on reaching some far-off fraternity, whose rigorous mode of life was just the very object towards which all their aspirations tended. In the mean time, being received as guests, they were treated with all courtesy and civility. Their feet were washed; they were lodged in the guest-house; an excellent meal was prepared for their refreshment; and they were not expected to subject themselves to the rigour of the Rule with respect to rising for Matins, manual labour, silence, and the like. After a few days they took their departure, and went through the same piece of deception at the next monastery. Some of these vagabonds made such a profession of this scandalous mode of life, that they furnished themselves with all the appurtenances with which it might be pursued with the greatest ease to themselves. They procured two stout saddle-bags, and an ass to carry them. Then, staff in hand, and clad in the monastic garb, they set forth upon their journey. On arriving

at a monastery, they begged to be led straightway to the church, in order to go through the prayers which were usually said before admitting guests into the enclosure. They asked for a draught of wine to fortify themselves after the fatigues of the journey; they diligently inquired the distance to the next monastery, and the best route which led thither; if asked whether they wished to be called with the rest of the Monks for the *Matin* office, they pleaded either ill-health or fatigue to exempt themselves from this duty; if the Community happened to be keeping fast, they begged leave to be excused from this, for the same reason; and then only did they take their departure when their keen eyes detected the slackening fervour of their kind hosts, who, scandalised at their behaviour, endeavoured by this means to hint that their presence was no longer pleasing to the brotherhood, who by the laws of their Institute were obliged to receive, as if they were Christ Himself, all strangers who came to them.

ST. BENEDICT'S AIM.—Bad as the Sarabites were in the eyes of St. Benedict, he considered that the Gyrovagi were, in all respects, even worse. Therefore, deeming all legislation for their reform to be useless, he turned his attention to the Cenobites, who are, in his opinion, the most steadfast kind of Monks. His aim was to put an end to the wandering habits of the Gyrovagi, to the licentious lives of the Sarabites, and to the independence of the Hermits. Therefore, in the Rule which he wrote, he established a life in common, and an enclosure, beyond which Monks were not suffered to pass without the leave of the Abbot,

and for some reason which would meet with his blessing and approval. This put an effective stop to the business of the Gyrovagi, and monastic tramps soon disappeared from the roads, and ceased to be met with in the guest-halls of the great monasteries. In the next place, he bound by vow all who embraced his Institute continually to labour at the amendment of their manners, and thus gave a death-blow to the Sarabites, who did whatever seemed best to their own wills, making evil good and good evil. Lastly, he made obedience to a Rule, and to the commands of a Superior, the very essence of monastic life, and thus drew a sharp line of demarcation between his children and all those who by leading an eremitical life were far removed from and beyond the reach of any one who might guide and exercise them in the paths of obedience.

SARABITES AND GYROVAGI IN SPIRIT.—Nevertheless, those who live under the mild legislation of his Rule, and bow their necks beneath the yoke of obedience, must not suppose that they are beyond the reach of that perverse spirit which animated the lives of the Sarabites and of the Gyrovagi. It is quite within the range of possibility that a man should be living under the sway of an Abbot, and be bound by all the enactments of a Rule, and yet in heart be both a Sarabite and a Gyrovagus. Are there not Religious who desire to be from under the sway of an Abbot or Superior, and to be rid of all the hampering trammels of a Rule? Are there not Religious who, though they have given up the world, cleave to it by their imperfect lives, inasmuch as they are given up to

pride, to vainglory, to itching curiosity, and to love of good cheer? How many are there who, under one pretext or another, manage to be out of their monasteries, and to flit from place to place, ostensibly on the plea of business, and with the will of their Superior, but in reality on business of their own creating and seeking, and with the will of their Superior, whom they have constrained to make his will their own? Men of this stamp, though living in a monastery, and under the sway of a Superior, are filled with the Sarabite's self-will, with the tramping spirit of the Gyrovagus, and are not of the number of those steadfast cenobitical men—except, indeed, in name—for whom St. Benedict says that he intends to write his Rule.¹

CHAPTER II.

WHAT MANNER OF MAN THE ABBOT OUGHT TO BE.

FATHER.—After describing for us the various kinds of Monks who peopled the monastic world of his own day, and pointing out to us that class of them which he considered to be the most deserving of praise and of imitation, our Holy Father next proceeds to treat of the character of him who, in his estimation,

¹ A Monk may, through *necessity* or through *utility*, reside beyond the enclosure of his monastery, and not only not incur any blame, but, in some instances, gain by the change. Thus, if he were promoted to a benefice, having attached to it the "care of souls," he would superadd to the state of perfection, in which he already lives as a Religious, the dignity of the sacerdotal office.—St. Thomas, ii, 2, art. viii.

is worthy to be appointed ruler over these Cenobites whom he calls "the most steadfast class of Monks." The title which he gives to him expresses, in a compendious sort of way, all that he would have him to be. He gives to him the name "Abbot," or father, and sets him at the head of the monastic community as another Christ. Therefore, he would have him unite in his person the threefold office of father, teacher, and governor : father, to love them ; teacher, to instruct them ; and governor, to rule and guide them. Under these heads is contained all the instruction which St. Benedict offers to Superiors. He sketches for them only the grand outlines of what their conduct should be with respect to their subjects, leaving the multitude of details to be filled in by them as circumstances shall require. Yet, within these few outlines, all those who hold sway over men will find principles of conduct, which, if acted upon, will guide them with unerring wisdom in the difficult task of government, and enable them to use with moderation that power which is intrusted to them, "not unto destruction, but unto edification."

EQUAL LOVE.—Preëminently, then, the Abbot or Superior who is intrusted with the government of men, and particularly if this government is a spiritual one, must show in his own person all the qualities of a father. For the power which is put into his hands, like all power, comes from God ; and he himself is set up in the midst of those who are subjected to his sway, to represent to them the person of Christ. As, therefore, he wields a power which comes to him from God, and holds, with respect to his subjects, the place of Christ,

he is bound in his conduct to behave towards them as our Divine Lord would behave, and to use the authority with which he is invested in the same way in which it would be used by Jesus Christ. From this it will follow that he must love them with a love similar in its nature to the love with which God loves us. Now, God loves mankind in two ways. In the first place, they are His creatures, the work of His almighty hands. He fashioned their bodies with wondrous cunning, making them the masterpieces of His creation, in beauty of form, in symmetry of proportion, in the right adjustment of all parts. Into them He breathed a living image of Himself, bearing upon its every feature the impress of the Divinity. He dignified them with the position of children, and took upon Himself, with respect to them, the title "Father." He destined them to an eternity of happiness, in the full enjoyment of the Beatific Vision, having made them "only a little less than the angelic natures" which minister round His throne. Therefore, because men are the creation of God's hands, bear upon their souls the impress of His divine nature, and are destined by Him for the enjoyment of eternal happiness, His love for them is *equal*. In consequence of these conditions in which He has been pleased to create man, He loves the lowly, the ignorant, the deformed, with a love just as great as is that with which He loves those who are noble, those who are learned, and those who are graced with that beauty which makes captive our impressionable hearts. Nay, when looked at in these respects, even the wicked, who have broken His yoke and cast it from their

shoulders, are loved with an affection equal to that which He metes out unto the just, who keep His ordinances and walk in His ways.

LOVE PROPORTIONED TO MERIT.—But besides this way in which God loves men, there is another in which His affection is poured out upon them for other reasons besides those of creation, of bearing His image, and of being destined to eternal happiness. In this second way the love which God bestows upon men is not equal with respect to each individual ; it differs both in measure and in degree of intensity, because it is awarded as a crown of merit ; and as the merit acquired by each, through the aid of divine grace, is not equal, the love with which it is rewarded cannot be equal. Thus it is that God loves with a closer, a more intimate, a fonder affection, him who is treading the paths of justice, than He does the man who has wandered out of the strait way, and is hurrying along the broad, smooth, beaten track which leads to destruction. He treats with more special care, and tends with more signal tokens of affection, one who is in a high degree of perfection, than He vouchsafes to bestow upon one who is in a less eminent degree. In a word, His love for men is proportioned to their merit.

If, then, the Superior holds the place of Christ with respect to his subjects, and if he is bound to love them in the same way in which Christ loves us, the love of the Superior must be like that which God bears unto men. It must, like God's love, in the first place, be given equally to all : " Let there be no distinction of persons in the monastery. Let not one be loved more than another." For each of the

Superior's subjects stands towards him in the relation of child, and he towards each in the relation of father. Therefore, in this respect, the claim of all upon his love is equal. Moreover, they are equally God's children; they bear in their souls the image of the Divine Nature, and look forward with an equal right to the inheritance of eternal life; consequently, they are in these respects entitled to receive from him the same measure of affectionate regard and fatherly solicitude. But although bound to pay to them this debt of paternal love, it is not required that he should *feel* its constraining influence in his inferior or sensitive nature. All that is looked for is that he should foster it in his superior or rational will, for that will suffice to move him to perform in their regard all those offices which their mutual relation demands. But if, in addition to the possession of this love in his superior will, he can have it also in his inferior nature, it will be all the better both for himself and for those who are under his charge, inasmuch as all the duties which flow from his love will be performed with greater ease by him, and be rendered more acceptable to those in whose behalf they are performed.

It is evident, therefore, that St. Benedict by this precept opens for Superiors the true fount whence an equal stream of love may flow unto all their subjects, and seals up those other sources from which worldly-minded men draw more copious draughts to bestow upon those who are not entitled to this richer outpouring of affection. Hence he will not suffer any Abbot or Superior to give more special marks of love to those of his subjects who may chance to have been nobly

born than he bestows upon those who have sprung from the mass of the people. He must not, for this reason only, advance them to high offices, nor to positions of trust, in the monastery. He must not allow himself to be swayed in his affection by beauty of form, nor by culture of manner, nor by the glitter of those merely accidental qualities, which have so great influence with men of the world. The reason which he gives is that noble birth, cultured manners, superior intelligence, and corporeal beauty have no weight with Christ, before Whom we are all one, and in Whose service we all bear an equal burden of duty; with Whom, consequently, there is "no accepting of persons." Nevertheless, while urging Superiors equally to love all their subjects, and insisting upon their not making any distinction in the love which they give to them, our Holy Father does not prohibit them from loving one of their subjects with more affection than they give to the rest, provided that there is a sufficient reason for so doing. That reason must be the same in its nature as is that for which God loves some men with more intensity and with a more copious measure of affection than He deigns to bestow upon others.

Now, as God loves those who are more virtuous in exact proportion to their merits, so also may a Superior, for the same reason, love one of his subjects more than another, "if in good works and in obedience he be found to surpass the rest." Also, he may advance to positions of honour and of trust those among them who are more intelligent and better fitted by their capacity to fill such offices, even though they are young

and only recently converted to religious life. But their promotion must not be the result of mere affection. Their title to honour and to trust must rest upon the possession of ability to be of use to the monastery and to their brethren ; so that St .Benedict, while strictly prohibiting all *favouritism* and mere natural affection springing from motives which are unworthy of Religious, does not interdict that special and particular love which is due to the more virtuous. If the Superior will but remember what he is, and by what title he is called, and that in the monastery he holds the place of Christ, he will equally love all his subjects as being the children of God ; he will show more affection only to those who are worthy of it, because of their superior virtue ; he will advance to offices of trust the nobly born, the well-favoured, the polished, only for some reasonable cause, and not for merely adventitious excellences ; like Christ, his great model, he will study not to be an acceptor of persons, and will, therefore, bear an equal love to all, subjecting them to the same orders and to the same discipline, in accordance with their deserts.

HE MUST TEACH FIRST BY EXAMPLE. — The office of Father of the community over which he rules entails many other duties upon the Abbot or Superior, such as providing for their maintenance and for their education, just as the head of a family does with respect to the household which is dependent upon him. Of the material maintenance which he is obliged to provide for them we need say nothing. In speaking of their intellectual education, we will confine ourselves to that portion of it which pertains to their advancement

in the science of the Saints. At this he is obliged to labour with all the earnestness of which he is capable. In this matter our Divine Lord must serve as a model to the Superior, who occupies His place; and the method of teaching which our Lord employed must be copied by him in its minutest details. Christ, as teacher, first set the example in His own person of all the great moral precepts which He wished to impress on the souls of His hearers, and then taught them by word of mouth with a simplicity and an earnestness which made the people exclaim: "Never did man speak as this Man does!" So also must every Superior act, who wishes conscientiously to satisfy his obligation of educating his subjects: he must first *do* and then *teach*; that is to say, "he must show them all virtue and sanctity by deeds more than by words," and first by deeds. For we are so constituted by nature that those things which strike our senses, which we see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, and touch with our hands, make a deeper impression on us than do those which we can reach only by means of our intellectual faculties. We grasp them at once, almost without an effort. It is for this reason that those who wish to teach, or to persuade, or to encourage others to act, invariably first put before their eyes an example, which makes it easy for those to whom they address themselves to understand the lesson, or to accept the reasoning, or to perform the act which is put before them. When a professor has a mathematical problem to explain to his scholars, he does not waste either his own energies or their time in vain attempts to impress it upon their brain by words only; he takes up his chalk and draws

the figure on his blackboard, and with that to catch their eyes, he easily conveys the elucidation of it to minds which, without that, would struggle in vain to understand his terms and his technical explanations. A captain on the field of battle does not confine himself to mere words of command and to exhortations to be courageous; he goes before, he leads his men whither he would have them to go, and *does* for them that which he wishes them to do. Such, also, must be the conduct of him who would impart to his subjects the precepts of the divine law. The mantle of authority will sit but ill upon his shoulders if he cannot do this, and his words will fall upon a soil whence they will be speedily swept away by the winds of human passion. Consequently, whatever light there is in a man must be made to shine forth in such a way as that others may see it, and by its brilliancy be guided to walk whither it points the way. But feeble and uncertain will that light be, unless it be reflected by the powerful background of personal example. This will focus its rays with tenfold power upon their minds and upon their senses, even if they chance to be of the number of those who are sitting in the shadow of deadly sin, willing captives of the world's enthralling pleasures. St. Paul was so keenly alive to the necessity for this irresistible force in a teacher that, when writing to his disciple Titus, whom he had left among the Cretans, he said to him: "In all things show thyself an example of good works."² To do this was peculiarly necessary in his case, inasmuch as those with whom he had to deal were proverbially

² Titus ii. 7.

deceitful, rebellious, stubborn, and intractable. In fact, so much so, that one of their own poets had written of them : " Always liars and beasts are the Cretans, and inwardly sluggish."³ Wherefore he was told by St. Paul sharply to rebuke them, and therefore there was all the more need on his part of a blameless, irreproachable life, which would shine before their eyes as a guiding light to the paths of holiness and of justice.

In the same way Superiors must first stand before their subjects as the models of all that they wish to teach them. Like the good shepherd of whom our Lord speaks in the Gospel, they must go before them in the exercise of every good work. If they wish them to be silent, punctual, attentive to choir duties, humble, patient, charitable, all these qualities must shine forth in their own daily lives, so that all may see these virtuous actions glittering like so many jewels in their vesture of office. If they do not see in them these virtues, or if they be able to mark their absence, it will be vain for a Superior to speak with earnestness and with eloquence of the advantages of silence, of the necessity for punctuality, of the heavenly joys of being privileged to sing in choir like the angels of God, of the urgency with which our Lord and St. Benedict insist upon humility, of their exhortation to patience in suffering, of the inutility of all virtue without charity : all this will fall upon minds whose only response will be, " Physician, heal thyself ; first do, and then teach us, and we will listen to and carry out thy precepts." Only those Superiors can teach with

³ Epimenedes, who lived in the sixth century B.C.

efficiency who, like St. Paul, are able to say to their subjects, "Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ;"⁴ for "what manner of man the ruler of the city is, such also are they that dwell therein."⁵

SECONDLY, BY WORD OF MOUTH.—But when a Superior has displayed in his own conduct before his subjects all the virtues which he wishes them to practise, he has not accomplished his whole duty. Another important part of it yet remains to be done. This is to teach by word of mouth those high moral principles from which all good, exemplary conduct springs. For the precept which the Apostle gives to those who hold the episcopal office,⁶ which precept the Council of Trent⁷ tells us applies to all ecclesiastical prelates, is twofold in its injunction: in the first place, it orders them to look well to their own lives to see that they are holy and exemplary; and in the next place, it bids them apply to *learning*, that they may impart unto others the knowledge of the truth. This latter obligation is a personal one, from which they are released only by some legitimate hindrance; and when any such impediment intervenes, they are bound to satisfy their obligation by calling in some one to accomplish this duty for them. Now, if Abbots and regular Superiors exercise over their subjects a quasi-episcopal jurisdiction, we may legitimately infer that there is upon them a very serious obligation of acting towards these subjects as prelates are bound to act towards their flocks; that is to say, to break to them the bread of the word, either personally

⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 16.

⁵ Eccles. x. 2.

⁶ 1 Tim. iv. 16.

⁷ Sess. ii. De Refor. cap. ii.

or by means of others. Hence a Superior must instruct his community not by example only, but by word of mouth also ; he must not only *do*, but also *teach* ; and to him as well as to Bishops applies that command of the prince of preachers, "to preach the word," and to be so earnest in the dissemination of it as to do this "both in season and out of season."⁸

He is set over them for this very purpose. He is the first among them in order to be a teacher to the rest. He is set on an eminence in order to give forth light, by which others may guide their steps. Therefore he must not hide whatever of light there may be in him, but must make it to shine before men. Upon him, as upon the Apostle, there is a necessity to preach the Gospel to his subjects, and woe unto him if he yields not to that constraining influence ! That zealous lover of Jesus Christ was bold enough to bid men look upon himself and imitate him, inasmuch as, being a counterpart of the Divine Master, they would thereby be imitating the Lord Himself. Therefore let Superiors, with respect to this duty of teaching their subjects "how they ought to walk and to please God," fasten their eyes upon St. Paul and attentively consider him. Arriving at Miletus, he summons the elders of the Church of Ephesus, and addresses to them those farewell words which drew tears from the eyes that were never again, in this world, to look upon his face. Of what do these words tell us ? Of his indefatigable zeal in preaching the word of God. He could say to them, "I have kept back nothing that was profitable to you, but have preached

⁸ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

to you, and taught you publicly, and from house to house. . . . I fear nothing, provided only that I consummate the ministry of the word which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. . . . I have not spared to declare unto you all the course of God. . . . For three years I ceased not, with tears, to admonish every one of you night and day.”⁹ It is to this model that our Holy Father bids all Superiors turn their eyes. What a glory, what a consolation will it be for one who has held this difficult post to be able to use such words at the end of his career, when the time has come for him to appear before Christ, Whose place he has held! If, like that great Master, he himself have first *done* that which he had to teach, and then failed not, with all diligence, to instruct the flock intrusted to him, he will be able to say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”¹⁰

HE MUST KNOW HIS SUBJECTS — Besides being father and teacher of the community which is put under his jurisdiction, a Superior is also a governor, or ruler, of those at the head of whom he is set. But, as St. Benedict takes care to tell him, he is a ruler or governor of *souls*, from which circumstance the manner of his government must differ widely from that of men who hold the reins of a merely civil authority. He cannot govern a community as a magistrate governs a city, nor as a general rules an army, nor as the captain of a vessel rules those who, under his direction, sail the ship. These men have little else to do than to administer a law which all have to obey.

⁹ Acts xx. 20, 24, 27, 31.

¹⁰ 2 Tim. iv. 7.

They have to apply it equitably, evenly, impartially to all, and to see that it is observed in the same way by all without exception. Far more difficult is the task of him who has to rule over *souls*. They belong to the great Master of all. They are intrusted to the care of Superiors by that Master in order to be educated for heaven, to be healed of vices and of defects, to be imbued with habits of virtue. Therefore they need a particular, an individual care, which calls for a different treatment in the case of well-nigh each individual. Consequently, the first duty of him who is appointed to govern them is to make himself most intimately acquainted with them, and with all their special needs. They are his flock, and, if he is worthy the name of "shepherd," he must *know* them.

"I know Mine," says the great Governor of souls, "and Mine know Me." By knowing them, we mean that he must understand their different characters. What a task is this! What penetration does it not require! What an amount of patient, large-hearted observation! unwarped by any narrow, preconceived notions; elastic, expansive, far-reaching, considerate, loving. No matter how small any community may be, there is not in it any one character which is exactly like unto another. One will be quick and intelligent, another dull and slow of comprehension; one mild, another fiery and irascible; one patient, another intolerant of control; one tractable and easily led, another stubborn and obstinate in adhering to his own will. Therefore, if the Superior's aim is intelligently to rule these widely different elements

which constitute his flock or community, and his desire to make them coalesce into a compact body, the various members of which will be in harmonious working order with one another, he must be at the pains to study the nature of their different characters, and on the watch to mark the ever-varying modifications to which these are subject. He must make it his business to observe the natural bent of each ; to ascertain his abilities, mental as well as moral ; to estimate the weight which his shoulders are able to bear ; in one word, to know by heart his whole intellectual and moral build. For a man who has fully grasped all these details will never satisfy himself by applying the Rule, in a wooden sort of way, to all indiscriminately. He will know that the same mode of treatment will not equally well suit all kinds of characters. Their mental powers are of different calibre ; their moral powers will not bear the same strain ; what one will endure without a murmur, another will sink under, utterly crushed, as if beneath a mountain of lead ; and while one will see at a glance the propriety, the reasonableness, and the utility of any law which he is called upon to observe, another will be stone blind to every other consideration, except to the fact that it is a hampering restraint upon his individual liberty, for which there is no reason whatever, except the whim of the Superior, who is gratified by the childish exercise of despotic power. He will know that, just as the same garments will not fit all men alike, so the same government will not adapt itself to all characters alike. He will see that, if even horses cannot be driven all in the same manner—some

needing neither spur nor whip, while others will not stir without a vigorous application both of the one and of the other—with much greater reason is it impossible to govern men by one and the same method. Therefore he will be careful to study the character of those whom it is his duty to lead unto God, and, in accordance with the individualities of that character, so to apply to them the governing power of the law as to direct their steps to the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore every Superior must endeavour to know thoroughly well all who are intrusted to his guiding care; and, knowing them, so to adapt himself and his government to the character and to the intelligence of each, as not only not to suffer any loss in the flock committed to him, but to have cause ever to rejoice in the increase and the well-being of one that is full of virtue. If he do this, he will speedily discover that some are more easily induced by fair speeches to tread in the path of obedience, than by the most stern and peremptory commands; that others, again, need the spur and the whip of a sharp reprehension before they can be corrected of their faults; while, by the gentle warmth of persuasion, others are melted who would be hard and immovable “as ribbed ice” against the brief, sharp word of command, in which those vested with authority but too often convey their orders. He will consequently be careful to imitate the wisdom of the Apostle, who, in dealing with offenders against the law, first reasoned with them, in order to enlighten them about their duty; then, with all charity, entreated them to perform it; and finally had recourse to repre-

hension only when all other measures had failed.¹¹ If he must needs threaten, he will mingle fair words with those which he is obliged to use in order to inspire fear ; he will study to combine the severity of a master with the loving affection of a father. Thus his fatherly kindness will win the affection and the confidence of the mild, the obedient, and the patient ; while his magisterial dignity and firmness will beat down the opposition of the disorderly, the restless, and the stubborn. To act thus is, of course, a matter of considerable difficulty. It needs much patience, much self-repression, much study. One has to use discretion and discernment, to take trouble, to put oneself to inconvenience. It is far easier to mete out the same measure of government to all, to lay the yoke on every neck, no matter whether it fits or does not ; to force all, without exception, to fight in the armour of Saul, and all to bear the same burden. For this kind of policy, men are sometimes highly commended by the undiscerning, and acquire a reputation for being strict disciplinarians. But what is the truth ? They have not the capacity to govern, in the true sense of that word. A drill-sergeant would do that which they do, and would do it with far more efficiency. The fact of the matter is that, being unable to govern, they screen their incompetency behind this species of mechanical military discipline—we might almost call it *despotism*—and instead of endeavouring to learn this “art of arts, the government of souls,” give themselves up wholly to the care of worldly matters, which would be far better and more efficiently managed by other

¹¹ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

hands. Therefore St. Benedict warns all Superiors that they have undertaken the care of *souls*, that they will have to account for them ; and he closes their mouths and prevents them from making excuses by telling them to seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and that then all things else will be given to them.

POWER TO INSPIRE LOVE.—Therefore, to have this intimate knowledge of those whom he has to rule is most necessary for one who has to hold sway over others. Yet the possession of this knowledge, unaccompanied by another very important quality, will leave him practically without influence among those over whom he is appointed to be ruler.

This quality is the power to make himself loved. Men are not led by their reason only : their sentiments and their feelings have far more to do with their actions than they would, perhaps, be ready to acknowledge. Therefore he who is able to captivate these—that is to say, he who is able to win their love—will lead them whithersoever he pleases. Without this power he may be able to convince their intelligences, but he will not succeed in persuading their wills. They will understand and assent, but they will not act. However, let him but make himself master of their love, and the key to their hearts is in his possession, the lever wherewith to move their wills is in his grasp. They will find nothing hard, nothing unjust, nothing beyond the power of their strength, even in that which is in itself arduous. The spring which moves to action has been discovered ; he who is master of that has all the mechanism of human actions under his control.

MEANS TO ACQUIRE THIS POWER.—It is scarcely necessary, therefore, to point out the importance of studying how to get possession of this ; but it may be useful to indicate how it may be most easily done. The most obvious and the most speedy method for winning the love of others is, first, to love them : for love begets love. But besides this, the Superior or governor of a community must study to have those qualities which command the love of others. These are summed up in that brief prayer which David offered to God, when he asked Him to give him “goodness, and discipline, and knowledge.”¹² By the term “goodness,” we do not mean simply the Superior’s personal virtue, which might be of a lustre so bright as even to dazzle the eyes and to compel the admiration of men, and yet not be able to attract, to draw them to him, with the cords of Adam. To our mind it embraces a wider range of qualities, and is in its nature multiform, many-sided. It implies that he upon whom God has bestowed it has received so copious an outpouring from the divine treasure-house, as to resemble, in a certain sense, God Himself, Whose very nature is goodness. He possesses that calm, mental placidity which does not permit itself to be ruffled by every breath which chances to play upon it. He has the meekness which is very slow to take offence. He has the patience to bear with the faults, the imperfections, and the sins of those who are under him. He has the modesty which seeks to hide from men the possession of great talent, the affability which invites them to draw nigh to him,

¹² Ps. cxviii. 66.

the kindness which invariably engenders confidence. In addition to this, he must have that discipline which we take to mean self-control, or ability to repress all outbursts of passion, and to hide the motions of them even when they are actually felt. This self-mastery gives to him that reserve of power, that strength of character which impresses others, and makes them feel that they are in the presence of a master whose will must be obeyed. It is a kind of invisible force, pushing and constraining the wills of those over whom he presides, speaking to them in the glance of his eye, in the tone of his voice, and in the very carriage of his body. It is the iron hand cased in a velvet glove, which to the touch is all softness and delicacy, but in which there slumbers a strength which is irresistible. Besides these qualities of goodness and of discipline, the Superior who wishes to win the love of his subjects must have *knowledge*. By this we do not mean mere book-learning, but that grasp of mind which is able to meet a difficulty ; to use the powers of reason to unravel the tangled skein of conflicting evidence ; to distinguish the right from the wrong, and to point it out to others in a few, clear, forcible words.

It would, perhaps, be more correct to call this knowledge "*scientia*"—that judicial frame of mind which abounds with penetrating, clear, sound common sense, going straight to the kernel of the matter, and plucking it out of the encircling rind of misrepresentation, of exaggeration, and perhaps of downright falsehood, with which most debatable questions are sure to be enveloped. He who is so fortunate as to be

possessed of these three qualities cannot fail to win the love of his subjects. For his self-control and his knowledge will assert their empire over all intelligences, and his goodness will lead captive all hearts. Thus the whole man will be in a submissive frame of mind, and "ready at the hearing of the ear" to carry into effect the slightest indication of his wishes. His intimate knowledge of their abilities, of their weaknesses, of their difficulties, of their passions; his fatherly love of them all individually; and the ever-present memory of the dread judgment to come, which St. Benedict keeps steadily burning like a brilliant lamp before his mind, will enable him to hold the reins of government in a spirit similar to that with which his divine model, Jesus Christ, would hold them. There will be in his rule an absence of all haughtiness and of all domineering spirit. Although the elder among his brethren, he will be as one of the younger; although the leader, he will be as one that serveth. He will obey St. Peter's injunction, and feed his flock without lording it over them; he will follow St. Benedict's advice, and study to be loved by them, rather than to be feared. Thus, by aiming to be a father to his subjects, he will without difficulty be their guide and their ruler also. They, on their side, will gladly follow him; they will yield a prompt and cheerful obedience to all his mandates; they will strive to carry into effect even that which they conceive to be his desire.

CHAPTER III.

OF CALLING THE BRETHREN TO COUNCIL.

IN the preceding chapters St. Benedict has told us what manner of Monks those are for whom he intends to legislate, and has sketched for us, in a few bold strokes, the character of him whom he deems worthy to rule over them. In the present chapter he treats of one of the great helps to a wise and prudent government—that is to say, the admission of those who are governed to a consulting voice in all affairs of any moment which concern the interests and the well-being of the community at large. Whenever anything of this nature occurs, he bids the Abbot take into his confidence those who are under his sway, and seek from them advice as to the best means for conducting himself with that prudent foresight which becomes one who is thought to rule in the person of Christ. Thus, while putting absolute power into his hands, he wisely endeavours to surround it with those safeguards which effectually confine it within due limits; and once again threatens him who has to wield this power with the dread and most rigorous judgment of God, if he should ever dare, by a tyrannical use of it, to turn it into an implement of destruction. In this wise enactment of the Rule we see the germ of representative government; for it is his wish that on certain occasions, when matters of the gravest moment call for the Abbot's attention, the advice of all should be asked; in matters of less importance that only the

elders should be consulted ; while in matters of ordinary occurrence it is his desire that the Abbot should be left to the guidance of that ripe judgment which is to be looked for in one who has been chosen to preside over his brethren. Here, in miniature, we have the kingly power, aided in its task of government by a few of the wisest of its subjects, who may be said to represent the wishes and the aspirations of the great mass of the people.

WEIGHTY MATTERS.—But we may ask, what are those matters which would be considered to be of so great importance as to call for the advice of the *whole* community? There can be no doubt that, first among these, we may reckon the election of an Abbot or head of a community, no matter by what name he may be called. For it is but natural that those who are about to place themselves under the absolute control of any ruler should have a voice in the election of him. As a matter of course, their wishes in this respect must be ascertained by him or by those who, for the time being, hold the chief power in their hands. In our congregation, however, the supreme head is elected only by the members of the general chapter. But in each monastery the Prior is elected, not by the suffrages of all who may at the time chance to be members of it, but only of those who are in holy orders.¹ These matters are not, in the present age, left to the legislation of the founders, but are regulated by the Church's common law, which has brought the various enactments of these holy men

¹ This is not a decisive, but only a consultive, vote. The Definitors are the electors properly so called.

into conformity with her wise and maternal discipline. The reception of novices to probation is another of the grave matters in which all members of a religious community have a voice. Again, when these novices have gone through the year which is prescribed for their trial, the question of their admission to take the vows is referred to the deliberations of those with whom they will have to live. If it should ever happen that any member of a community should so far forget the sanctity of his state and the solemn obligations which he contracted when he gave himself up to God, as to deserve expulsion from the Order; or if he should become so rebellious and so incorrigible as to deserve the penalty of excommunication, all would be called to council, and their respective opinions would be asked as to the advisability of having recourse to these extreme measures. Also, when a Superior wishes to erect any buildings which would entail very considerable expense, or to sell any valuable piece of property belonging to the monastery, or to hire or to let for many years what are called immovable goods: in each of these instances he would be obliged to ask the opinion of all the members of his monastery, for all these are considered to be matters of grave moment.

MATTERS OF LESS MOMENT.—There are other matters which, though unable to take rank in importance with those just mentioned, yet are grave enough to call for the counsel of prudent men. In these cases the Abbot is ordered by St. Benedict to ask the advice of the elders only, and this because “they who do all things by counsel are ruled by wis-

dom,"² and are advised "to do nothing without counsel, in order that they may not afterwards have to repent of their deeds ;"³ and are induced to act in this way because "there is safety where there is much counsel."⁴ Even motives of policy ought to urge him to obey our Holy Father's injunction, if higher motives have not any weight with him. For nothing is so offensive in a ruler as the appearance of looking upon himself as the only wise and sensible man among those over whom he holds sway. This assumption of authority, and this air of regarding himself as Abbot, Prior, Cellarer, of bearing in his breast the whole community, will alienate from him the hearts of his officials, will render them incompetent, and will paralyse the executive of the monastery. Besides, when any of his measures either goes amiss, or turns out a total failure, the whole blame will fall upon him, and he will lose that reputation for sagacity which ought to be one of the distinguishing features in a Superior. It will give occasion to secret satisfaction at his discomfiture, and this is a sorry feeling to engender in the hearts of those who ought not only to rejoice with him in his joy, but to grieve with him in his sorrow.

THE ELDERS.—These lesser matters, upon which the Abbot is advised to consult only the elders, are manifold in their nature, and at the present day are regulated by the canon law of the Church. We will mention these when we have first explained who these elders are, and the manner in which our Holy Father orders the Abbot to seek their advice and the advice

² Prov. xiii. 10.³ Eccclus. xxxii. 24.⁴ Prov. xi. 14.

of the whole community, whenever there is a necessity for so doing.

In St. Benedict's day the elders of the community were all those who were distinguished for prudence and for wisdom, and not merely those who were old in years, "Cani autem sunt sensus hominis;" but who they were, or how many there were who formed this council, it is not easy to determine; nevertheless, if we may judge from the prominent place which in his Rule he gives to the Provost or Prior, to the Cellarer, to the Master of the Novices, and to the Deans, we should not be far wide of the mark if we were to conclude that these, or at least some of these, constituted the council to which, in all matters of grave moment, the Abbot usually applied for advice. But at the present day, as we have before remarked, it is the canon law of the Church which determines who these councillors are to be, and how numerous they are to be. In our congregation they are taken from among those who are called "seniors;" that is to say, those among the community who have finished their course of theological studies, and who have been nine, or at least seven years in the Order. They must consist of a third or a fourth of the community. Of these, some are councillors by right, such as the "Magistri" and the "Prædicatores Generales;"⁵ others by office, such

⁵ "Magister" is a title given in our congregation to one who is remarkable for his learning. He must be a man of mature age and of blameless character; he must have taken either a doctor's or a licentiate's degree in some Catholic University, or at least have taught a full course of theology. The title "Prædicator Generalis" is given to those who are remarkable for their learning, &c.

as the Sub-Prior, the Cellarer, and the Professor of Theology; but these last are of the council only as long as they hold their respective offices. A new Superior when installed in office chooses his own council from among the seniors. If, however, during his term of office, it should chance that there should be a necessity for admitting another person to the number of the council, it is not in his power to *nominate* him to that dignity: he must propose him to the members of his council, who elect him by secret votes, of which more than half are requisite in order to constitute a valid election. When admitted to the council-board, each member is obliged to make a promise of secrecy and of fidelity; the violation of this secrecy is punishable by expulsion from the council.

THE SECRETARY.—One of the councillors is chosen by the votes of the majority of his colleagues to act as secretary. After each meeting his duties are to write in a book specially destined for this purpose the name of the person who called the council, the names of those who were present at it, what was therein proposed, who it was who made the proposition, and what was the conclusion at which the members arrived. These minutes are signed by the Prior and by the Secretary. When once signed, nothing can be expunged except by the President during his quadrennial visitation. If any councillor objects to the determination at which his colleagues have arrived, he can claim to have his protest entered on the council-book, and the Secretary, at his request, is bound to insert it. This book is kept by the Prior, and is shown only to councillors. The frequency with which councils are

held depends almost entirely upon the occurrence of anything which seems to require them. Yet if any member of the council is of opinion that some matter which affects the well-being of the monastery ought to be discussed, the Prior, at his request, is bound to convene a council once in each month, provided that one has not already been held during the month in which the request is made.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE.—At all these meetings the Prior, in pursuance of the directions given by our Holy Father, first lays before the members of his council the matter about which he wishes to learn their views and to ask their advice, but without letting them know what are his own views and sentiments. In the next place, he listens to all that they have to suggest. He then revolves in his mind the counsel which they have given ; and lastly carries into effect that which seems good to himself, unless, indeed, the matter about which he has consulted them is one of those in which he is obliged by law to follow the majority of votes. He must be careful, however, not to come to any decision until he has heard the opinions of all his councillors. It may happen at times that there is good reason for removing some one of these from the dignity which he enjoys as a member of this board. But the Prior cannot do this without, in the first place, having a grave reason for his action ; and in the second place, the votes of more than half the council. Only the President has this power. Even he uses it only at the request of the Prior, and when the fault, for which such a penalty is deemed necessary, has been clearly proved against the delinquent.

WHEN THE SUPERIOR MUST CONSULT.—Now that we are fully acquainted with the constitution of the Superior's board of councillors, and with the method in which their deliberations are conducted, we may next proceed to consider what those cases are in which the Superior is ordered to consult, and to obtain their consent, and what those in which he is bound to follow the majority of their votes.

In the first place, when the *horarium*, or timetable of the monastery, is to be drawn up, the disposition or arrangement of its hours is not fixed before it has been submitted to their notice, and their assent to it has been obtained. Also their advice and consent are sought for concerning the daily routine of duties, those only being excepted which have reference to the choir. When this order has once been well and wisely fixed it cannot be changed without the permission of the President-General. With their consent also the time both for dining and for supping is determined on, together with the measure of drink which is allowed to the brethren. Moreover, in all things that are usually regarded as of grave moment recourse is had to them for their counsel; and when that has been given, for their consent to the execution of that conclusion at which they have arrived. Should any of the Monks desire to quit the congregation, in order to join some other religious body, their assent to such a step must previously be obtained. It is also requisite before any layman can be admitted to reside in the monastery; for the appointment of the Novice-Master; for the admission of novices to persevere in the novitiate—which permission must be asked for every three

months, and after the Master has presented his report on the way in which they have been conducting themselves during that period. Again, they are consulted, and their consent is requisite, whenever it seems desirable, in the case of any particular brother, to shorten the course of studies, and the time which ought to elapse before his elevation to the priesthood ; for prolonging the period of his juniorate ; and for asking the President's leave to send him to the House of Studies. Furthermore, without their consent no one is allowed to take academical degrees ; but to take the degree of Doctor or of Licentiate in Theology, it is necessary to obtain the leave of the President also. Upon their consent depend also the determining of the length of time during which postulant lay-brothers are to be first tried in the secular habit ; the appointment of an official called a " Depositarian," and of a Procurator in England, which office was necessary when the monasteries were in foreign countries ; the imposition of censures upon those who have deserved those penalties ; also one or two other matters which the altered relations between Church and State have in these days rendered obsolete.

WHEN OBLIGED TO FOLLOW THE MAJORITY OF VOTES. — There are some few cases in which the Superior is bound by canon law to follow the view, or the opinion, or the line of action, for which two-thirds of his councillors have voted ; and there is one instance in which the votes of the whole council are requisite before he can proceed to act. The latter is when, for some particular reason, he wishes to put any Monk into a higher rank than that which is due unto

him from his age in the habit. The former cases are : first, to admit any one to receive the monastic habit ; secondly, to admit him to profession after he has passed through the year of probation ; thirdly, to admit lay-brothers either to the habit or to profession ; and lastly, to receive any one to a class of brothers called Oblates—that is to say, persons who are admitted into the community for the purpose of performing the menial work of the monastery, and who, at the end of the year of probation, take a simple vow of obedience to the Superior, in the presence of two witnesses, and give themselves for life to the monastery.

Then, again, there are three cases in which their advice is asked for, indeed, but need not be followed, by the Superior. The first of these is when he has to absent himself for some considerable time from the community. This he must not do without calling his council, and laying this matter before them. The second is when he wishes to nominate any one to the office of Sub-Prior. The third when he wishes to appoint any one to the important post of Cellarer.

MISCELLANEOUS DUTIES.—At the end of the President-General's quadrennial visitation the members of the council are called together by him, and the regulations which he wishes to put in force are read to them. Also the contents of the document in which is set forth the whole *status* of the monastery are laid before them. This is signed in their presence both by the President and by his Secretary. Any suggestions which the President may think proper to make for the well-being of the community are

then made known to them ; each gives his opinion upon the questions submitted to his judgment ; and to this the President listens, without, however, being obliged to follow it. But although he is not obliged to follow any of their opinions, yet he cannot impose his injunctions upon the community "*in virtue of holy obedience*" without the consent of the greater number of the councillors. If it should ever happen that, upon these occasions, the President should be obliged to exercise the painful duty of suspending the Superior from his office, on account of some canonical fault, and that the Sub-Prior, who, in the natural course of things, ought to take up the reins of office, is not a fit person to hold them, it is then the duty of the council, together with the President, to appoint some one to do this, until the Superior is reinstated in the office from which he has been excluded.

During the time of the presidential visitation it is the duty of the council to determine whether it is to last for more than four or five days ; and, in case the President is hindered from fulfilling in person this part of his office, it rests with them to say whether or not a Definitor of the Regimen is to be received as his delegate.

Previously to the profession of a novice it is their duty, together with the Superior, to examine him, after having heard the Novice-Master's report concerning his behaviour during the year of probation. The object of this examination is to test whether he is sufficiently instructed to take upon himself the obligation of the vows.

If it should ever happen that the monastery

should be deprived at the same time both of Prior and of Sub-Prior, they would have to choose some one to rule the community till the election of a new Superior.

To them the Cellarer's books are submitted for examination at the end of each half-year; and it is at the council-board that the Prior nominates those who are to act as confessors to the community.

Among our Benedictine Sisters it is the councilors of the Abbess, or of the Prioress, who appoint a delegate to represent them at the general chapter, whenever their vicar is unable, through some unforeseen circumstance, or through illness, to be present at that assembly.

Such are the duties which fall to the lot of those who, in these modern days, hold the place of the men who, in our Holy Father's time, were called ancients or elders, and were, according to his ordinance, the advisers of the Abbot in the various contingencies which might arise in the course of his government.

MANNER OF GIVING COUNSEL.—In the deliberations in which they take a part, the most ample liberty is accorded to each to express his view upon any question which is submitted to him for consideration. But while giving a wide scope for freedom of opinion, St. Benedict is careful to point out the manner in which that opinion should be expressed. It must be offered with all due subjection and humility. He who is asked to give his counsel must remember that he is a subject, not an equal. Therefore he must show all due deference in his manner, in his words,

and in the tone of voice in which he speaks. He must not so conduct himself as if all wisdom sat enthroned in his bosom. He must not deliver himself in an oracular manner of the conclusion at which he has arrived ; as if, after he has spoken, no other view of the question under debate is admissible. He must not address either his Superior or his own colleagues in a high and clamorous tone of voice. He must not speak until he is asked ; nor must he be so rude as to interrupt others when they are speaking. He will observe all these counsels, if he be careful to obey our Holy Father's injunction, to give his advice "with all subjection and humility." Whenever it happens that his views and those of his Superior are not in accord, he must not presume "stiffly to maintain his point, nor insolently to contend with him." Yet, while forbidding anything so unseemly as this is in one who is a Religious, our good Father does not prohibit the Superior's councillors, nor any of us, from defending our opinions with that moderation and rational self-composure with which sensible men are wont to put forward their views. For by saying that they are neither "stiffly nor insolently" to do this, he insinuates that they may contend with him in a manner which is neither stiff nor insolent. If the Superior will not accept the opinion which the councillor offers to him, the councillor must quietly acquiesce in that which seems best to the Superior, because it is becoming in him who is but a disciple to obey his master, and to suffer him to dispose all things with that prudent forethought, and with that impartial justice, which it is but natural to look for in one who, by his

age and by his position, is generally supposed to be ripe in judgment and sound in all his views.

DEPARTURES FROM RULE.—In concluding this admirable chapter, our Holy Father says: “In all things, therefore, let all follow the Rule as their master, and from it let no one rashly swerve.” From this we might be led to infer that the Rule is made supreme over all. For by the word “*all*,” Superiors as well as subjects are ordered to look upon it as their master, and in all its enactments to yield it a willing obedience. If this is so, ought we not to conclude that all power is withdrawn from Superiors to change it, or to modify it, or to dispense with it? If this conclusion is correct, what are we to think of the many ways in which we, in these days, have departed from it, in that which it enjoins in such matters, for instance, as agricultural labour, perpetual abstinence, the liturgical arrangement of the Divine Office, and several other points which might be mentioned? In answer to these questions, we think that no such conclusion as that which is drawn from the first question can be legitimately deduced. For it must be observed that St. Benedict, while bidding all without exception follow the Rule as their master, and ordering them not to swerve from it in any way whatever, very carefully introduces the phrase, “rashly to swerve from it.” Now, a *rash* swerving from the Rule is in direct opposition to one that is *prudent*, that is to say, to one that is sanctioned by right reason and by lawful authority. It is evident, from several passages in the Rule, that any such departure as this would not be reprobated by him. For whenever a valid reason for

any deviation from Rule presents itself, he tells the Abbot, in as many words, that he must use his own discretion. Thus he allows him to change the order which he himself had drawn up for reciting the Psalms at the Divine Office, if that arrangement did not suit him.⁶ He may increase the measure of their drink and the quantity of their food, whenever he deems that either their labour or the heat of the season calls for the one or for the other.⁷ He may break the monastic fast in order to entertain a guest.⁸ He may add to the amount of the Monk's ordinary clothing, and change its texture according as the weather or the climate requires it.⁹ In a word, he is to consider the infirmities of those who are in need,¹⁰ and not to tie himself down to administer a hard and fast rule, which falls upon the shoulders of all with the indiscriminating weight of a machine. All this clearly indicates that St. Benedict leaves in the hands of the Superior the power to change, to modify, and to dispense with the Rule, whenever the circumstances of times or of persons may require it. Consequently, he does not forbid *any swerving* whatever from the Rule, but only such a swerving or departure as would be rash, unreasonable, and whimsical, for which, in one word, there is no rational cause.

This answer will tell us what we are to think about the many departures from regular ordinances which have been made during the centuries which have elapsed since his day. During that lengthy

⁶ Regul. chap. xviii.

⁷ Chaps. xxxix. and xl.

⁸ Chap. liii.

⁹ Chap. v.

¹⁰ Chap. v.

period the whole state of civil society has, in many particulars, totally changed ; and, in consequence of this change, there have sprung up many needs which did not make themselves felt in those early times. In the infancy of their existence, our forefathers in the Order were the heaven-ordained ministers of God, raised up by Him for the purpose of gathering together the seeds of future life from amid the crumbling elements of a corrupt and decaying civilisation. Carrying these in their bosoms, they fled into the solitude of the mountains ; they preserved, they cherished, they propagated them. They fled from the face of men in order to preserve themselves from the flood of iniquity which was then inundating the world. But in these our days, and in the days of the preceding centuries, the mission of the Monk has been somewhat modified. He has to open wide his storehouse, and to give forth his treasures of learning and of civilising influences, gathered and carefully guarded during the long ages which have passed away. Now that the people are crying for the bread of religious instruction and for the food of intellectual life, the Monk has, in great measure, to quit his solitude ; he has to take with him into the noise, the bustle, and the unrest of modern life, the calm, the peace, and the stability of his cloistral home ; he has to implant them, together with the science of heavenly and of earthly things, in hearts which have been scorched, withered, and blighted by the burning heats of unruly passion. Consequently, he has, in many respects, to adapt himself to the altered condition and to the varying needs of the times. Hence arose the changes

which have been made in many of the enactments of the Rule.

From that which we have said in answer to the first question, it will be evident what our opinion must be concerning the various departures from the ancient Rule which have been made and which we are actually making. When these modifications and changes and dispensations are made by the authority of Superiors, and are sanctioned by the Church, which has in so many instances brought monastic legislation into unison with her common law, they must be regarded as belonging to the Rule; for, ordinarily speaking, they are either declarations of it or additions to it. Hence the Rule at present consists partly of the ordinances of Superiors and partly of the Rule, both together making but one Rule. The only matters in which no divergence from it either ever has been or ever can be permitted are the three vows and the moral law of God.

SUMMARY.—From all that we have said we may gather that, in ordinary occurrences, Superiors are to use their own judgment in the ruling of the monastery which is intrusted to their care. In matters of grave moment they are to ask counsel from the elders. Only in cases of the utmost importance are they to ask the opinions of the whole community. The instances in which Superiors are *obliged* to consult their councillors, as well as those also in which they must *follow* the advice which these give, whether it pleases them or not, are all stated in clear and precise terms, in the particular constitutions of each Order and of each congregation. In proffering the advice which is

asked of them, St. Benedict is careful to enjoin upon councillors humility of manner, the deepest respect, and the utmost consideration for the susceptibilities of those who have to bear the burden and the responsibility of office. Although he makes the Rule supreme, and orders all to obey its injunctions, yet he leaves it in the hands of Superiors, to be by them modified according to the changing circumstances both of times and of persons. Finally, he warns all those who hold the reins of government not to be high-minded and autocratic in the administration of the code which is intrusted to them, but to stand in awe of that dread tribunal before which they will one day have to appear, to give a strict account of all their acts and of all their judgments.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE INSTRUMENTS OF GOOD WORKS.

ST. BENEDICT has already told us in the Prologue of the Rule that his aim in drawing up that system of legislation was to establish a school in which the method of rightly serving God should be taught. He evidently regarded this method as a kind of science which it is necessary to impart by certain precepts, just in the same way in which either theology or philosophy is conveyed to the mind. It is natural, therefore, to expect that after describing the scholars, and pointing out the qualifications to be looked for in

the teacher who is to rule and to instruct them, and also one of the chief means by which the government of this Institute is to be carried on, he should now put before us the sum of those precepts, whereby the science which he undertakes to teach may be most easily acquired. This he does in the present chapter. But because this science is mastered only by great labour on the part of the pupil, he changes the metaphorical language in which he has already spoken of the place in which it is studied as "a school" into the much more appropriate term "workshop;" and calls the precepts by which this science is imparted the tools or instruments, by means of which the servant of God must fashion his soul into the shape of that ideal of perfection which has been left to us for imitation by our Divine Lord. Hence this chapter is generally known as that which treats "of the instruments of good works," to wit, of those precepts by the practice of which all those virtues summed up in the words "evangelical perfection" are made to flourish in the soul.

A DIGEST OF THE GOSPEL.—A glance through these "instruments" or precepts will suffice to show us that they are a complete digest of the whole teaching of the Gospel, consisting of the commands of the Decalogue, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, the virtues which are opposed to the seven deadly sins, and lastly, the four great fundamental truths, the constant meditation upon which acts as a spur to the soul, urging it to put in practice all that is taught in the revelation of God.

In order to give some sort of cohesion to these

oracular sayings, which seem to hang so loosely together, we will form from them a system of religious life, after we have first examined into the question of the source whence our great lawgiver is thought to have drawn them.

THE SOURCE OF THE "INSTRUMENTA."—At one time there was a very widespread belief that St. Benedict had copied these precepts from the letter of Pope St. Clement to St. James, who is styled in the Gospel narrative "the brother of the Lord." In an uncritical age it is easy to understand how readily, and with what unwavering faith, such an opinion would be accepted. But in the year 1431, Cardinal de Cusa, in his work, *De Concordia Catholica*,¹ struck the first blow which staggered the faith of the learned, about the authenticity of the very writings from which our Holy Father is said to have taken these two-and-seventy precepts. After having examined the writings attributed to Clement, Anacletus, and Melchiades, the learned prelate came to the conclusion, from the many anachronisms which he discovered in them, and from the profound silence of antiquity concerning them, that, to say the least of it, if they were not utterly unworthy of credence, they were of a very doubtful character. Thus, in St. Clement's letter, the Saint is made to inform St. James about the death of St. Peter, whereas it is well known that St. James had died several years previously to the great Apostle. The mine of historical criticism, first opened by the Cardinal, was worked with unflagging industry by Bellarmine and by Baronius, by the Bollandists and by the

¹ Lib. iii. cap. 2.

Ballerini, till these and other writings of a similar nature were deposed from the unmerited position which they had once occupied, and relegated to the shelves upon which reposed, amid dust and in dishonour, the apocryphal books and the fables of clever impostors, who had successfully palmed off their lucubrations upon an unsuspecting age, in which the peril of detection was comparatively slight.

But though the document from which the "Instrumenta" are reported to have been taken is undoubtedly spurious, yet it is not quite clear that the portion of it in which they are found is the handiwork of the pseudo-Isidore, who, between the years 829 and 845, is said to have drawn up the "False Decretals." According to Mabillon, the first part of the letter of St. Clement, as far as the phrase, "Sed et nunc jam exponere quæ præcepit, Domino opem favente, incipiam," is very ancient, and was translated from the original Greek by Rufinus. It was praised by the Council of Vaison² in the year 442. The second part, however, which begins with the above-cited words, is apocryphal, and, in the letter which is attributed to St. Clement, was inserted by some impostor who concocted the "False Decretals." Who this person was is not certain. The honour of having been the author of this performance is shared by Benedictus Levita of Mayence, Paschasius Radbert, Otgar, Archbishop of Mayence, and Agobard, Archbishop of Lyons. As the document bears the signature "Isidorus Mercator," or "Peccator," this name may be applied to any one of these. It is in this second

² In the province of Arles.

part that the "Instruments of Good Works," somewhat changed both in phraseology and in order, are found. Hence it is evident that, instead of being copied by our Holy Father from the apocryphal letter of St. Clement, they were in reality stolen from the Rule by the fabricator of the Decretals, and inserted without acknowledgment in the document which is falsely attributed to the saintly Pope and Martyr. If we bear in mind that our great lawgiver was deeply read in the sacred Scriptures, and had made them his meditation by day and by night ; if we take the trouble to examine the pages of the Rule, the very texture of which is woven out of the words of Holy Writ, we shall readily admit that he was quite capable of culling from that inspired volume the maxims of spiritual wisdom which he has embodied in the present chapter.

RELIGIOUS SYSTEM.—Having settled this question, we will now endeavour to throw into some sort of logical sequence the precepts which our Holy Father has left us, so as to frame out of them a religious system, of which they will constitute the very bone and the sinew.

FAITH.—Any one who will carefully read through these two-and-seventy precepts, with which he has furnished his disciple, for the purpose of aiding him successfully to labour at the work of his own personal sanctification, cannot fail to notice that he seems to take it for granted that the great gift of faith is already deeply rooted in his heart. Thus faith is the very foundation of all sanctity, for without it, it is impossible to please God : " He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder of them that

seek Him.”³ Therefore, although he does not in so many words mention faith among the instruments, yet he does speak of one which is an unmistakable sign of its existence in the soul. He bids his disciple “know for certain that God beholds him in every place” (49). As, then, this faith comes by hearing, and as the next best thing which those persons can do, who cannot always enjoy the privilege of hearing the Divine Word, is attentively themselves to read it or to listen to another person reading it, our Holy Father tells his scholar “willingly to hear holy readings” (56). By making an assiduous use of these two instruments, he will acquire a sufficient knowledge of the infinite perfections of God, and particularly of His unbounded mercy and goodness.

HOPE.—The natural effect of such knowledge is to fill the heart with hope in that never-failing fountain; hence we are not surprised to find that the disciple is told to exercise this virtue, by never suffering himself for a single moment to despair of the mercy of God (72).

CHARITY.—From the knowledge of God’s infinite perfections, and from hope in His mercy, there springs love, or divine charity, to which, as being the most essential duty, he gives the foremost place: “First of all, love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (1). Then, to show that this is an energising principle within us, he says: “Daily fulfil by deeds the commands of God” (62).

COMMANDMENTS.—That there may be no mis-

³ Heb. xi. 6.

take about these deeds, he mentions the chief among them which he would have his disciple practise: "Honour all men" (88 and 68). "Obey in all things the commands of the Abbot" (60). "Give not way to murmuring" (39). "Thou shalt not kill" (3). "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (4). "Thou shalt not steal" (5). "Thou shalt not bear false witness" (7). "Thou shalt not detract thy neighbour" (40). "Thou shalt not covet" (6). By observing these precepts, he will "prefer nothing to the love of Christ" (21); "he will put his trust in God" (41); "he will often devoutly pray to Him" (57); "with tears and sighs daily in prayer, he will confess to God all his past evils, and will amend them for the time to come" (58).

MORTIFICATION.—In order to tame his flesh to such an extent as to enable him to keep these commandments, our Holy Father next orders him "To deny himself, in order to follow Christ" (10). "To chastise his body" (11). "Not to seek after delights" (12). "To love fasting" (13).

OPPOSITION TO DEADLY SINS.—This self-denial will make it easy for him to employ those "instruments" by which the deadly sins are warded off from the soul. These instruments are "Not to be proud" (34); nor haughty (67); not given to anger, nor to envy (65); nor to drowsiness (37); nor to sloth (38).

VIRTUES OPPOSED TO THESE VICIES.—The effect of all this upon the soul is an eagerness to practise the virtues which are opposed to these hateful vices. It satisfies this eagerness by using the following instruments: To attribute to God whatever good there is in himself (42). To admit that the evil which he does

is a natural offshoot of his perverse nature (43). This temper of mind induces him to make known to his spiritual father all the evil thoughts of his heart (51). Not to wish to be esteemed holy before he is really holy (61). To repel unchaste thoughts by the image of Christ (50). To refrain from evil and filthy words (52). To repress the desires of the sinful flesh (59). To have a profound love of holy chastity (63). Not to yield to anger (22); nor to hatred (64); nor to revenge (23); nor to contention with others (66); but to be willing to suffer persecution for justice' sake (33). Not to be given to wine (35); nor to overmuch eating (36); nor to overmuch talking (53); nor to vain words, and such words as move to laughter (54). Not to exceed in laughter, especially if it is unrestrained laughter (55). To keep watch over self (48).

LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.—To love God is only half the divine law; the other half is to love one's neighbour. Hence St. Benedict places among "the instruments" of good works those which enable his disciple to accomplish this part of God's will in his regard. Consequently, in the words of Holy Writ, he says to him: "Love your neighbour as yourself (2). If he is your inferior, love him for Christ's sake (69). Do not unto him that which you would not that he should do unto you (9). Forsake not the charity which you are bound to show unto him (26). If he injures you, render not evil for evil (29); be reconciled unto him, and let not the peace which you make with him be a fictitious peace (25). If he hates you, love him (31); if he speaks ill of you, speak well of him (32); if he injures you, bear it patiently

(30); before the close of day be reconciled with those who are at variance with you (71); and, in your prayers to God, forget not those who are hostile to you (70). In your dealings with your neighbour, let there be no deceit in your heart (24); let your mouth speak to him the sentiments of your heart (28); then there will not be any necessity for you to swear unto him that you mean what you say, and thus you will never forswear yourself (27).”

CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY.—This charity towards our neighbour must not be shut up in the heart only; it must be poured out into our deeds also. Hence St. Benedict orders his disciple to relieve the necessities of the poor (14); to clothe the naked (15); to visit the sick (16); to bury the dead (17).

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY:—Not only the body but also the soul, must feel the warmth of the fire of his charity. Hence he must help those who are in tribulation (18), and comfort those who are in sorrow (19). The result of keeping the commandments, of shunning the deadly sins, of practising the virtues opposed to them, and of loving one's neighbour as one loves one's self, will be the spirit of unworldliness. Thus St. Benedict's injunction “to withdraw ourselves from worldly ways” (20) will be effectually accomplished.

MOTIVE POWER.—The motive which incites the Religious to make a constant use of all these instruments of perfection, and thus to fashion himself into an exact counterpart of the divine model Jesus Christ, is that filial fear of God which is kept alive in the heart by a remembrance of the great truths of faith. Hence

our Holy Father orders his disciple always to have death before his eyes (47) ; to fear the day of judgment (44) ; to be in dread of hell-fire (45) ; and to think of the never-ending joys of heaven, so as to be filled with the desire of life everlasting (46).

THE REWARD.—If, during his life, the disciple make a constant use of all these various instruments or tools of the “spiritual art,” so as to merit the approval of his heavenly Master, that good Lord will recompense his labour with a reward so surpassingly great, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man been able to conceive anything that can give an adequate idea of its nature.

CHAPTER V.

OBEDIENCE.

THE virtue which is the subject of this chapter may be said to constitute the very essence of the religious life. For it is not poverty which makes a man a Religious, nor chastity ; nor both these virtues combined. Then only is he worthy to bear this name when he unites both vows in the vow of obedience. It is, therefore, but natural that St. Benedict should dedicate a special chapter to the treatment of it, and should, in various other parts of his Rule, recur to it again and again. On reading it, the first thing that strikes us is the apparent contradiction between that which he says in the seventh chapter and that which he says here, when he tells us that the first degree of humility is “obedience without delay.” In the seventh

chapter he says that it is the "fear of God." This apparent discrepancy is explained by various interpreters in various ways. Some say that the true reading is, "The first degree of obedience is *obedience* without delay;" but the majority of critics maintain that St. Benedict wrote the sentence just as it stands in the text, because humility and obedience are so interwoven the one with the other that neither can be said to have an independent existence. There are some, however, who say that he calls it the *first* degree, not in order, but in excellence and in dignity. Others that he so styles it because *extrinsically* obedience is the first degree of humility, while *intrinsically* the fear of God undoubtedly holds that place. Others, again, hold that St. Benedict meant that obedience is first in *utility*, without any reference whatever to the order of place. There are others who maintain that all that he wished his disciples to understand by these words is that obedience is first, not *absolutely*, but only as one of those virtues which a Religious must *first* learn to practise when he embraces the monastic life.

THE SUM-TOTAL of St. Benedict's teaching on the virtue of obedience may be comprised under three heads: (1) The *motives* for subjecting one's self to the authority of a Superior, which are the fear of hell and the desire of everlasting life. (2) The *manner* in which obedience is to be paid, which is, that the Superior should be obeyed as if he were Christ Himself. (3) The *qualities* of obedience, which are, that it should be prompt, intrepid, manful; not cold, not murmuring, but willing and joyous.

SYSTEM OF OBEDIENCE.—The teaching of St. Benedict on this subject, as we see it in the different chapters of the Rule, may be reduced to a system, if we consider: (1) whom we are to obey; (2) in what things we are to obey; (3) in what manner we are to obey.

WHOM.—(1) The Abbot or Superior, whom St. Benedict wishes to hold the place of Christ in every monastery. He is to be obeyed in all lawful matters, even though he himself should chance to be personally unworthy of esteem. For the wickedness of those who hold power does not deprive them of their authority: "Be submissive, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward."¹ As our Lord teaches, we are in these cases to follow the Superior's doctrine, but not his example: "What they say, do ye; but what they do, do ye not."²

(2) All officials appointed by the Superior; for, inasmuch as they are his representatives, they deserve the same obedience. These, as well as the Abbot or Superior, must always remember that they are vested with authority, not to lord it over their brethren, but to be among them as their servants, as the last and least of the community.

(3) One another. This, however, is an obedience not of precept, but of counsel.

CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF OBEDIENCE.—(1) Reverence. "In honour preventing one another." The seniors or elders are told always to address the juniors as "Brothers;" the juniors are told to call the seniors "Reverend Fathers." If a junior meets a

¹ 1 St. Peter ii. 18.

² St. Matt. xxiii. 3.

senior, he asks a blessing. At the present day this is done by simply uncovering the head and saluting. If he is seated when a senior comes to the place in which he happens to be, he rises to give him place. If he is rebuked by the Superior or by a senior, or if he perceives that they are vexed with him, he falls on his knees, and does not rise till he is told to do so.

(2) Subjection of the judgment. The Religious is cautioned by our Holy Father against obeying with an evil mind or an evil heart. Therefore his duty is to obey with a good mind and with a good heart. By the heart is meant the intellect, or the will, or the soul. Therefore the intellect must submit as well as the will: "He wills to have an Abbot over him, and to walk according to his judgment" (*arbitrio*). This obedience of the intellect is more perfect than that of the will, because it requires more self-effacement. In order to enable ourselves to submit in this way, we must shut our eyes to the *person* who commands; we must not reflect upon nor curiously examine into the *nature* of the things which he orders; we must not judge of his *intentions*.

IN WHAT THINGS WE MUST OBEY. — (1) In all things; but as the Superior holds the place of Jesus Christ, St. Benedict takes it for granted that he will never order anything except that which would meet with the approval of our Divine Lord.

(2) In all things according to Rule. Our obedience is promised according to the Rule of St. Benedict; and, consequently, it is limited to those things which that Rule prescribes.

(3) Hard and impossible things. Those things

are said to be *hard* which can be accomplished only with great labour and effort. Those things are said to be *impossible* which altogether surpass the strength of nature. These are not the *impossibilities* of which St. Benedict speaks in the Rule. For anything may be said to be impossible in one of these four ways : by nature ; *e.g.* it is impossible for a brute beast to reason : by reason of bodily weakness ; *e.g.* it is impossible for a child to carry the burdens of a man : by inexperience or by ignorance ; *e.g.* it is impossible for an uncultured peasant to read Greek : by the perseverance of a constant will, by the fidelity of friendship ; *e.g.* it is impossible to break vows, oaths, the law of God. Only this last kind of impossibility is excluded from our obedience ; the other three kinds may be the objects of it. But when commands which come under any of these three aforementioned heads are imposed upon us, two things are to be considered : (1) the accomplishment of the command ; (2) the disposition promptly to obey. It is this latter which is ordered by our Superiors when they impose these impossibilities upon us. They do not mean us to *execute* them, but only to show our readiness and our willingness to accomplish them. When they impose upon us anything which is altogether beyond our strength, the Rule points out to us that which we must do. It tells us *patiently* and in *due season*, without pride, or resistance, or contradiction, to lay before our Superior the causes of our inability to comply with his orders. If, after this, the Superior insists upon the execution of his order, our Holy Father's advice to us is : " Know that it is for

your good, and trusting in the assistance of God, obey through love for Him.”³

QUALITIES OF OBEDIENCE.—Our obedience ought to be (1) without delay; (2) humble in mind and in heart; (3) patient; (4) unhesitating; (5) without any fear; (6) not cold; (7) cheerful.

LADDER OF OBEDIENCE.—In obedience, as in humility, there are certain degrees, out of which we may construct a ladder, by ascending the various steps of which we shall at last reach the summit or perfection of this essential virtue of religious life. It consists of twelve steps or degrees: (1) To obey the Abbot. (2) To obey the seniors and the brethren. (3) To obey in all things. (4) To do all things in the spirit of obedience. (5) To obey without delay. (6) To deny our self-will in our obedience. (7) To deny our judgment in obedience. (8) To obey with humility. (9) To obey with patience. (10) To obey without either fear or hesitation. (11) Not to obey with coldness. (12) To obey with joy of heart.

DEFECTS OF OBEDIENCE.—(1) To obey orders which we like, but to disobey those which we do not like. (2) To obey imperfectly. (3) To obey, but to do that which we are ordered in the way in which it pleases us to accomplish it. (4) To show unwillingness in our obedience. (5) To obey through fear. (6) To obey only after a lengthy discussion. (7) To obey with murmuring. (8) To obey with sadness. (9) To execute the orders of obedience in a careless, offhand manner.

³ Cap. lxxviii.

CHAPTER VI.

SILENCE.

IT is not without good reason that, in this particular place, St. Benedict introduces the chapter on the great monastic virtue of silence. It stands between the chapter on obedience and the chapter on humility; and it holds this particular position because silence partakes so largely of both these virtues, and is so materially aided by them, that they may be said to be its props and stays. In perusing this part of our Holy Father's legislation upon silence, the first thing that strikes us is the total absence of any provision for what we might call the recreation of social intercourse. There is no mention whatever of any fixed time during which the Monks are allowed to speak together. And yet it is evident from the Rule that the silence enjoined by St. Benedict is not perpetual. For we remark that he says: "Let leave to speak be *seldom* given."¹ "When anything has to be asked for, it should be asked for at suitable times."² One of the retrenchments which he recommends in time of Lent is the repression of *talk and of laughter*.³ He allows those who meet the guests of the monastery to ask for their blessing, and if spoken to by those who happen to be visiting the monastery, to tell them that Monks may not converse with guests. Also, they could ask their Superiors for advice; they could manifest to them the state of their conscience, and receive from them instruction. With these exceptions,

¹ Cap. vi.² Cap. xxxi.³ Cap. xl., ix.

there was no recreation - time properly so called. This was introduced in process of years and by little and little, till at last it became a recognised institution, and was legislated for in various monastic codes and constitutions. It is clear, therefore, that although perpetual silence was not enforced, yet the rare occasions when leave to speak was granted were limited to those which necessity, or mutual edification, or public or private utility required. If, then, they were to be sparing of even good words, with how much greater reason ought they to abstain from all those which are evil! Of these latter, he marks out for perpetual exile from the cloister three kinds: those which are *scurrilous*, those which are *idle*, and those which provoke to *laughter*.

SCURRILOUS WORDS.—We should consider those words to be "*scurrilous*" which are abusive and unbecoming. But in St. Benedict's mind scurrility meant something worse than this or than mere buffoonery. The word is derived from *scurra*, which in its turn comes from the Latin word *sequor*—I follow. Parasites were termed "*Scurræ*," or followers of their rich patrons. They were admitted to their festive boards in order to amuse the guests by their gibes, their jests, and their unlicensed jocularities. Hence any indecent, filthy story came to be called *scurrilous*. Therefore, when St. Benedict forbids scurrility, it is all conversation of this nature as well as all abusive language which he proscribes. It is, of course, needless to remark that any one who is given to such sins of the tongue as are forbidden by the sixth commandment—that is to say, all immoral, obscene, and filthy

language—is not likely to seek a retreat in the cloister. Therefore it seems superfluous to make such an enactment as this. But in St. Benedict's time, when men of all classes and from every rank in life were flocking into the monasteries, it was by no means superfluous. However, at the present day we may take it as a law which proscribes and banishes from our midst all the less objectionable forms of speech, which are, to say the least, very unbecoming in the mouths of those who are consecrated to the service of God.

IDLE WORDS.—It is because of the terrible severity of the dread tribunal of God that our Holy Father forbids his children to indulge in conversations that are even merely idle and not sinful. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it in the day of judgment."⁴ We may define an idle word to be "that which is useless both to the speaker and to the hearer; which does neither good nor evil." To prevent our words from being idle, it is not necessary that we should have some *pious* intention in uttering them. Provided that they are directed to procure some useful purpose, they cannot be called "*idle*." To unbend the mind after severe study, to divert the thoughts of a friend from gnawing cares, to change the current of a conversation which is flowing in a dangerous direction, these and the like intentions are amply sufficient to make our words anything but idle, no matter how frivolous and apparently nonsensical they in themselves may chance to be.

WORDS WHICH PROVOKE TO LAUGHTER. — To

⁴ St. Matt. xii. 36.

proscribe words of this nature at first sight seems to be excessively rigorous. What would become of our social intercourse if all merriment were banished from it? It would be simply unbearable. We cannot, therefore, think that St. Benedict would wish us to be so funereal in our conversation as to eliminate from it all harmless hilarity. In this particular passage his intention seems to be, to prohibit all such laughter as is begotten of *scurrilous* conversation. For in other parts of the Rule he tells us "not to love *much* and *dissolute*, i.e. unrestrained, laughter;"⁵ not to be *easily* moved and *prompt* to laugh. From which it is evident that gentle, moderate, decorous laughter would not meet with his reproof. That which he would never tolerate are the loud, vulgar, unrestrained peals of laughter which betray the empty, unthinking mind.

PLACES in which silence is kept. If the words of the Rule were strictly interpreted, silence would have to be observed in *every* place, since it is ordered to be kept at *all* times. But this would be straining the words to mean that which they were never intended to signify. We have already seen that the silence enjoined by St. Benedict is not perpetual; and from his legislation about the observance of Lent, we discover that during this penitential season he looks for a more stringent observance of the already strict rule respecting silence. It will follow, therefore, that if there be times of stricter silence, there will be also places in which a more rigorous observance of it will be expected. The first of these is:

⁵ Cap. iv. Instrum. 55.

THE REFECTORY.—The words of the Rule are : “The greatest silence shall be kept at table, so that no muttering nor voice shall there be heard, except the voice of the reader.”⁶ The brethren are to make *signs* for those things of which they stand in need. They must neither make remarks upon what is read, nor ask any questions about it. Only the Superior is allowed to say anything about the reading, if he should deem it expedient to remark upon it.

THE DORMITORY.—That the strictest silence was observed in the dormitory may be gathered from the words of the forty-second chapter, in which it is ordained that after Compline *no one* shall be permitted to speak. For the breach of this rule a severe penalty was inflicted ; and the only exceptions to its observance were made if guests arrived during the night-time, and if there supervened any urgent necessity which seemed to require such a dispensation. Special leave was then asked from the Abbot, and, when it was granted, those who were permitted to speak were instructed to do so with great gravity and moderation, so as to make evident by their conduct that they were conscious of the solemnity of this the “*great silence.*” This begins at Compline, and ends usually after Prime on the following morning.

THE ORATORY OR CHAPEL.—It is enacted in the Rule that this shall be a place for prayer and for nothing else. Consequently, as soon as the Divine Office is ended, the Monks are ordered to go forth from the oratory “with exceeding great silence,” after first making a lowly reverence to the Divine Presence

⁶ Cap. xxxvi.

abiding there in the Most Holy Sacrament. This is to insure tranquillity for those who wish to return and apply themselves to prayer.

THE SACRISTY. — Besides those places specially mentioned by the Rule as places in which silence is to be observed, each monastery has certain parts within its own precincts in which Superiors enjoin the observance of strict silence. It is natural that the first of these should be the sacristy, because of its intimate connection with the house of God, and of its close proximity to the oratory or chapel. Unless this rule be observed, the faithful will be scandalised and the sacred ministers disturbed during their functions in the very sanctuary itself. The other places in which silence is usually enjoined are the library, the cloisters, and the common-room. In this respect the customs of various monasteries are not always in accord.

REASONS FOR SILENCE.—The main reason for which St. Benedict so strongly insists upon the discipline of silence is to give his children a mastery over that unquiet evil, the tongue. Look at the use which men ordinarily make of it, and you will cease to wonder why, like all the great ascetical teachers, he is such an enemy of speech. There are some persons who can narrate scarcely any trivial occurrence without either grossly exaggerating it or minimising it, just as it suits their purpose. They make uncharitable insinuations about their neighbour. They boast about themselves and their own performances; they tell idle stories; they detract from their neighbour's good fame, and sometimes go so far as to calumniate him.

In these circumstances all their good and useful thoughts evaporate, their fervour cools, their charity grows cold, and they end by losing the grace of God. "In much speaking thou shalt not escape sin."⁷

THE DIFFICULTY of bringing the tongue under control is another reason why St. Benedict enjoins silence. It is easier to tame the ferocity of the lion and of the tiger, to overcome the timidity of birds, and to charm the venom from the serpent's tooth, than to overcome the malignity of the human tongue. Man can do all this in the case of the animal creation, but, without the grace of God aiding his own fixed purpose, he cannot tame the restless evil which he carries in his own mouth. When he can keep that quiet, he can keep his soul in peace. He can put a bit between his jaws, and can turn himself whithersoever he pleases. The consciousness of this truth made the Wise Man exclaim: "Who will set a guard before my mouth, and a seal upon my lips, that I fall not by them, and that my tongue destroy me not?"⁸ Only God, by His divine power, can do this. Therefore the Psalmist prays: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips."⁹

OUR LORD'S LOVE OF SILENCE. — This was another very powerful motive with the holy men of old, and with the founders of religious Orders, to induce them to have a special predilection for silence. Look at the wondrous silence of the Son of God. He is the wisdom of the Eternal Father, and His words are luminous with the uncreated wisdom of the Deity; yet for thirty years He keeps those lips closely

⁷ Prov. x. 19.

⁸ Eccus. xxii. 33.

⁹ Ps. cxi. 3.

sealed. Only a few words are recorded, the rest is silence. When the time preordained of God had come, He spoke with effect, but yet His words were given out in number, in weight, and in measure. In the presence of Caiaphas He maintained a deep silence as to His doctrine, concerning which that crafty and malignant man presumed to question Him; and, though accusations by false witnesses were poured in against Him, He gave them not even a passing notice. Puzzled and baffled, the hypocritical priest, in a tone of suppressed rage, cried out: "Answerest thou *nothing* to the things which these witness against thee? But Jesus held His peace."¹⁰ When left in the hands of the ministers of the high priest's household, and made the butt of all their malignant hatred and clumsy ridicule, He maintained an unbroken silence, as if He had been a man of stone, and not, on the contrary, keenly alive to every blow, to every insult, to every cutting gibe and unseemly jest. Before the Roman governor He held His peace, though accused on many points, so that Pilate in amazement said to Him: "Dost Thou *hear* how great testimonies they allege against Thee? And He answered him *never a word*. So that the governor wondered exceedingly."¹¹ To all the questions addressed to Him by Herod He did not deign to give even one word of response, so that the adulterous wretch scorned Him as a fool, and sent Him back to Pilate.

OUR LADY'S LOVE OF SILENCE.—For thirty years she had daily and hourly before her eyes Jesus, the

¹⁰ St. Matt. xxvi 12, 63.

¹¹ Ibid. xxvii. 12, 14.

lover of silence. She could not but imitate One in Whom all the love of her heart was centred. How deep, then, is her silence concerning all that our hearts are yearning to know, and of which only she could speak with certainty and authority ! Only four times do the Evangelists record her words: first, her interview with the angel concerning the mystery of the Incarnation ; then the interchange of greetings between herself and her holy cousin St. Elizabeth ; next, the words of loving remonstrance addressed to her Divine Child, when, after three days of sorrowful searching, she found Him in the Temple ; and lastly, when, out of her immense charity, she informed Him at the marriage-feast of the straits to which the young couple were reduced by the failure of the wine. Here, then, we have before us the two who are dearest to our hearts as models of that self-denying virtue of silence, which St. Benedict considers to be so important and necessary for Religious as to write a whole chapter of his Rule to inculcate its practice. Their example should be a very powerful motive to urge upon us the observance of silence, and to make us set a high value upon the careful guardianship of our tongue.

If we be careful to keep these two models of silence before our mind's eye, we shall be sparing of even those words which are in themselves good and conducive to the edification of others. We shall studiously avoid all those which are scurrilous, or idle, or productive of that unrestrained laughter which springs from the narration of that which is unseemly. We shall respect those places in which silence is

enjoined by the Rule, either of St. Benedict or of the particular house or monastery in which we chance to live. We shall be careful to be silent at all the times indicated by Rule and by Superiors. The outcome of the observance of silence will be solitude of heart, in which the Holy Spirit is wont to speak to the soul, and that perfect control of the tongue which will keep us from offending in word. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."¹²

CHAPTER VII.

OF HUMILITY.

MAN is naturally so full of the idea of his lofty destiny that he instinctively aims at being something greater and higher than he actually is. Finding that he is not in reality that which he would like to be, he pretends to be that which he is not, and is, in a certain sense, satisfied if his fellow-men should take him to be that which he is not. This is to enact a lie. It is to aim at lofty things above himself. It is to prefer to *seem* to be rather than actually to be. Now, this is in direct opposition to the will of God. His desire is that we should be content to be in the eyes of our fellow-men that which we are in His eyes, not any better, nor any worse. For a being so full of pride as man is this is an arduous task, calling upon him at every moment for an amount of self-repression and of self-effacement, of which he is naturally incap-

¹² St. James iii. 2.

able. This self-repressive power is called "humility;" by some it is defined to be "truth in the sight of God;" by others, "a virtue which puts a curb upon the mind, and prevents it from immoderately tending to great things above itself."¹ When it is in the heart of any one, it brings its repressive power to bear upon him in four different ways: first, it causes him not to wish that others should believe him to be that which he is not; secondly, it causes him not to prefer any advantages which he may possess, to the advantages which other men possess; thirdly, it makes him acknowledge that these excellences do not spring from himself; fourthly, it makes him attribute them all to God, their true source. Therefore humility is a fundamental virtue. Charity cannot exist without it; for the love of God cannot be in a heart in which pride finds a home, nor can purity exist there, unless humility also is there to give it a foothold. St. Benedict, consequently, has given in a compendious form quite a treatise on this most important virtue; for as it was his purpose to build up in the hearts of his children an edifice of Christian perfection, he was anxious, like every builder, to be quite sure of the foundations upon which that edifice is to rest. His wide experience taught him the necessity for it, because he had seen those who were esteemed to be pillars of the Church and of the monastic life utterly ruined through the absence of this essential virtue. From what we have said it will be seen that humility consists in the repression of the soul's appetite for undue exaltation. That which regulates the degree of repression which is

¹ St. Thom. ii. 11, q. 161.

necessary is self-knowledge. This self-knowledge is the outcome of knowledge of God, compared with Whose infinite perfection we are as nothing. Hence we may say that the "genesis" of humility is knowledge of God ; this knowledge begets self-knowledge, which in its turn applies the curb upon the appetite for undue exaltation, and thus begets humility. This internal disposition of the soul manifests its existence by words, by deeds, and by the general behaviour of our body. Hence we obtain the twelve degrees of humility :

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.—1. Fear of God. 2. Repression of self-will. 3. Submission of the will to Superiors. 4. Obedience in matters which are hard and difficult.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.—5. Confession of faults and of defects. 6. Admission of inefficiency for great things by reason of defects. 7. Preference of others to self, because of these defects in our character.

HUMILITY IN DEEDS.—8. Avoiding all singularity.

IN WORDS.—9. Speaking only in due season.

11.—Not betraying pride in our way of speaking.

OUTWARD BEARING.—12. Lowliness of heart quenches the haughty fire of the eyes. 10. Stifles all unseemly laughter and misplaced joy.

THE LADDER OF HUMILITY.—These are the twelve steps of the ladder of humility, which ladder, as our Holy Father explains, is our life here in the world. Its sides are our soul and our body, in which God has placed these various steps which we must ascend. Now, at first, we should be inclined to think that if humility is a ladder, the topmost round of it ought to be the perfection of this virtue. But as we read on

through the chapter, and pass from degree to degree, or, [as we should say, from step to step, it becomes evident to us that there is not in them a progress from less to greater. The second step is not a development of the first, and higher than it. There is no reason why we should not practise the virtue inculcated by the sixth, the eighth, and the twelfth step before we practise the first. Therefore it seems to us to be clear that by this ladder of humility St. Benedict did not mean to put before us a kind of ascending scale, which starts with that which is imperfect, and ends with that which is perfect. The best way to explain the figure is to consider that the various steps or degrees are so many different manifestations of the virtue of humility, both in outward and in inward acts.

As humility is a virtue, the office of which is to curb our appetite for undue elevation, we may look upon each of these degrees or steps as so many different ways in which it brings its repressive power to bear upon that insatiable craving which is in the heart of man. Self-knowledge, gained by comparison of our nothingness with the infinite perfections of God, engenders reverential fear, which is the root whence humility springs. Fear, however, is of three kinds : first, that which is *filial* ; secondly, that which is *mercenary* ; thirdly, that which is *servile*. We find all three kinds in the first degree of humility. St. Benedict tells us that " those who contemn God by breaking His commandments fall into hell for their sins"—this is *servile* fear of God ; he bids us remember that " everlasting life is prepared for those who fear God"—this is *mercenary* fear ; he bids us always

be mindful of God's commands, and tells us that this mindfulness "casts out fear and makes us obey as children"—this is *filial* fear. The effect of this last kind of fear is to withdraw us from sin ; it keeps our *thoughts* and our *lips* pure ; it guards our *eyes* from looking at vanity, our *hands* from the commission of evil, our *feet* from the ways of sin ; it curbs our self-will and our unruly desires.

THE SECOND DEGREE.—This consists in not being wedded to our own will. We submit our will to God, because we fear and reverence Him. We submit it to His law for the same reason. But in doing this we become aware of the *perversity* of our own will. We see how we struggle against God ; what it costs us to do that which is right ; how easily we introduce self-will even into that which we do for God. Hence we *distrust* self-will, and begin to desire to do God's will. The necessity for this is the example of Christ, and the fact that a penalty follows its non-fulfilment, a reward its faithful accomplishment. In confirmation of this, St. Benedict cites as Scripture the words, "Self-will engendereth punishment, and necessity purchaseth a crown." These words, however, are not to be found in the Bible. Nor does our Holy Father wish us to believe that they are to be found there, in so many words, but only their sense. Interpreters of the Rule are of opinion that this sentence sums up the meaning of several texts. The first part—"Self-will engendereth pain"—they consider to be drawn from the words, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction."² The

² St. Matt. vii. 13.

second part—"necessity purchaseth a crown"—they consider to be taken from the words, "Strait is the way that leadeth to life."³ A second commentator thinks that the sentence is a reference to the text, "That servant who knew the will of his Lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes."⁴ A third would have it that it is the combination of two texts drawn from widely different sources: the first part from Jeremias,⁵ "Those who were fed delicately (*i.e.* who gratified self-will) died in the streets"—a penalty for their pride; the second part, a reminiscence of the Apostle's words: "Every one who striveth for the mastery (by subjecting himself to a sort of *necessity*) refraineth himself from all things," &c.⁶ Dom Hæften, however, thinks that the sentence is nothing more than a well-known proverb which St. Benedict, following the custom of many of the ancient Fathers, calls *Scripture*.

THE THIRD DEGREE.—This follows as a natural consequence from the one which precedes it; for if humility bring the will into subjection to God, it will also bring it into subjection to those who hold His place. The motive which St. Benedict suggests to urge this is "the love of that God" to Whom the will has already subjected itself. This is a strong incentive; but it requires a powerful lever to move the will to this difficult task. It is comparatively easy to obey God, Whom we know to be so wise, so just, so good; but any Superior may be lacking in all those

³ St. Matt. vii. 13.

⁵ Lam. iv. 5.

⁴ St. Luke xii. 47.

⁶ 2 Cor. ix. 25.

qualities which command respect and elicit love. Therefore a very strong constraining power is needed to bring the will into submission to that which he orders. St. Benedict consequently adduces the strongest which he knew ; because in addition to the difficulty of obeying a man as readily as we obey our Lord, he requires us “with *all* obedience” to submit ourselves to him.

BLIND OBEDIENCE.—By inserting that one little clause, our holy lawgiver wishes us *blindly* to obey those whom God has placed over us ; that is to say, he wishes us to subject to our Superiors our intelligence as well as our will. But yet by this you must not imagine that he wishes you to close the eyes of your intellect, and to obey only with your will. To do that is an impossibility, for nothing can be in the will unless it has first been in the intelligence. If any one were to obey in this way, he would be obeying like a machine, and there would be no merit in his act. That which he means by blind obedience is an obedience in which the judgment is subjected to that of the Superior, and subjected in such a way as to judge that what he orders is the best. How, you will ask, is it possible for any one to obey in this manner ? We answer, by making use of a reflex act, by which the subject thus reasons with himself : “Though that which is ordered seems to me to be ill-advised and wrong, yet there may be circumstances with which my Superior is acquainted, and of which I know nothing. These, if understood by me, would quite change the whole aspect of things. Therefore, on that supposition, I set aside my objections, and

obey." Even if the subject knows for certain that the Superior is wrong, and that he himself is right, yet even so, by this reflex act, he can submit his judgment to him, and blindly obey; for he can reason thus with himself: "I am in the hands of Divine Providence. He directs all things for our good. By suffering this mistake to happen, He wishes to humble me, and to try my virtue; therefore under this respect the command of my Superior is best. I submit my judgment and obey." If the worst comes to the worst, and we deem that it is impossible to obey, then we must look upon the command as coming under the head of "those impossibilities" which St. Benedict provides for, by asking us to make an *attempt* to obey, trusting in the never-failing aid of God.

WITH ALL OBEDIENCE.—This means also that the whole man obeys; not intellect and will only, but the body also, together with all its powers. The feet must be prompt and swift to carry us to obedience; the hands ready to execute; the eyes to sparkle with pleasure at the task which is imposed; the face to beam with joy in the performance of it.

Another meaning which may be given to the clause, "with *all* obedience," is that we are *always* to obey. Not for a time only, but for ever. It is easy to obey for a year, or while one is in one's first fervour, or while one is young. The difficulty is to go on with this from year to year till the last day of our mortal career. Yet this is what St. Benedict wishes us to do. Hence the necessity for patience or long-suffering in obedience. To encourage us to persevere in our obedience, he adduces the example of

Jesus Christ, "Who was obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross."

THE FOURTH DEGREE is to obey, notwithstanding all the hard and contrary things that are to be met with in obedience. These arise from the *duties* which we have to perform, from the *persons* with whom we have to live; and from the Superiors who impose commands upon us. First, our duties, such as fasting, abstinence, the observance of monastic discipline, rising for Matins, solitude, obedience to bells, &c. Secondly, persons with whom we live. These at times are rough in character, impetuous in temper, stubborn in argument, prejudiced in their judgments; or, again, there may be some who are weak and irresolute, full of faults, jealous, envious, spiteful, and given to detraction. Thirdly, Superiors, who, though God's representatives, are yet men, and subject to many of the faults and the infirmities incidental to human nature. They may be unsympathetic and gruff; they may be haughty in bearing and imperious in manner. The cares of office may make them irritable and always preoccupied. Not less difficult to endure are those who are timid, irresolute, and scrupulous; who suffer abuses to creep in, and have not any decided line of policy in anything. For all these ills, and the contradictions arising from these three sources, the sovereign remedy is the patient, long-suffering obedience counselled in this fourth degree.

From what we have said thus far, it is evident that the fear of God makes man submit to the commands which the Lord imposes upon him; then to the

orders of those who, in his regard, hold God's place ; and finally, to these orders, even when that which they enforce is hard and contrary to the natural inclination of him upon whom they are imposed. These three ways in which the human will is made to yield under the pressure of the fear of God, together with that fear itself which is their cause, constitute the first four degrees of humility. The opinions which this virtue causes man to have about himself furnish the next three steps in the ladder by which St. Benedict wishes that all his children should ascend to heaven.

THE FIFTH DEGREE.—The light which humility kindles in the mind enables us to see ourselves, to a certain extent at least, as God sees us. The revelation of our real worth which that sight unfolds to our gaze makes us estimate ourselves at our true value. We recognise our many vices, defects, shortcomings, and blush as they stand out clear before us. But though we are painfully conscious of their existence, yet others, often enough have not even a suspicion of our inward deformity. Humility makes us desirous that they should see us, not as they imagine us to be, but such as we know ourselves to be. We lift the veil which hides us from their gaze, and we do this by our words : “ The fifth degree of humility is to manifest to the Abbot by humble confession all the evil thoughts of our heart, and the secret faults committed by us.” The natural man would wish to let the veil hang down over all this moral deformity ; but he in whose heart humility has fixed its root tears it away, and lets himself be seen just as he is.

There is some doubt as to whether St. Benedict is here speaking of sacramental confession, or only of that manifestation of conscience which, in religious Orders, is made to Superiors. Smaragdus, Turrecremata, and others think that sacramental confession is here spoken of; Craesbeeck, Perez, and Alvarez de Paz, that manifestation of conscience as well as confession is intended; Hæften is inclined to take this latter view, but thinks that, in this particular chapter, only manifestation of conscience is meant. This last opinion seems to be the best founded; for in the forty-sixth chapter our Holy Father discriminates between the two when he says: "But if the fault is a secret sin, let him manifest it to the Abbot only or to his *spiritual seniors*, who know how to heal their own wounds, and not to disclose or to publish those of others."

THE SIXTH DEGREE.—He who is thus willing to recognise his defects, and to make them known to others, will readily admit his inability to fill important offices, and will, therefore, be content with all that is meanest and poorest. This is the sixth degree of humility. When the Monk was in the world, it may be that he had everything of the best: a beautiful home, rich furniture, attentive servants, and all the other adjuncts of a comfortable and honourable position in society. He accepted all these as his due, as a matter of course, as something to which he was entitled. If any of them had been withheld, he would have deemed himself aggrieved. He enters Religion; and he enters into himself. He sees himself as he is, at his true value, and accordingly reckons up his

deserts. He has a bare whitewashed cell, a few mean prints, a small bed, a chair, a desk, a few books, and an image of the Crucified. He is clad in coarse garments; he is his own servant, and the servant of others; he washes, and sweeps, and polishes, and digs. This is all that is poorest and meanest. He is content. He knows that he has received that which is his due. In this way he is happy to be suffered to live on for yet a few years, to blot out by penance the handwriting that is against him, to endure a little here, in order to escape that punishment which would have been his, had not God opened his eyes to his real state.

THE SEVENTH DEGREE.—He who recognises his defects and confesses them, who in consequence of these deems himself unfit for important offices, and who is content with that which is poorest and meanest, will manifest this lowly opinion of himself in yet another way—"he will in his very heart believe himself to be most abject, and inferior to all." This is the seventh degree of humility. At first sight this seems to be impossible, for a good man cannot but be conscious of his own integrity. He does not lie; he does not wrong his neighbour; he leads a moral life; he strives to the utmost of his ability to serve and to love God. At the same time he is not blind. He looks around him and he sees all kinds of men: one is deceitful; another has not the Spirit of God in him; the venom of asps is under the lips of another; in another, faith is dead; from another, every particle of morality has departed. How, then, can he with truth believe that he is the most abject

and inferior to all? Yet this is what St. Paul, as well as St. Benedict, requires him to do: "In humility, let each esteem others better than himself."⁷ Let us, therefore, try to see how this can be done. A man's character may be viewed from many different stand-points, and it is from these that he may be seen in such a light as to appear to us to be better than we are. To all who look at him in a superficial sort of way there may not appear to be in him anything lovable. Yet are we not quite justified in thinking that there may be some good quality hidden away in his heart, and that we do not possess that very quality which he has? Therefore, in that respect, each of us can say that he is inferior to that neighbour, who, in so many other ways, appears to be unworthy of esteem. But if it be impossible to discover in him any redeeming quality, we shall be able, nevertheless, to put ourselves beneath him by considering that if he had received all the graces which God has bestowed upon us, he would have made a better use of them and have attained a higher degree of perfection than we shall ever be able to attain. Besides, we can always say to ourselves, "If that man is not now actually my superior in virtue, he may at some future time far surpass me, and win for himself a more glorious crown in heaven." Again, if we examine into that sanctity for which we deem ourselves to be his superiors, can we not humble ourselves to the very dust when we see it marred by so many and so glaring imperfections? Hence it is that no matter how far advanced in holiness any one may actually be, he may put himself

⁷ Phil. ii. 3.

under the feet of all, and deem himself to be the worst of sinners; for, considering all these circumstances which we have put before you, he will not magnify himself for that which is good and virtuous in himself, but will say with St. Paul: "By the grace of God, I am what I am."

THE EIGHTH DEGREE.—We are now brought by this degree to consider in what way humility manifests itself in actions. In the first place, it prevents one who is filled with it from being in any way *singular* in that which he does. In the words of St. Benedict: "It causes the Monk to do nothing but that which the common rule of the monastery or the example of his seniors teacheth and exhorteth him to do." To depart from the common rule, or to comply with it in a way which is not sanctioned by the example of the seniors, is, therefore, to be singular. To avoid this, two things are required: first, the observance of the common rule in the common way; secondly, the omission of nothing which is prescribed, and among those things which are prescribed, the preference of those which are common to the whole community rather than of those which are peculiar either to self or to a limited few. By *common rule* we understand that which affects each member of the monastic family. This prescribes *common charity*, and sets its face against particular friendships, particular company, and conversation from which others are excluded. The reason for this prohibition is that any other line of conduct shows a degree of self-will and of self-seeking which is indicative of pride. It gives rise to scandal, discontent, jealousy, and un-

charitableness. Consequently, although in themselves these friendships, conversations, and the rest, may be without a shadow of sin on our part, yet we must not use our liberty when that use of it would be detrimental to our neighbour. Common rule prescribes also *common substance*. By this is meant that clothing, food, place of abode, furniture, and the rest, which are common to the brotherhood. A true Religious will studiously avoid singularity in each and in all these particulars. He will not desire to have a habit of finer stuff, nor of a different shape from that which is worn by the rest of the community; he will be content with the same food, unless ill-health require him to ask for more succulent fare; he will not quarrel about the position of his cell, nor complain of its scanty furniture. To be like his brethren in all these respects will be the height of his ambition; and if he find that less is meted out to him than to the others, he will rejoice that an opportunity is afforded him of feeling the pressure of poverty. Besides common rule and common substance, this degree of humility prescribes *common obedience* also. By this is meant that obedience is given to *all* Superiors and to *all* rules alike. Human nature prompts men sometimes to yield a more ready and more willing obedience to one Superior than to another; to affect the fulfilment of a certain class of duties more than of certain others; to escape, if possible, coming under the jurisdiction of one person rather than of another; and to shirk all unpalatable employments and offices. To do this is to practise a *particular*, and not a *common*, obedience. A more subtle and self-deceiving fault than this is to

do *more* than the rule requires ; to rise, for instance, half an hour before the rest ; to bow lower in the choir ; to spend a longer time in manual labour or in mental prayer ; to keep silence when leave is given to speak, &c. The remedy which St. Benedict suggests is to imitate the elders of the monastery, who by long exercise of all the virtues of the religious life have learnt to keep the golden mean between indiscreet fervour and dangerous laxity of observance.

THE NINTH DEGREE.—Humility of heart shows itself in the command which it gives the Religious over his tongue. Hence St. Benedict assigns to this the ninth step in the ladder of humility. It enables the Monk to refrain from much speaking, to be silent till he is questioned, and not to be moved with the desire to lead and to shine in conversation. Also, it teaches him never to be guilty of the vulgarity and the rudeness of breaking in on another person's discourse. Our Holy Father points out two means by which we may acquire this degree of humility. The first is to bridle the tongue, and prevent it from speaking too much ; the second is to wait till a question is put to us. It is the disciple's place to listen, the master's to speak and to teach.

THE ELEVENTH DEGREE.—There is a logical connection between the ninth and the eleventh degree of humility. In order, therefore, to bring them into close proximity with each other, St. Thomas departs from the order observed by St. Benedict, and passes from the ninth to the eleventh. The ninth treats of bridling the tongue ; the eleventh points out the means which will effectively secure the thralldom of that

unquiet member to the power of the enlightened will. These are, to speak gently and without laughter; humbly and with gravity; in few words, with discretion, and not in a loud tone of voice. All these conditions will be found in one who has learnt to be meek and humble of heart. He will speak with gentleness, for "from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." He will deliver himself of that which he has to say, without laughter and without arrogance. His words will be grave, because they will be well weighed before they pass his lips, and he will part with them only as men part with their gold and their silver. He remembers and acts upon the sage counsel of Ecclesiastes: "Speak not anything rashly, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter a word before God. For God is in heaven, and thou art upon earth. Therefore let thy words be few."⁸ Moreover, to the best of his ability he endeavoureth to imitate in this respect the conduct of the divine model: "He did not cry out, neither did any one hear His voice in the streets."⁹

THE TENTH DEGREE.—The virtue of humility, burning like a powerful light in the sanctuary of the heart, causes its luminous splendour to shine out through the bodies of those who have been careful to enshrine it within their bosoms. The first way in which it does this is to repress that promptitude to laugh which is so natural to man. We have already spoken of laughter, when treating of the "Instruments of Good Works," one of which is "not to speak words which provoke to laughter;" another, "not to love

⁸ Chap. v. 1.

⁹ Isaias xlii. 2.

much nor excessive laughter," for "the fool exalteth his voice in laughter." From these words it is evident that St. Benedict does not wholly exclude laughter from the monastery, but only frequent and immoderate laughter. To keep it within due bounds is the object of this tenth degree. To do this is a mark or sign of humility. For humility is modest, and one of the effects of modesty is the repression of laughter. Yet modesty is not morose, it does not frown down *all* laughter, but banishes only that which is immoderate. It cannot endure the loud, unrestrained, offensive roar, which peals from the open throat of an underbred, unmannerly man; nor can it tolerate that ill-timed, misplaced merriment, which is as incongruous as joyous music amid the lamentations which are sung over the dead. Therefore humility places a curb upon the risible faculties, and suffers them to enjoy only a restricted liberty, at due times and in due measure. To laugh in this way is commendable and decorous. For our various faculties were given to us by God to be used with that moderation which right reason and the divine law sanction. We are not always to laugh, nor always to abstain from laughter. There is a time and a place for each of these. Our own good sense will point out to us both the one and the other. When the time for laughter, and the place for indulging in it, present themselves, humility will gently restrain us, and make us temperate in our use of that in which it would ill become those persons to indulge without restraint, who profess to be followers of Him Who was oftener seen to weep than to laugh.

THE TWELFTH DEGREE.—The second way in which humility manifests its presence in the outward behaviour of the body is by the restraint which it puts upon all its motions, and particularly by the guard which it sets over the eyes. St. Benedict tells us that it causes him who is animated by it to imagine himself at every moment as being about to be ushered into the presence of the great Judge, to give an account of his stewardship. It becomes, in a certain sense, his soul, his animating principle; and just as we are able to judge of the character of the soul which informs the body, by the impress of itself which it stamps upon the man's bodily presence, so are we able to judge of the humility which dwells in a man's heart, by the outward behaviour of the body. As we pass men in the streets, we can see the soul, in a certain degree, which looks out through their eyes, and mirrors itself in their faces. Upon one, we see the impress of the soul which has passed through the deluge of sorrow. Upon another, we see all the marks of a sour and sullen disposition. Poverty has pinched and stamped another with all its rough, hard lines. As the self-sufficient, vain, empty-headed youth meets us, we see the self-complacency of his soul in the smirk with which he courts our admiration. Lewdness flashes out upon us through the saucy stare of that other young man's lascivious eyes. The soul within has stamped itself upon the outward man. In like manner, when the soul is filled with humility, it will imprint the outward characteristics of humility upon a man's bearing. His head will be bent; his eyes will be downcast; his footstep slow;

his voice soft and low. His memory is full of the thought that he has offended God. He is in daily and in hourly expectation of His judgment. He verifies in his own person those words of the Wise Man: "A man is known by his look, and a wise man when thou meetest him is known by his countenance. The attire of the body, and the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of a man show what he is."¹⁰ Thus the outward manifestations of humility are seen in the repressing of all haughtiness in look and in bearing, and in the checking of all unseemly joy, which usually betrays itself by unrestrained laughter. He who shall persevere day by day in striving to ascend these various steps or degrees, till he have at last succeeded in firmly planting his feet upon the topmost round, will presently come to that love of God which is perfect, from which all fear has been purged away. He will then observe every jot and tittle of God's law, not now through the dread of punishment, but through the filial love of an obedient and affectionate child. He will walk in the way of God's commandments, as it were, naturally and without any painful efforts. The fear of hell will now no longer be the chief support of his tottering steps, but the love of God, the charm of virtue, and the good habits acquired by laborious self-repression. Such will be the outcome of the Holy Spirit's work in the heart of him who has been cleansed by God from his defects and sins.

¹⁰ Cap. xix. 26.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NIGHT OFFICE.

THE liturgical portion of the Rule begins with this chapter and ends with the twentieth, inclusively. In these thirteen chapters St. Benedict gives instructions concerning the manner in which the Divine Office is to be said. The first four regulate the Night Office, the number of Psalms which are to be recited during the course of it, the manner in which it is to be said during the summer months, and on Sundays. The next two deal with the celebration of Lauds on Sundays and on weekdays. The following chapter is devoted to the arrangement of Matins on Saints' days. Then there comes a chapter which points out at what times, and in what parts of the Office, "Alleluia" has to be said. The three chapters which succeed legislate for the manner in which the day-hours are to be celebrated, fix the number of Psalms which are to be recited during each, and point out in what order these Psalms are to be said on each succeeding day. The last two chapters of this liturgical group deal with the discipline to be observed in psalmody, and with the reverence which must be shown during the service of the Divine Office.

DIVISION OF THE YEAR.—Instead of dividing the year into four equal parts, as we do at the present day, St. Benedict divided it into two, that is to say, winter and summer. Winter extended from the 1st

of November—or from the Sunday which was nearest the 1st—until the feast of Easter; summer began with that feast, and ended on the 1st of November.

“SOUND CALCULATION.”—Some interpreters explain the words *juxta considerationem rationis* to mean—taking into account the infirmities of different people. But we think, with Perez, that the rendering of this phrase which is given in the text is more in accordance with the whole tenor of the chapter. For as our Holy Father is determining the hour at which the Monks are to rise, and as the nights are of unequal length at different seasons of the year, it is but rational to expect that the “eighth hour” must needs be determined by sound or rational calculation. For at the solstice, that is to say, on the 21st December, it would be later than at the equinox, that is to say, on the 21st March.

EASTER.—In the early ages of Christianity there were two modes of celebrating the great solemnity of Easter. The Roman Church and the vast majority of the faithful, following the practice of St. Peter and of St. Paul, kept the festival on the first Sunday which followed the fourteenth day of the moon of the vernal equinox. In Asia, however, the Christians, appealing to the authority and the practice of the Beloved Disciple, observed the feast on the same day upon which it was celebrated by the Jews, that is to say, on the fourteenth day of the moon of the vernal equinox, no matter whether that day fell on the Sunday or did not. Hence they were called “Quartodecimans.” When St. Polycarp came to Rome about A.D. 160, he discussed the matter with Pope

Anicetus, but no agreement was arrived at, and each party was left to follow its own custom. In the year 190 the question was again opened between Pope Victor and Polycrates of Ephesus ; and, had it not been for the intervention of St. Irenæus, the Asiatic party would have been excommunicated by the Holy See. The matter was finally settled in the year 325, at the Council of Nicæa, which, besides confirming the practice of the Roman Church, drew up the method of computation by which the feast of Easter was in future to be determined. St. Benedict followed the Roman method of computing and of keeping Easter.

“THE EIGHTH HOUR.”—In order to understand what St. Benedict means by the *eighth* hour of the night, we must remember that he divided the day and the night into twelve hours. The day consisted of twelve hours, and the night consisted of twelve hours. Only twice in the year were these hours of equal length, that is to say, at the spring and the autumnal equinox. In winter, the hours of the night were much longer than those of the day ; and in summer, the hours of the day were much longer than those of the night. Hence, in winter, the eighth hour of the night would be about two o'clock ; in summer, the eighth hour would not be much past midnight. It is the opinion of the commentators that in spring and in autumn the brethren were awakened at the middle of the eighth hour, and that the last signal for Matins was given when that eighth hour was complete ; that is to say, they were awakened at half-past one, and went to the church at two, which is then the eighth hour ; but in December, as the nights are then longer, they

would be awakened at half-past two, and would begin Matins at three, which then would be the eighth hour of the night ; for in December a night hour would be equal to an hour and a half of the day. Consequently, the hour for rising in summer-time would be much earlier than in winter ; but, nevertheless, it was the eighth hour of the night, for the hours are then shorter.

STUDY.—*Meditatio* and *meditari* in the Latinity of St. Benedict's day did not mean that mental prayer to which the word " meditation " is now almost exclusively applied, but had a wider significance, and was used to indicate study, learning by heart, recitation, speaking. By assigning to study the time which intervened between the end of the Matin service and the beginning of Lauds, St. Benedict gave leisure to those who had but recently come to religious life to learn to read and to write ; to commit to memory the Psalter, which in the choir they had to recite by heart ; to prepare the lessons which had to be read in the Divine Office ; to study the Holy Scripture, the Fathers, and to give themselves up to other pursuits of a like character. It is evident from the Rule that there was no fixed time for the exercise of meditation or mental prayer, as the whole life of a Monk was deemed to be given up to communion with God. After the completion of the Divine Office, some short time was devoted to this purpose. Then the signal was given for all to leave the oratory, and after that, those who pleased might return to pray.

MATINS.—The Latin word used for this by St. Benedict is *vigiliae* or the " night watches ;" Matins

were so called because they were celebrated during the night-hours.

LAUDS.—The Latin word for this canonical hour, which is now usually joined with Matins, and is considered with them to constitute one hour, is *matutini*, because Lauds are usually said in the early morning at break of day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NUMBER OF PSALMS TO BE SAID AT THE NIGHT OFFICE.

DIVINE OFFICE.—St. Benedict was the first to introduce into the Office the verse, “O God, incline unto mine aid.” This opening of the service of praise was adopted by St. Gregory, and by his authority was extended to the whole Church. Nothing is said by our Holy Father about the “Gloria Patri” and the “Alleluia,” which at the present day are said after the “Deus in adjutorium ;” nor about the “Laus Tibi Domine Rex æternæ gloriæ,” which at certain seasons of the year takes the place of the “Alleluia.” In his time it is likely that these were not part of the opening verses of the Office. After the “Deus in adjutorium,” he orders that the verse, “O Lord, Thou wilt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise,” be three times repeated, to honour, no doubt, the most Holy Trinity, and to remind us of the ardent zeal with which we should give our whole heart to the praise and the worship of God. Then follows the

third Psalm, which was probably introduced into this part of the Office because of the verse : " I have slept and have taken my rest ; and I have risen up because the Lord hath protected me."

GLORIA PATRI.—At the end of the third Psalm the " Gloria Patri " is ordered to be said ; and in chapters xiii. and xvii. directions are given for saying it at the termination of every Psalm during the Divine Office. It is generally believed that this verse was made by the Apostles, or by those who immediately succeeded them. The Fathers of the Nicene Council,¹ in order to counteract the impiety of the Arians, who denied the divinity and the eternity of the Son of God, added the words : " As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." St. Benedict puts it into the mouths of his children, as a preservative against that detestable heresy, which was still rife even in his day. It will be noticed that whenever he orders a long Psalm to be divided, a " Gloria Patri " is added at the end of each division. But whenever two short Psalms are joined together, only one " Gloria Patri " is added at the end of the Psalms thus united.

THE INVITATORY. — The ninety-third Psalm, which follows immediately after the third, is called the *Invitatory*, because it invites or calls us to praise and to worship God. This was always said with an antiphon, and on great solemnities was sung also with an antiphon. The manner in which this is either said or sung is as follows. The Antiphoner or Cantor first either says or sings the whole antiphon.

¹ A.D. 325.

This is then taken up by the choir. When the choir has either said or sung the whole antiphon, the Antiphoner says the first verse of the Psalm, after which the whole antiphon is repeated. After the second verse, only half the antiphon is said ; after the third, the whole antiphon ; and so on alternately till the end of the Psalm.

ANTIPHON.—This word is composed of two Greek words, *αντι*, against, and *φωνη*, voice, as if to signify voice against voice, or voice echoing voice. Therefore an antiphon is some verse or text which one choir takes up, and the other choir repeats. Or it is a verse or text which one choir repeats in answer to the verse of the Psalm which is either said or sung by the opposite choir. Whenever St. Benedict in his Rule says that the Psalms are to be sung or to be said with antiphons, it is in this way that they were recited. Either the Cantors said one verse of the Psalm, which the rest of the choir repeated after them, or they said the verses, after each of which the choir repeated the antiphon, much in the same way in which we now say the “Invitatory.” The hundred and thirty-fifth Psalm will give any one who wishes to examine it a very good idea of what is meant by saying the Psalms with antiphons. If we take the words, “For His mercy endureth for ever,” as the Antiphon, we shall see that while one choir said, “Praise ye the Lord, for He is good,” the other replied all through the Psalm, “for His mercy endureth for ever.” The words of St. Benedict, when directing the Invitatory to be said in this “intercalated” manner, may be taken to signify either that the Invitatory was to

be *said* with an antiphon, and if the antiphon was omitted, was to be *sung*; or that the Invitatory was to be *sung* whether the antiphon was said with it or not.

THE HYMN.—Our Holy Father in this passage calls the hymn "*Ambrosianum*," either because most of the hymns used by him in the Divine Office were composed by St. Ambrose, or because they were introduced into the service of the Church in the time of that illustrious Bishop. In our Breviaries at the present day there are many hymns which were composed by other authors; these also would, no doubt, be called by St. Benedict "*Ambrosiani*." It may be of interest to some to know which of the hymns at present in use among us belong to St. Ambrose, and which are the productions of other writers. For this purpose we will give after the name of each author the hymns which are attributed to him.

ST. AMBROSE.—*Æterne rerum Conditor*—Sunday at Lauds. *Splendor paternæ gloriæ*—Monday at Lauds. *Æterne Christi munera*—feast of Apostles and of Martyrs at Matins. *Somno refecto artubus*—Monday at Matins. *Consors paterni luminis*—Tuesday at Matins. *O Lux beata Trinitas*—Saturday at Vespers. The following are said to have been written by St. Ambrose: *Jam lucis orto sidere*—at Prime. *Nunc Sancte nobis Spiritus*—at Tierce. *Rector potens verax Deus*—at Sext. *Rerum Deus tenax vigor*—at None. *Conditor Alme siderum*—Vespers in Advent.² *Audi benigne Conditor*—Vespers in Lent. *Vexilla Regis*—

² In the days of St. Ambrose, the time of Advent was not observed by the Church.

Passiontide. To St. Ambrose also are attributed the hymns which we say on ferial or week days at Matins, Lauds, and Vespers.

ST. GREGORY.—*Primo dierum omnium*—Sunday at Matins in winter. *Nocte surgentes*—Sunday at Matins in summer. *Ecce jam noctis tenuatur umbra*—Sunday at Lauds in summer. *Lucis Creator optime*—Sunday at Vespers. *Audi benigne Conditor*—Sundays in Lent at Vespers.

PRUDENTIUS.—This writer, who was born in Spain A.D. 348, was almost a contemporary of St. Benedict's. The following hymns were written by him: *Alis diei nuntius*—Tuesday at Lauds. *Nox et tenebræ et nubila*—Wednesday at Lauds. *Lux ecce surgit aurea*—Thursday at Lauds. *O Sola magnarum urbium*—the Epiphany at Lauds. *Quicumque Christum quæritis*—the Transfiguration. *Audit tyrannus anxius* and *Salvete flores martyrum*—Holy Innocents.

SEDULIUS—A poet who flourished in the fifth century. Only two hymns written by him are used in the Benedictine Breviary: *A solis ortus cardine*—Lauds of Christmas Day; *Hostis Herodes impie*—Epiphany at Vespers.

VENANTIUS FORTUNATUS was Bishop of Poitiers, and died A.D. 600. He composed the following hymns which are used by us: *Pange lingua gloriosi, prælium certaminis*—Passion Sunday at Matins; *Lustris sex qui jam peractis*—Passion Sunday at Lauds. He is the reputed author of *Vexilla Regis*.

PETER THE DEACON composed the hymn, *Ut queant laxis*, which is sung on the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. The first syllable of each line in the

first strophe of this hymn gives the name to the notes of the gamut :

“ *Ut queant laxis,
Resonare fibris,
Mira gestorum,
Famuli tuorum,
Solve polluti,
Labbii reatum,
Sancte Joannes.*”

ELPIS, the wife of the Senator Boëtius, composed the two hymns, *Aurea luce et decore roseo* and *Jam bone pastor Petre*, which are sung on the feast of SS. Peter and Paul.

PETER THE VENERABLE, Abbot of Clugny : *Inter æternas superum coronas*—feast of St. Benedict at Lauds. *Jesu corona celsior*—author unknown. *Veni Creator Spiritus*—Charlemagne ; also Gregory the Great.

BODY OF THE DIVINE OFFICE. After the hymn there followed six Psalms, which were said with antiphons. These antiphons were said either between every verse of the Psalms, or at fixed intervals after several verses.

THE VERSE OR VERSICLE is a short prayer at the end of the psalmody, an uplifting of the heart, a sort of ejaculation ; it is not necessarily a prayer, in the sense of being a petition, but sometimes is a short act of praise or of blessing.

THE BLESSING.—In the Office such as we have it at the present day, the Abbot, or whosoever presides in the choir, says the “Pater noster” immediately after the versicle, and then gives what is called the absolution or short prayer. After this the Lector

says: "Jube Domne benedicere," and then the Abbot gives the blessing. This has been the custom for many centuries. But in St. Benedict's day, and afterwards, the "Pater noster" was not said, and only one blessing was given for all the lessons. At the present time a blessing is given before each of them.

ALL BEING SEATED.—From these words, and from others which are to be found in the sixtieth and in the sixty-third chapter, it is evident that the Monks *stood* during the recitation of the Psalms, and sat only at the lessons. But in this respect the discipline of various monasteries was not uniform. The Psalms, owing to the scarcity of books, were usually recited by heart, and only the lessons were read from the book which lay upon the *analogium* or reading-desk. These lessons were not read, as at the present day, by one person; but for each of them there was a different lector, the brethren taking their turns in this duty.

RESPONSORY.—This derives its name from *respondeo*, I answer. It follows immediately after the lesson, and *answers*, by the sentiments which it expresses, that which has just been read. This close connection between the lesson and the responsory is to be noticed now only in the responsories which are read on the Sundays of Advent and of Lent. In the modern Breviary the sentiments to which they give utterance refer mainly to the feast which is celebrated, and not to the lesson which precedes. To the last responsory a "Gloria Patri" is added, previously to which all arise, and then profoundly bow, in order to testify their reverence for the mystery of the most Holy Trinity. The expositions on sacred Scripture which

were read during the Divine Office, St. Benedict required to be taken from the writings of those Fathers who were most *famous, orthodox, and Catholic*. Those who in his day were considered to fulfil these conditions were St. Leo, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and Origen. As the names of these writers were, as often as not, never prefixed to the "Extracts" which were thus made for the use of the choir, it came to pass that in the process of time the Monks did not know whose were the writings which were read to them. At the command of Charlemagne, Alcuin collected together these Homilies, and assigned them to their real authors, dividing them into two parts, one of which was used for the summer and the other for the winter Office. In the second Nocturn there were six Psalms. The "Alleluia" of which our Holy Father speaks was very probably said as a sort of antiphon at the beginning of the first Psalm and at the end of the sixth. After these came a short lesson from the Apostle, which was said by heart, and the Matin service was then brought to a close by the supplication of the Litany, *i.e.* by the "Kyrie eleison."

It is evident from the last paragraph of this chapter that the two Nocturns of which St. Benedict speaks were not divided, but were said one immediately after the other. But both before St. Benedict's time and after it, there were monasteries in which they were separated the one from the other. This, however, was not the custom generally in use.

CHAPTER X.

CELEBRATION OF NIGHT OFFICE IN SUMMER.

IN summer the lessons were omitted, in order that Lauds might begin at break of day ; for if these lessons had been read, it would have been broad daylight before the Matin Office was finished. The number of Psalms, however, remained the same. "Twelve" seems to have been a sacred number among the early Religious ; for we find that in Africa and throughout the whole Western Church, as well as in Egypt and all through the East, this was the number of Psalms ordered to be either said or chanted at the night Office. In all likelihood, this number was fixed in consequence of the vision vouchsafed to a community of Egyptian Monks. While they were engaged in the "work of God," an angel appeared in the midst of them, and after reciting twelve Psalms, vanished from their sight. St. Pachomius, who at that time ruled this community, thereupon ordained that this number should be retained both in the day and in the night Office.

We think it very likely, from what is said in the ninth chapter and in the eleventh chapter, that the Office was partly recited and partly sung by the Monks over whom our Holy Father ruled. For the first three centuries after the Apostolic age, the Psalms were probably said in a monotone. But about the middle of the third century, Harmonius, the son of Bardesanes of Edessa in Syria, began to set his heretical dogmas to music, and thus rapidly spread

them among the people. To meet this new method of propagating error, St. Ephrem composed hymns, and had them set to music. In these metrical and musical compositions he put forth the true Catholic doctrine, and very soon had the satisfaction of seeing them taken up by the people. In this way falsehood was vanquished by the very weapons which it had devised for fighting its way into the hearts of the faithful. From that date began the practice of chanting the Psalms; and there can be little doubt that St. Benedict, who knew what a salutary power there is in music for stilling the tempest of the passions, and for exciting all the devotional feelings of the soul, eagerly adopted it, and introduced it into the choral service, which he imposed upon his children as one of the greatest duties which they had to perform.

CHAPTER XI.

CELEBRATION OF NIGHT OFFICE ON SUNDAYS.

MORE SEASONABLY.—By reason of the greater length of the Office, the Monks had to rise at an earlier hour than usual. Those who ordinarily rose for Matins at midnight would probably rise for the Sunday's Office at eleven o'clock; those who rose at two would rise at one o'clock, and thus have the Matin service over in order to begin Lauds at the prescribed time, that is to say, at daybreak.

SUNG (*modulatis*).—The Psalms were sung in a certain measured and harmonious chant.

ORDERLY MANNER.—By this is meant that each person was to sit, not at haphazard, and wherever he could find a seat, but in that order which was due to his dignity, office, and date of profession. The Abbot sat first ; next to him the priests ; then the Provosts, the Deans, and the brethren. At the end of the fourth responsory, as soon as the Cantor began the “Gloria Patri,” all are gently, modestly, and reverentially to rise from the low stools or the benches on which they were seated, and humbly to bow, and thus do reverence to the most Holy Trinity.

CANTICLE.—All the Psalms are truly canticles ; but some persons make a distinction between a psalm and a canticle, and say that whereas the Psalms were sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments, the canticles were sung by the voice only. A canticle is defined to be “a pious poetical work, written by the Prophets, or by men illuminated by the Holy Spirit, to commemorate some memorable event.” In the prophet Isaias, canticles are to be found in chaps. 5, 12, 25, 26, 35, 40, 54, 60, 63 ; in Jeremias, the lamentations over King Josias and the city of Jerusalem ; in Ezechiel, the lament over the Kings of Juda¹. Moses sang a canticle in thanksgiving for the passage through the Red Sea ; Debora and Barach, after slaying Sisara ; Anna, after the birth of Samuel ; Ezechias, after recovering from his mortal illness ; Tobias, on regaining his sight ; Judith, after slaying Holofernes ; our Lady, after the salutation of Elizabeth ; Simeon, after beholding in his arms the infant form of our Saviour ; Zachary, on regaining his speech.

¹ Chap. xix.

OTHER FOUR LESSONS out of the New Testament. These were evidently not taken from the Gospel, because our Holy Father expressly orders all to stand while the Gospel is read, and the Abbot to read that lesson. For many centuries the Abbots have ceased to do this, except upon the great feasts, just as the Bishops have ceased to sing the Masses in their cathedral churches, except on certain high festivals. The office of reading the Gospel has been given to the priest whose turn it is to lead the choir for the week.

TE DEUM.—Before St. Benedict's time, the *Gloria in excelsis* was usually sung upon all occasions of solemn thanksgiving. But from the date of his monastic legislation the *Te Deum* began to take its place. The tradition which assigns this hymn to the joint authorship of St. Ambrose and of St. Augustine is now regarded by all scholars as a fable. According to a trustworthy authority,² the earliest mention that is made of it is in the Rules of St. Benedict, and of Tiridius, nephew of St. Cesarius of Arles. It has been attributed to St. Abundius, to Nicetius Bishop of Trèves, and to St. Hilary of Poitiers. Although it is absolutely impossible to fix with certainty its true author, yet public opinion has usually assigned it to St. Ambrose. Our Holy Father, as we see in the Rule, orders his children to sing during the Divine Office the hymns of this great Bishop. Now, as St. Ambrose wrote many of these in strict metrical form for the use of the learned, it is not at all unlikely that he may have written the *Te Deum* in a sort of loose

² Menard, Annot. in S. Gregorii Sacrament.

manner for the use of the common people. In the sentiments to which the composition gives expression there is nothing out of keeping with his character, or his style, or his teaching ; but every word of it tends to impress upon the mind the doctrine of the great mystery of the Holy Trinity.

THE GOSPEL.—After the *Te Deum*, the Abbot is ordered to read the Gospel, and while he is doing this the rest stand in reverential fear. This custom seems to have come down to us from the Apostolic age, and is, at one and the same time, a public manifestation of respect for the word of God, and a sign of our readiness to carry into effect the lessons which it inculcates. At the end of the Gospel the choir answers “ Amen,” which is an assent to all the truths which the Gospel teaches, and an approbation of the morality which it enforces. The Abbot then goes on with the hymn, *Te decet laus* ; but according to the rite in use at the present day, it is the choir which says this, and when it is finished the Abbot gives a blessing, and straightway begins Lauds. From this we gather that the interval between Matins and Lauds, of which mention is made in the preceding chapter, was not conceded to the Monks on these Sundays.

THE BLESSING.—What is this *blessing*, which the Abbot is to give at the end of Matins? In all likelihood it is another name for the collect or prayer, which from the beginning of the Order was always said at this time. For our Holy Father, in another part of the Rule, uses this word “ *blessing* ” to signify *prayer*. Thus, when speaking of the prayer which is said for those who are to begin their task in the

kitchen, and for him who is to read during the week, he calls it a "*blessing*." Moreover, all the blessings given by the priests in the Old Dispensation, and those which are invoked by the priests of the New, are in reality prayers. Hence we may safely conclude that the blessing of which he here speaks is the prayer which is usually said at the conclusion of Matins.

THE LESSONS.—The length of these lessons depended upon the will of him who happened to preside in choir. When it seemed to him that a sufficient amount had been read, he said "Tu autem," and the Lector then ended the lesson by the words "Miserere nobis." But, generally speaking, it was the business of the official Cantor, on the preceding evening, to mark the place at which each lesson was to end. It is probable that during these the reader did not stand, but sat. In the Rule of St. Cesarius and of St. Fereolus it is expressly stated that he is to sit during the reading of the lessons; and in order to prevent those who had to listen from falling asleep, they were permitted to do some work, such, for instance, as spinning the cords out of which the mats were made. On Sundays, when all manual labour was strictly prohibited, those who felt inclined to sleep were ordered to stand.

SHORTENING THE OFFICE.—St. Benedict speaks of shortening the Office, if the Monks should not have risen "more seasonably" for Matins. This was done either by curtailing the notes to which the responsories were sung, or by reciting them straight on, without any repetition. He through whose fault the brethren were not called in time for the Office

did penance in the oratory for the fault which he had committed. The manner in which he did this was left to the discretion of the Abbot. In all probability his penance consisted either in bowing or in prostrating himself on the ground before the altar till the signal was given by the Abbot, or by the person who presided in choir, to rise from this lowly posture.

CHAPTER XII.

CELEBRATION OF LAUDS.

LAUDS.—As we have already noted in a preceding chapter, the word which St. Benedict uses to indicate Lauds is *Matutini*, and he so calls Lauds because they were said in the early morning.

STRAIGHT ON.—The sixty-sixth Psalm is ordered to be said without an antiphon, and not as the *Venite* is said at the beginning of Matins, with the antiphon following each verse. The words of the Latin text are rendered in our translation by the words “straight on” (*in directum*). This, according to Thomasi, was to sing, not in alternate choirs, as was usually done, but collectively, the whole choir uniting in the chant. But the general belief is that the phrase *in directum* means to *recite* the Psalm, not to *chant* it in the intercalated manner in which the *Venite* is either said or sung. Nothing whatever is said about beginning Lauds, as the other hours are begun, by the verse “Deus in adjutorium.” Hence it is the opinion of some that it was not said before Lauds, as the open-

ing verses of the sixty-sixth Psalm express the same prayer that is contained in the "Deus in adjutorium." But the custom of saying this verse before Lauds, as well as before the other hours, has prevailed, and with some few exceptions has always prevailed.

By ordering the fiftieth Psalm to be said with "Alleluia" as an antiphon, we may conclude either that it was repeated after each verse of the Psalm, or, what is more probable, that the rest of the Psalms at Lauds were sung to the tone in which the "Alleluia" was chanted. In the Breviary published by order of Paul V., one "Alleluia" is said before the fiftieth Psalm and two at the end of the sixty-second. Before the *Benedicite* and after it the antiphon "Tres pueri" is said. At the beginning and at the end of the *Laudate*, three "Alleluias."

"THE BLESSINGS."—By these, St. Benedict means the *Benedicite*, each verse of which begins with the words, "Bless ye the Lord."

"THE PRAISES."—These are the three Psalms,¹ of which almost every verse begins with the words, "Praise ye the Lord."

THE LESSON from the Apocalypse was ordered to be said by heart, and then followed a responsory, at the end of which St. Benedict does not order a "Gloria Patri" to be recited, as he does at the end of the last responsory of the lessons. It is presumed, however, that it was said at the end of this responsory also.

CANTICLE FROM THE GOSPEL.—There are four Canticles in the Gospel: the *Magnificat*, the *Nunc*

¹ Ps. cxlviii., cxlix., cl.

dimittis, the *Benedictus*, and the *Gloria in excelsis*. Although it is not stated which of these was said, yet the practice of the Roman Church has been to recite the *Benedictus*; and it is thought that St. Benedict followed this rite, especially as he orders his Monks in one chapter of the Rule to follow it in a certain particular.

THE LITANIES.—By this is meant the “Kyrie eleison.” With this supplication Lauds were ended; for no mention whatever is made of the collect or prayer which now is said at the end of every hour. We will examine this matter farther on in chapter xviii.

CHAPTER XIII.

CELEBRATION OF LAUDS ON FERIAL OR WEEK DAYS.

MORE SLOWLY.—It must be borne in mind that on weekdays there was an interval between Matins and Lauds; hence this order to say slowly the *Deus misereatur*, that time might be allowed for those who were late to be in their places for the beginning of the *Miserere*, which was said with an antiphon, as before explained.

ORDER OF PSALMS.—It will be seen that St. Benedict does not give the Psalms in succession, but passes from the fifth to the thirty-fifth, &c. The reason why he selected these particular Psalms for Lauds is supposed to be because in them reference is made to the dawn of day and to the resurrection. The *Miserere* was probably ordered to be said every

day at this time because of the words "Domine labia mea aperies;" and of those others, "et exultabunt ossa humiliata," which refer to the resurrection.

THE CANTICLE OF DEUTERONOMY.—This is the Canticle *Audite cæli quæ loquor*, which is said in the Roman Church every Saturday, but without any division. St. Benedict differs from the usage of the Church, in that he orders this long Psalm to be divided. But on the other days of the week he orders the same canticles to be said which are prescribed by the Roman Church.

CELEBRATION OF LAUDS.—The word *agenda* is thus translated; but in this place it is a substantive, signifying *service, office, celebration*.

OUR FATHER is recited aloud at the end of Lauds and of Vespers, in order that the brethren, reminded by the compact which is in this prayer of receiving pardon on condition of granting it to those who have either offended or injured them, may pluck out of their hearts and out of their lives the thorns of scandals which spring up through contention, anger, envy, and the like. In the other hours, only the last part is said aloud, that all may answer, "But deliver us from evil," and by so doing may signify the concord and the unity of heart which reign among them. From this we may conclude that no other prayer or collect followed this response, but that the hour was ended by the Lord's Prayer.

CHAPTER XIV.

CELEBRATION OF MATINS ON SAINTS' DAYS.

SAINTS' DAYS.—It is thus we render the words "*in natalitiis*," of which the literal meaning is "on the birthdays of the Saints." The day of a Saint's death is called his birthday, for then only does he begin to live. By these words of St. Benedict we are reminded to regard our present life as a living death, and our true life that which we shall live beyond the grave.

FESTIVALS AND SOLEMNITIES.—Though these words are now used synonymously, yet it is thought that St. Benedict applied the word *festival* to the Saints' days, and the word *solemnity* to the feast-days celebrated in honour of our Lord.

PROPER TO THE DAY.—There are two opinions about the meaning of these words. The first is, that the Psalms, antiphons, lessons, &c., were proper to the festival or to the solemnity which was celebrated. The second is, that the Psalms, &c., were proper to the ferial days on which the festival or the solemnity was celebrated. Custom, which is the best interpreter of laws, has given its sanction to the first of these opinions.

THEIR NUMBER.—*Modus* is often taken in this sense. From the fact of the number of Psalms, lessons, and Canticles being the same on the feasts and the solemnities as on the Sundays, it is evident that there was no Office of the Saints consisting of three

lessons. Yet the custom of having these three lessons is very ancient ; so ancient, in fact, that the origin of it cannot be ascertained.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN " ALLELUIA " MUST BE SAID.

ALLELUIA.—This is a Hebrew word signifying " Praise ye the Lord." Tobias¹ prophesied that it would be sung through the streets. Epiphanius says that the Prophet Aggæus, 517 years before Christ, was the first among men to sing this joyous word of praise, when he beheld the structure of the new Temple.

ALWAYS.—This usage of *always* saying " Alleluia " during Paschal-time sharply marks it off from the other seasons of the year, during which it was not always said in the way indicated in the Rule. During Paschal-time it was said in the antiphons, the responsories, the versicles, and the Psalms. In these last, " Alleluia " was said either at the beginning and at the end, or after each verse, in the intercalated manner of which mention has already been made in a preceding chapter.

FROM PENTECOST TILL LENT.—The Roman Church ceases to sing " Alleluia " from Septuagesima Sunday. This was probably ordered by St. Gregory. But in St. Benedict's day there was no law which forbade the use of " Alleluia " in Septuagesima. In

¹ Chap. xiii.

the Ambrosian Rite it is still sung until Lent. Except during this holy season, "Alleluia" was sung on all Sundays with the Canticles, and at Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, and None. The reason why "Alleluia" is not said during Lent is probably because there is annexed to it the idea of joy and of exultation, which would be incongruous during a season of penance and of mourning.

RESPONSORIES.—"Alleluia" was not sung with these, except during Paschal-time, that is, from Easter till the octave of Pentecost. The Roman Church, however, sings "Alleluia" in the responsories of Corpus Christi, of the Transfiguration, of Christmas, and of the Epiphany.

CHAPTER XVI.

CELEBRATION OF THE DAY OFFICE.

SEVEN TIMES.—Both before St. Benedict's day and after it there were many who observed this way of praising God. Among these we may mention St. Basil, St. Aurelian, Cassian, Cassiodorus, and St. Isidore of Seville. But St. Benedict was the first to prescribe the recitation of the hours, Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. The night-watches are not counted in this number. These *vigiliæ* or night-watches are now called Matins. Speaking of them, he says: "In the night let us rise to confess to Him." At the present day Matins with Lauds are counted as one hour.

SACRED NUMBER.—“Seven” was regarded as a sacred number, because of its frequent use in Holy Scripture. Thus we find the seven days of creation; the seven days of unleavened bread; the seven days of the consecration of priests; the seven days of a leper’s purification; the seven days during which the army marched round the walls of Jericho; the seven angels of the Apocalypse; the seven Churches; the seven-branched candlestick; the seven trumpets; the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; the seven times in which the prophet praised the Lord.

PRIME—This hour was not among those celebrated in the East. Cassian says that it was introduced in the monastery at Bethlehem while he was staying there. The reason which he gives for its introduction is that after Matins some of the Monks used to waste the time in sleep. The elders, therefore, ordered this hour to be recited; and when it was finished, a little after daybreak, they ordered that the brethren should go forth to work.

CHAPTER XVII.

NUMBER OF PSALMS TO BE SAID DURING THE AFORE-MENTIONED HOURS.

IT is worthy of observation that at five of the hours, namely, at Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, and Compline, St. Benedict orders three Psalms to be said. He does this, according to Amalarius, for two reasons: first, that the Blessed Trinity may be wor-

shipped and honoured by the addition of the "Gloria Patri" to each Psalm; secondly, that we may be reminded to subject the five senses of our body to the three powers of our soul, and thus be enabled to love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, and with our whole mind. At the end of Prime, Tierce, Sext, and None it appears that the *Pater noster* was not said, nor "Dominus vobiscum," nor the *prayer*, all which are now said after each hour, together with "Benedicamus Domino" and "Fidelium animæ" after the prayer. But it must be remembered that all these were introduced after our Holy Father's time, and that the legislation of the Church has arranged the liturgical Office somewhat differently from the manner in which it was fixed by him.

LET THE HOUR CONCLUDE.—It is in this way that we render the words "*et missæ sint.*" Concerning the meaning of these few words there is a great divergence of opinion, which arises, no doubt, from the variety of meanings which may be given to the word "*missa.*" This signifies (1) the Sacrifice of the Mass; (2) the festival of a Saint; (3) a canonical hour; (4) a lesson; (5) a prayer or collect; (6) a dismissal. Out of these six different meanings there can be question, in the present instance, of only the last two. We have to decide whether the phrase in the text of the Rule signifies that a prayer or collect should be said at the end of the Little Hours, or that they should be concluded in the manner already indicated, namely, by the "Kyrie eleison." Many of the most illustrious commentators maintain that by these words St. Benedict orders a prayer or collect to

be said. On the other hand, there are authors of great learning and weight who hold that nothing more is ordered by these words than that the Office should thus be brought to an end. This is the simple, straightforward meaning of the words, and they themselves constitute the ordinary formula by which any assembly is dismissed. Moreover, St. Benedict nowhere prescribes a collect or prayer at the end of the Office. If to these reasons we add that when, in the ninth and thirteenth chapters, our Holy Father is giving directions concerning the way in which Matins and Lauds are to be brought to a close, he uses a form of words equivalent to that which is employed in the present instance, we may with good reason infer that "*missæ sint*," "*sic finiantur*," and "*completum est*" are all various modes of expressing the idea that the Office is to be concluded.

IF THE COMMUNITY IS NUMEROUS.—Twelve would be considered by St. Benedict to be a numerous community; for from the beginning it was his practice to put that number of Monks in each of the monasteries which he built. But yet if we consult chapter the twenty-first, we may reasonably infer that the number requisite to constitute a *major congregatio* would be at least twenty-four or twenty-five; for he there orders *Deans* to be chosen, that is to say, persons who had the charge of ten Monks—*si major congregatio fuerit*.

RECITED (*in directum*).—The reason why this is permitted in small communities is on account of the great burden which it would be to them to sing these hours; also, it would bring contempt upon the worship

of the Church, if it must needs be performed by a few voices, and these, perhaps, none of the sweetest.

SYNAXIS.—A Greek word signifying “meeting, assembly.” It was used to designate a gathering for the purpose of praising God. The Vesper Office, or, as it is called in England, Evensong, was celebrated at about six o’clock in the evening, and was styled the last hour of the day, as Prime was called the first. It was anciently called *Lucernarium*, because being said at a late hour lamps had to be used, at least during the winter months. Hence it is that some authors have reckoned Vespers among the night hours. The Canticle out of the Gospel which is ordered to be recited at this hour is the *Magnificat*.

COMPLINE.—It is thought that this hour was unknown in the West until it was introduced by St. Benedict as an evening prayer to *complete* the daily service of God. In the East St. Basil had already instituted for this hour an office corresponding to Compline, which he called “Petitio.” The *Blessing*, concerning which we have already spoken in the eleventh chapter, was given after the “Kyrie eleison,” and probably was preceded by the Lord’s Prayer.

THE MASS.—In the distribution of the various hours at which the Divine Office is to be celebrated, no mention is made of the time at which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered. The reason of this may be owing to the fact that there were not any priests among the Religious, and consequently that no fixed time could be assigned for this great duty. There can be no doubt, however, that the Mass was said on all Sundays and on festival days. St. Bene-

dict in the thirty-eighth chapter expressly mentions the celebration of Mass on Sundays; for on these occasions the brethren had to approach to receive the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Later on, when priests were among the members of each community, the Holy Mass constituted one of the chief religious services of every day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHAT ORDER THE PSALMS ARE TO BE SAID.

SUNDAYS AT PRIME.—The one hundred and eighteenth Psalm, of which four divisions (*capitula*) are ordered to be said on Sundays at Prime, is in Hebrew an alphabetical Psalm. Each division of it begins with a letter of the alphabet; and as there are twenty-two letters in that alphabet, there are consequently as many divisions or *capitula* in the Psalm. As four of these are devoted to Sunday's Prime, and three to each of the Little Hours—Tierce, Sext, and None—the remaining nine are given to Tierce, Sext, and None on Monday. At the end of the four divisions which are said at Prime there is now added the Athanasian Creed.

THE ATHANASIAN CREED.—The great St. Athanasius¹ is popularly believed to have composed this symbol of Catholic belief while he was in exile at Trèves; and this latter circumstance is brought forward as a reason which satisfactorily accounts for its being written in Latin. It is impossible, however,

¹ Born about A.D. 300; died 373.

to say with certainty whether he is or is not the real author of this excellent *résumé* of the Church's doctrine on the Holy Trinity and on the divinity of our Lord. Some attribute it to St. Hilary of Arles, who flourished about the year 430; others to Venantius Fortunatus, who lived in the sixth century; others to Virgilius of Thapsus, an African Bishop, who in the fifth century wrote a treatise on the Holy Trinity. Those who contend that the author is St. Athanasius say that if the Creed was drawn up at a date later than the Council of Ephesus (431), it would have contained some clauses pointedly condemning the heresy of Nestorius; and if later than the Council of Chalcedon (451), would have expressly taught the doctrine of the two "natures" in Christ, in opposition to the heresy of Eutyches. All that can with certainty be affirmed about this much-contested point is that St. Athanasius might have been the author of the *Quicumque vult*, and that there is in it nothing which is opposed to the dogmas for which he so strenuously contended during his long and troubled career. Of this famous Creed the earliest manuscript copy which has thus far been brought to light is the Utrecht Psalter, which dates from the sixth century. One of the canons of the Council of Autun (640) enjoins the use of what is believed to be the Athanasian Creed; but the date of this canon has been questioned. In our own day Mr. Ffoulkes has tried to brand the Creed as a forgery of the age of Charlemagne, but without much success. His argument rests upon this fact, that Alcuin, writing to thank Paulinus, Bishop of Aquileia (800), for a book containing a

description of the Catholic faith, says that it ought to be circulated among the clergy, and by them be committed to memory as a "symbolum fidei." This "symbolum," he maintains, *must* be the *Quicumque vult*, commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius, and charges Alcuin, Paulinus, and Charlemagne with a conspiracy to palm off this forgery as a genuine composition of the illustrious Bishop of Alexandria. In support of this assertion he has not any positive proof to offer, except his own firm conviction. From the words in which Alcuin concludes his letter to Paulinus, it is evident that the "Libellus" which he had received was not a Creed, but a refutation of three errors which were rife at the time: (1) a species of revived adoptionism which had broken out in Spain; (2) an irregular mode of administering baptism, prevalent in the north countries; (3) an incorrect view of the condition of the souls of the Saints before the day of judgment. But that which has shivered to fragments the theory of Mr. Ffoulkes is the examination which was made of the Utrecht Psalter by Sir Thomas D. Hardy, Deputy-Keeper of the Records. After a most careful and searching scrutiny of the character of the writing, he gives it as his firm conviction that it is undoubtedly of the sixth century.

DIVISION OF PSALMS.—Because the ninth and seventeenth Psalms are long, St. Benedict orders them to be divided, and at the end of each division a "Gloria Patri" to be added. This custom he received from the Egyptian Monks, who usually divided the long Psalms, and after each division recited a prayer; but

he was the first to introduce this division of the Psalms into the Divine Office. The profound humility of our Holy Father is evident from the permission which he grants to the Abbots to change the order of psalmody which he established, provided that they adhered to the number which he wished his children to recite. There was nothing small, nothing narrow in his character; if his followers fulfilled the substance of his commands, it mattered not to him in what particular mode they carried them into effect.

THE WHOLE PSALTER.—This, as is well known, consists of one hundred and fifty Psalms. It is thought that St. Benedict ordered this number to exclude from the choirs of his monasteries all apocryphal Psalms, of which there was a considerable number in circulation at the time in which he lived. Thus the one hundred and fifty-first Psalm, which is to be found in some Greek Psalters, is a song upon the combat between David and Goliath. Also, he wished to admit into his service of psalmody only those compositions which are inspired by the Holy Ghost, for private individuals had at that time made many Psalms which were sometimes chanted in the Church. Tertullian speaks of the faithful being invited in their meetings to sing not only the Psalms of David, but also those of their own composition. Some of these effusions, especially those which were composed in Africa, were alphabetical Psalms, in imitation of the one hundred and eighteenth. It is most probable that St. Paul is alluding to this custom of psalm-making, when he says to the Corinthians: "When you come together, every one of you hath a *Psalm*, hath a doctrine, hath

a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation : let all things be done to edification.”²

IN ONE DAY.—In order to stir up our zeal for the due celebration of the Divine Office, he puts before us the example of our fathers in the monastic life, who in one day were accustomed to say that number of Psalms which he portions out among the days of a whole week. After St. Benedict’s time, many of his children were in the habit of every day saying the whole Psalter. Among these we may mention St. Neot, St. Aldhelm of Malmsbury, who, while immersed in water, recited one hundred and fifty Psalms ; St. Stephen, Abbot of Citeaux ; St. Celestine, and many of the Camaldulose hermits.

TWELVE PSALMS AT MATINS.—St. Benedict’s reason for prescribing this number of Psalms for the Matin Office is thought to have been a desire on his part to comply with that injunction of the Apostle “to pray always.” As, then, there are twelve hours of the night, during which people of the world cannot pray, he assigned this number of Psalms for the night-watches, that thus there might be a hymn of praise ascending to God for each of the hours of the night.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ORDER AND THE DISCIPLINE OF PSALMODY.

THE PRINCIPLE whence the right order and the due discipline of all monastic psalmody flow is the

² 1 Cor. xiv. 26.

mindfulness of the ever-present all-seeing eye of God. In every place it looks upon the good and the bad : on the good, to advance them in virtue ; on the bad, to mark them out for righteous chastisement. He who remembers this will carefully regulate his external behaviour, so as to be grave and modest in his deportment during the service of God, and will animate the internal affections of his heart, so as to be wakeful and fervent in the performance of this sacred duty.

THE WORK OF GOD or the divine work. It is by this name that St. Benedict very often calls the duty of psalmody, because it is that which occupies the lives of the holy Angels and of the blessed Saints in heaven. Their happiness and their duty consist in praising, adoring, and praying to God ; in contemplating the inexhaustible beauties of His attributes ; and in proclaiming His marvellous works. That which they do in heaven is one of the chief duties of the Benedictine Monk in his monastery on earth, and hence he is ordered by his holy founder never to prefer anything to this "work of God."¹

WITH UNDERSTANDING.—To chant the Divine Office in this way is to quit ourselves of this important duty with that internal affection and unction which should be the very soul of this grand liturgical

¹ An "opus Dei"—namely, the "care of souls," which, according to the teaching of theologians, is even more the "work of God" than psalmody—has been intrusted to our congregation by the Holy See. Therefore, at the call of obedience, we must be ready to undertake it ; for by so doing we are, in a higher way, carrying out St. Benedict's injunction—"Never to prefer anything to the work of God."

prayer. In the next place, it is to have a clear understanding of the Psalms, the lessons, the responsories, and the various collects which are read during the course of it. It is to observe all the ceremonies which are prescribed, so as to perform this public act of worship with that religious decorum and reverence which inspire the hearts of those who assist at this function, with sentiments of piety. The Constitutions of the English Benedictine Congregation prescribe that when the signal for the Office is given, all are to hasten with eager piety to the *statio*, whence all processions are formed previously to entering the choir of the church. While actually in choir they are to show, in the outward carriage of the body, that humility and that modesty which are begotten of a mindfulness of the divine presence. Careful attention is to be paid to the rubrics of the Breviary, and to all the minute directions of the monastic ceremonial. The Psalms, whether sung or recited, are to be chanted in a high and sonorous tone of voice, and in so even a manner that each of the syllables may be distinctly heard. Each verse of the Psalms must be begun and be ended by all at the same time. In the middle of the verse, and at the end of it, a pause must be made sufficiently long to take breath, but yet not so long as to make the Office wearisomely slow and burdensome. To increase the solemnity of the Office, it is permitted to employ instrumental music; but only those instruments are to be admitted which are in keeping with a monastic choir. Figured music is rarely to be introduced, and only in monasteries in which there is a numerous community. Yet even in

these it is not allowed to be used at all times, but only on the great feasts ; nor is it to be used in all parts of the Office, but only at Mass, at Vespers, and sometimes at our Lady's antiphon, sung at the end of Compline. In character this figured music must be grave and sedate. It must be so distinct that the words may be heard, and not smothered by a multiplicity of notes.²

IN THE SIGHT OF THE ANGELS.—In many passages of Holy Writ the Angels of God are represented as interceding for us, helping us, and suggesting the good pleasure of God unto us. They are the courtiers of the great King, before Whom we present ourselves as humble suppliants. It is, therefore, in their presence that we stand when we go to worship God. The memory of this is suggested as a reason to maintain a reverential bearing and a recollected mind.

LET US STAND.—This is another of those passages in the Rule which clearly proves that the Monks did not sit during the recitation of the Psalms, but only at the lessons. It is also an exhortation to keep the body in a becoming posture, and the mind intent upon God.

MIND AND VOICE IN ACCORD.—This signifies that we should always endeavour, when in choir, to have our minds filled with those sentiments which the Psalmist breathes forth in his inspired poetry. When the Psalm prays, we should pray ; when it grieves, we should grieve ; when it exults and rejoices, we should exult and rejoice. But, in order to bring about this accord between mind and voice, we must,

² Constit. cap. viii. No. 4.

before assisting at the "work of God," fervently ask for the 'grace of prayer and of attention of mind ; we must firmly purpose to exclude distractions ; and we must carefully prepare the Office, so as to remove all occasions of disturbance during the divine service.

CHAPTER XX.

OF REVERENCE AT PRAYER.

PRAYER.—That act by which we lift our minds and our hearts to God is prayer, in which our memory recalls His various attributes, our intelligence searches into them, and our will elicits the manifold affections which, as it were, spontaneously well up in our hearts from the consideration of His infinite perfections. In the preceding chapters of this liturgical portion of the Rule, St. Benedict has been engaged in pointing out to us the merely ceremonial part of this great duty ; in the present chapter he treats of it as that worship which we owe to our Heavenly Father, and teaches us those conditions which will breathe into it the breath of life, and endow it with a power strong enough to bend the will of the Omnipotent. Making use of a very familiar argument, he tells us that if we are humble and reverential in the presence of the powerful, from whom we wish to obtain some favour, with much greater reason ought we to be animated with like sentiments when we present ourselves as suppliants before God. The first condition, therefore, which he requires is :

HUMILITY.—This is the very soul of prayer, as it is also of all virtues. It gives to it the power to rise before the throne of God, to persuade Him to listen, and to be bounteous and merciful. “The prayer of him who humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds; and till it come nigh he will not be comforted; and he will not depart till the Most High behold.”¹ This humility must externally show itself in the lowly demeanour of him who prays, as well as make itself felt in the heart, by causing the suppliant to acknowledge his own unworthiness and the infinite perfections of God. Hence St. Benedict says “in all humility.”

PURITY OF DEVOTION.—Besides being humble, our prayer must be pure. To understand what is meant by this, we must bear in mind that it is through the aid of the Holy Spirit that we are able to pray at all. When He vouchsafes to speak to us, we are sometimes flooded with so great sweetness that our very flesh exults and rejoices in the wealth which He bestows. Nothing is difficult to us. We find no trouble in our spiritual life. But when He withdraws Himself, and leaves us to ourselves, then it is that we see our own poverty. If we still persist in our prayer when this occurs, and if we are not influenced to persevere in it through any sensual motives, it is said to be *pure*; for there is no self-seeking, no self-love in it. We are seeking God in simplicity of heart, and our prayer to Him is *pure*.

NOT IN MANY WORDS.—This is ordered because our Lord bids us not to speak much when we pray,

¹ Eccles. xxxv. 21.

as the heathens were wont to do. "For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be not you, therefore, like to them; for your Father knoweth what is needful for you before you ask Him."² We must not imagine that God needs to have our case stated for Him, as if we were pleading for justice or for favour before an earthly potentate. Those long formal prayers, of which we meet great numbers in our manuals of devotion, are made for the purpose of bringing home to the persons who use them the necessities of their souls, that they may then send up before the throne of mercy the heart's strong cry, to which our Father never turns a deaf ear. To pray in many words is not the same thing as to pray with much affection. Our prayer is never to be regarded as long, in the former sense, if it is fervent, pious, humble, persevering, and full of confidence. Our Lord passed whole nights in prayer, and when He was in an agony of foreboding grief He prayed the longer, but not in many words. As models of the very opposite to this "much speaking," which we are to avoid, see the prayers made by those who in the sacred Scripture are deemed most worthy of imitation. "Son," said our Blessed Lady, "they have no wine." The leper, addressing our Lord, said, "If Thou willest, Thou canst make me clean." "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me," exclaimed the blind man. Therefore, the best means to guard our prayer against the defect of much speaking is to stir up in our heart an earnest, ardent desire of that for which we crave.

PURITY OF HEART. — Our prayer will ascend

² St. Matt. vi. 7.

before the throne of God from a pure heart, if all care for carnal, sensual pleasures have been cast out of it, and if the memory of them be banished with horror the moment that it presents itself. Besides this, it is furthermore required that the mind should be free from all those distracting images which crowd into it, through the agency of the evil spirit ; which are generated by the fancy or by the disorderly affections of the heart ; which spring from cares, from anxiety of mind, or from ignorance of the methods of prayer. When all these are removed, the heart is as a chamber whence all the filth and the lumber of years have been swept ; in which there is room for God to enter, and to hold communion with the soul.

PENITENTIAL TEARS.—External or material tears are not always at our command ; but internal tears, or *compunction*, may be obtained from God, if we prayerfully contemplate the enormity of our sins, and the severity of the judgment to come. The result of this will be that we shall grieve with rational sorrow for having offended God, and for having exposed ourselves to the danger of hell-fire. We shall purpose never again to fall into sin, and to lead a good life. We shall lament over our exile here below, and sigh after the joys of our true home. In these things consists that compunction of heart which is styled by St. Benedict "*penitential tears.*"

SHORT AND PURE.—As prayer must be made with great attention of mind, with fervour, and with reverence, St. Benedict, who knew full well the weakness of human nature, prescribes that it should be *short*, unless the prompting of the Holy Spirit inspires

the soul to persevere in it for a long time. By requiring it to be *pure*, he wishes to intimate to us that in it we should seek only God and His glory, not our own pleasure.

PRAYER MADE IN COMMON MUST BE SHORT.— There are various interpretations of this obscure passage. (1) Some understand it to mean the prayers made at the end of each Psalm, after the manner of the Egyptian Monks; or the collect at the end of the Office. (2) The prayers which each said before the Divine Office began. (3) Short prayers offered up silently at the end of each Psalm. (4) The secret prayers said at the end of the Office, before the Abbot or the presiding Superior gave the signal to rise and leave the church.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DEANS OF THE MONASTERY.

DEANS.— St. Benedict, mindful of the advice which Jethro gave to Moses—“to provide out of the people able men, such as fear God, in whom there is truth, and that hate avarice, and appoint them rulers of thousands, and of hundreds, and of fifties, and of tens”¹—and seeing that, as the various communities increased, it would be impossible for the Abbot to fulfil all the duties which devolve upon him as their head, wisely commands that he should take unto himself from among the brethren under his charge some

¹ Exod. xviii. 21.

few to help him in the direction and the government of the monastery. These he calls deans (*decani*), because they were appointed over ten persons.

QUALIFICATIONS.—To be eligible for this office, it was required that the candidate should be in good repute among his brethren for his amiability and his kindly disposition ; and that his life should be irreproachable. It was expected that he would be zealous for his brethren's perfection ; discreet in the use of the measure of authority intrusted to his hands ; obedient, though vested with power ; and humble, though raised to a position of dignity. Therefore, to be worthy of the Dean's office, a Monk had to be wise in counsel, gentle in manner, prudent in dealing with others, grave in external behaviour, mature in age, watchful over that which was committed to his charge, and well versed in all the duties of monastic life.

DUTIES.—The duties which ordinarily fell to the lot of the Dean were to awake for the *Matin* Office all the brethren under his charge ; to lead them forth to the work which they had to do, and to conduct them back again at the appointed times ; to go about the various workshops to see that all were engaged in their allotted tasks ; to see that discipline was observed ; if he was a priest, to hear the confessions of those over whom he presided ; to correct ordinary faults and mistakes ; to watch over the observance of the monastic ceremonial ; to provide for the devout and orderly celebration of the *Divine Office* ; and, as we shall see in the next chapter, to sleep near those over whom he exercised the authority of Dean.

APPOINTMENT.—The Deans were, in all likeli-

hood, chosen by the Abbot. They did not attain to this office merely because they happened to have been a long time in monastic life. Unless they had the necessary qualifications, their gray hair and their length of service were not made of any account. That which entitled them to this promotion was their merit. They had, in a certain sense, to be learned ; mature in mind and in age ; and endowed with such capacity as would compel the respect and invite the confidence of their brethren. By an ordinance of Pope Benedict XIII., they had to be in priest's orders, and at least five-and-twenty years of age. With them the Abbot *shared* his burdens, but did not transfer to their shoulders the *authority* which was vested in himself. The dignity and the office conferred upon them were not given to them for life ; if they became incapable of performing the duties attached to the dignity, or if the dignity itself generated in their hearts a spirit of pride, the Abbot could dismiss them, and substitute in their place one possessed of the power and the virtue requisite to discharge with efficiency the office of Dean.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE MONKS ARE TO SLEEP.

BEDS.—In this chapter we see the paternal care of St. Benedict to guard from all danger the chastity of his Monks, and to inspire them with that modesty which is as a garment of honour to all those who

dedicate themselves to the love and the worship of God. They are to sleep in separate beds, as is ordained by all the monastic legislators from the very beginning ; a light is to be kept burning in the open dormitory till morning ; they are clothed in their habits, and girded ; the younger brethren are in the midst of their elders, and under their watchful care. Thus no precaution is omitted which may serve to protect them from unholy thoughts, or from unbecoming behaviour.

BEFITTING THEIR CONDITION (*pro modo conversationis*).—This is capable of various interpretations. Some take it to mean that the beds are to be “ monastic :” not made of costly material, nor soft, nor flattering the sensuality of the body, nor inviting to sleep ; but cheap and hard, which will enable us to sleep indeed, but not to sleep in luxurious comfort. Others understand by these words that both the bed and its coverings are to be suitable to the country in which the Monks live, and to the season of the year—in summer a light covering, in winter one of much thicker texture. To the minds of others this phrase seems to indicate that St. Benedict wishes the bed-covering and the bed itself to be accommodated to the wants, the age, and the infirmities of each Religious, and also to the temperature of the climate in which the monastery is situated. This seems to be the most sensible of the interpretations which are given. Not a few are of opinion that by these words there was given to the Abbot a discretionary power to appoint for his Monks beds suitable to their various degrees of perfection ; so that to those who were not

inured to the austerities of the monastic life were given beds somewhat more luxurious than to those who were accustomed to its rigours.

IN ONE PLACE.—As our Holy Father has repeatedly, in the course of the Rule, left the arrangement of such matters as this to the discretion of Superiors, it cannot be said that the well-nigh universal custom of the present day, of dividing each dormitory into many cells, as our Constitutions ordain, and of assigning one to each of the Religious, is contrary to the intention of St. Benedict. In his day, the Monks were in the dormitory only during the hours of the night. But at the present time, when studies of various kinds occupy so large a portion of our time, the necessity for a private cell in which to pursue them is obvious to any one who will give the subject a moment's consideration. Besides, the inconveniences of a common dormitory are so many and so great, that the wisdom of Superiors in arranging matters as they are at present is worthy of all praise. The system of separate cells has many advantages, among which, not the least is the convenience which it affords for solitude, for the practice of silence, for reading, for prayer, and for discreet mortification. In the gallery into which these cells open a light is kept burning throughout the night, as the Rule ordains; and in the cells themselves that monastic simplicity and poverty, which were so dear to St. Benedict, are rigidly enforced.

CLOTHED.—The Monks, contrary to the custom of the age, were ordered to sleep *clothed*. For this purpose they had two habits. In the one they worked,

and in the other they slept and attended the night Offices. They were girded as they slept, either with their girdle (*cingulum*)—which was of leather, or of wool, or of linen—or with a rope (*funis*), which was of hemp or of linen, twisted round like a rope. The reason which St. Benedict assigns for this disciplinary arrangement is that, like soldiers, they may always be ready to rise at the given signal, and to repair to the choir. It seems that each Monk by his side carried a knife in a sheath. This knife was doubtless used by him in his work, and in the refectory to cut his food. When he retired to rest, he laid aside this knife, lest it should slip from its sheath and wound him ; or lest he should draw it in his dreams, and injure either himself or some of his brethren.

THE YOUNG MONKS were not allowed to sleep in a part of the dormitory specially set aside for their accommodation. Their beds were distributed among those of the elders, that the gravity of their superiors might keep them under restraint, and that they themselves might learn from the good example of these seniors to cast off all sluggishness, and to rise with alacrity to perform the “work of God.”

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER.—This was not done by word of mouth, but in all likelihood by striking the foot on the floor, or by shaking the bed in which the sleeper lay. Good example in speedily casting off all sluggishness was, no doubt, the best mode of encouraging one another to rise from bed, which it is difficult to forsake, even though it is as hard as the floor upon which it is stretched.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EXCOMMUNICATION FOR OFFENCES.

EXCOMMUNICATION.—This punishment, which is inflicted upon evil-doers, in order to inspire them with a true idea of the gravity of their sins, and thus move them to repentance, is of three kinds. First, the greater excommunication, by which a man is separated from the communion of the Church and of the body of Christ. Secondly, the lesser excommunication, which deprives a man of the Holy Sacraments, and renders him incapable, for the time being, of acquiring a benefice. This is incurred by speaking to any one who is excommunicate. Thirdly, simple excommunication, also called regular. This is twofold: (1) that which separates Monks from participating in the common table, and deprives them of the right to intone a Psalm or a responsory in choir, but does not withdraw from them the right to enter the church of the monastery; (2) that which excludes them from a participation not only in the common table, but also in the oratory or church of the monastery.

POWER OF EXCOMMUNICATION.—Abbots and Priors, who have the power of government, and exercise jurisdiction over their Religious, have the right to pass on them the sentence of excommunication. They ought never to use this unless the fault of the person subject to them is not only a mortal sin, but one of those which are called enormous. It is, more-

over, required that all the steps be previously taken which are enjoined by canon law. The guilty person must thrice be admonished: twice secretly before a few witnesses, the third time publicly before the whole community. It is thought that the excommunication spoken of in this chapter is the greater excommunication, because on the part of the excommunicate there are contumacy, a grave fault, and contempt: on the part of the Abbot, there are the conditions requisite for the legitimate use of this power, a triple admonition and authority.

SINS FOR WHICH IT IS INFLICTED.—These are: (1) Contumacy. In law, a person is said to be *contumacious* who after three citations does not appear in court; who openly contemns what is ordered by his judge; who, when interrogated by him, will not answer. In religious life a person is said to be contumacious who proudly refuses to obey; insolently answers and resists to the face his lawful superiors; despises orders which are given to him; and insults authority. (2) Disobedience. Every contumacious person is disobedient; but not every disobedient person is contumacious. The disobedience which is punished by excommunication must therefore be excessive. It must consist in a *refusal* to obey or to perform the penance which is imposed for misconduct; in an open contradiction of the Superior, or in a contempt of his secret and of his public counsels. (3) Pride, which is outwardly manifested by word or by deed. (4) Murmuring, which spreads the virus of discontent through a whole community. (5) Gainsaying the Rule by rebelling against it. (6) Contemning the orders of

the elders, by behaving with respect to them in the same way in which gainsayers behave with respect to the Rule.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE.—Before a Superior can inflict the penalty of excommunication upon one of his subjects, he must see that all the formalities required by canon law are duly carried out. The offender must be secretly admonished either by the Abbot, or by the elders who have charge of him. This admonition is given twice in private. The third admonition takes the form of a public reprehension given in chapter before the community. When these prove unavailing, recourse is had to excommunication, which, however, is inflicted only on those who are aware of its gravity, and who may be benefited by it. The obdurate, the incorrigible, and the stupid are not to be excommunicated, but to be soundly whipped, that bodily pain may work a reformation in their life and manners.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MANNER OF EXCOMMUNICATION.

QUALITY OF THE FAULTS.—St. Benedict divides the delinquencies which are to be punished by excommunication into two classes—those which are light and those which are grave. Under each of these classes it is easy to conceive that there will be many minor degrees of levity and of gravity, and consequently that the same measure of excommunication

or of punishment cannot with justice be applied to all. Hence the necessity for appointing some one who shall act as judge, to determine what those faults are which must be considered to be grave, and what those which may be accounted but light.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE ABBOT.—The person with whom the determination of this important matter rests is the Abbot or Superior of the monastery. Our Holy Father does not mean by putting this power into his hands that the Abbot has his authority to make any faults grave which it may please him to designate as such, and any others light which his whim may select for that category. All that he does is to leave to the sound judgment and the prudence of one whose position is a guarantee that he is calm and self-possessed, the office of determining whether faults committed in such and such circumstances are to be considered either grave or light. Also, it is worthy of remark that he does not allow the measure of punishment to be determined by his judgment, but only the classification of the faults which deserve punishment. When he has done this, his only duty is to apply the drastic means appointed by St. Benedict himself for their amendment.

LIGHT FAULTS.—It is very probable that our Holy Father would consider to be *light* such faults as the following: idleness, coming late to monastic duties, trifling and laughing in choir, giving up work and leaving church without sufficient reason, giving way to sleep in church, over-much talking, receiving letters and seeing either friends or guests without permission, disobedience to a senior, and the like.

THEIR PUNISHMENT.—We may divide into three classes the punishments by which light faults were corrected. (1) Those which inflict bodily pain, or impose labour, or cover with confusion—for example, to take a discipline, to write out a small treatise, to eat apart from the rest. (2) Those which deprive of food, or of company, or of help—for example, to take away one's portion of wine, to exclude from the refectory, to work alone. (3) Those which deprive of place or of degree acquired by right—for example, to be removed from among the seniors to the last place in the community, to be shut up in a cell for some short time, and the like. All these and similar penances and punishments ought to be accepted with humility and with a rational joy, as so many means for liquidating that debt of temporal punishment which must be paid either in this world or in the world to come.

CHAPTER XXV.

OF MORE GRIEVOUS FAULTS.

MORE GRIEVOUS FAULTS.—The canon law of the Church divides the faults of which her children may be guilty into five classes: (1) light faults, of which we have already spoken; (2) grave; (3) most grave; (4) enormous; (5) excessively enormous. In a Religious, that would be considered to be a *grave* fault which is opposed in a special way to good manners, to the monastic institute, to the Holy Rule

or to any constitutional enactment which is prescribed "in virtue of holy obedience." Such faults as these are punished by prostration before the whole community, when they are assembled in the *statio*, both before and after each conventual duty; or by fasting on bread and water every alternate day, and by kneeling in the middle of the refectory on these occasions; or by withdrawal during the space of a whole month of permission to go beyond the monastic enclosure; or by deprivation for the space of fifteen days of permission to speak with the rest of the brethren; by the imposition of the Penitential or of the Gradual Psalms to be recited kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament every day for a week.

MOST GRAVE FAULTS.—When the afore-mentioned faults are committed with open and public scandal, or when they have annexed to them either legal infamy or excommunication, they are said to be *most grave*. These are punished by the same penalties by which grave faults are punished; and these penalties may be inflicted for the space of three months. In addition to these the delinquent is deprived of office, of dignity, of power either to vote or to be voted for, and of all the privileges and the prerogatives annexed to his offices and dignities. He is not suffered to exercise the holy Orders which he has received, and is degraded to the lowest place among his brethren. All these punishments may be inflicted either separately or conjointly.

ENORMOUS FAULTS.—These are faults which in civil courts cover a man with infamy, and subject him to disgraceful penalties. For these faults the punish-

ments usually assigned are imprisonment in a cell which is lightsome and healthy, deprivation of the hood and the clerical corona or tonsure, and the infliction of the penances assigned to most grave faults.

EXCESSIVELY ENORMOUS FAULTS.—Of this nature are considered to be all those faults which in the ecclesiastical courts are punished by degradation from holy Orders, and in the civil courts by perpetual imprisonment or by death. Faults of this kind are punished by confinement in a cell destined for this purpose, by deprivation of the religious habit, of office, of dignity, of power to vote or to be voted for; by suspension from the exercise of the holy Orders which have been received; by fasting on bread and water for three days every week; and by perpetual abstinence from flesh-meat. These penalties may be inflicted for five, for seven, or for nine years, but not any longer. The delinquent is allowed the use of holy books; there is given to him some work with which to occupy his time; and the Superiors and the seniors are enjoined frequently to visit, console, and exhort him to patience and to penance.

In these days it depends altogether upon the good pleasure of the guilty person whether he will submit to these penalties or not. If he will not, the doors of the monastery are wide open and he may depart, unless the civil power lays its hands upon him and compels him to do penance in the rough and stern manner in which it seems good to it that all offenders against its laws should atone for their transgressions. Any one who is guilty of crimes which need these repressive and penal measures for their amendment

would be ignominiously expelled from the precincts of the monastery.

ST. BENEDICT'S "MORE GRIEVOUS FAULTS" would be all those which are enumerated in the twenty-third chapter, to which no doubt he would add all grievous, public, and scandalous transgressions of any of the three vows.

PUNISHMENT.—For faults of this nature the delinquent was punished by ecclesiastical excommunication. He was forbidden to eat with the rest of the brethren. He was excluded from the oratory, which exclusion meant deprivation of the use of the Sacraments. He was not allowed either to speak to or to join the company of his brethren, and a like injunction was given to them to avoid all converse with him. He was forced to work by himself; no one gave him a blessing as he passed; nor was the food which he ate signed with the holy Cross, or blessed, as was the food of his brethren.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OF THOSE WHO KEEP COMPANY WITH THE EXCOMMUNICATE.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE EXCOMMUNICATE.
—This may take place in one of these five ways. (1) A person may converse with him, or may visit him, or eat with him, not knowing that he is under excommunication. (2) He may do this knowing indeed that he is excommunicate, but without being aware

that there is any law which prohibits intercourse with him. In both these cases no penalty whatever is incurred. (3) Again, a person may hold communication with the excommunicate with a view to move him to repentance ; if this is not done officially, or by necessity, minor excommunication is incurred for two or three days. Some theologians maintain that no penalty whatever is incurred in this case. (4) By communicating with him, to confirm him in his malice ; (5) to counsel and to aid him in fleeing away from the monastery, the same excommunication is incurred under the ban of which the person thus counselled and abetted is lying.

IN THE DAYS of St. Benedict there was not any distinction between a minor and a major excommunication. This we learn from Cassian,¹ from whom our Holy Father took all his legislation respecting this matter. That great ascetic tells us that among the Egyptian Religious, any one who through a mistaken zeal and compassion for the excommunicate should pray with him, was straightway punished by the very same penalties under which the object of his misguided zeal was suffering.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ABBOT'S CARE FOR THE EXCOMMUNICATE.

SPECIAL CARE.—Twice during this short chapter is the necessity for special care in the case of delin-

¹ Instit. lib. ii. cap. 16.

quents urged upon the notice of Superiors ; because, being morally sick, these erring brothers need the attention and the skill of the physician to restore them to health. It is but natural that those who are in authority should shrink from this troublesome and difficult task. Hence it is that we so often see them eager to transfer unruly subjects to other monasteries, or to rid themselves of them in some way or other, thereby unintentionally encouraging the lukewarm, the restless, and the discontented to make themselves as disagreeable as possible, in order to be removed to places in which they fancy that their dissatisfied souls will find peace and rest. But to act thus is to be unfaithful to one of the chief duties of their office. This is to heal the moral ills under which their flock is labouring. They are, therefore, reminded that the task which they have undertaken in accepting the abbatial dignity is to care for and to endeavour to heal the sick souls committed to their charge. It is not an office of merely ruling over them and of lording it as the princes and the magistrates of the world do. Consequently they must not give their attention to this, which is, as it were, a merely accidental part of their office ; nor must they direct their ministrations to the docile, the meek, and the perfect. The model put before them for imitation is the good shepherd, who left the ninety-nine sheep in the desert, and went in search of the erring one as if it only was deserving of his affectionate care.

EVERY MEANS.—The Superior must not leave untried any means which are calculated to win over to better ways those who have strayed from the path

of God's holy law. He must exhort them by the persuasive words which a father's heart will inspire ; he must entice them by the magnetic force of good example ; if these fail, he must threaten with the severity and the authority of a master, and apply the rod of correction with the firm and steady hand of a minister of justice. He will thus, like a skilful physician, try different remedies for different stages of the moral disease, at all times carefully taking into account the physical and the moral strength of his patient.

ELDERLY AND DISCREET BROTHERS.—This is not the literal translation of the word *sympæctas*, but only a description of the persons who usually bore that title. The word has been variously written,¹ and in consequence has been variously explained. The most likely derivation is that which traces it to the Greek word *συμπαίκτης*, a playfellow, or as it is rendered in Latin, *collusor*. Hence it comes to mean one who is in *collusion* with the Abbot, who *plays* into his hands in order to aid him in the task of winning over the delinquent. Generally speaking, those who were thus employed in this charitable service were the elderly and discreet brethren, who with the Superior's connivance, or with his leave, came secretly to visit the brother who for his misdeeds was under excommunication, and reasoned with and exhorted him to humble himself, to do penance, and to ask for forgiveness.

¹ *Senipetas* is another of the numerous readings of this word. It is derived from *senium*, old age, and *peto*, I seek—*i. e.* one who is advancing towards old age.

GRADES OF MONKS.—It is thought that there were in the Benedictine monasteries four grades of Monks. First, juniors, who had not been twenty-four years in the Order. On them were laid all the heaviest burdens of the cloistral work. Secondly, those who had not been forty years in the Order. These were exempt from the office of cantor, and from acting either as deacon or as subdeacon at the solemn celebration of Holy Mass. Thirdly, those who had been forty years in the Order. These were called seniors or elders, and were not required to perform any of the burdensome offices of the monastery, such as that of cellarer or of almoner. They usually composed the Abbot's council, and their opinions were asked by him in all matters concerning the well-being of the monastery. Fourthly, the *sympæctæ*. These were Monks who had passed their fiftieth year in religious life, and who were exempt from all, or from nearly all, monastic duties. They usually lived in the infirmary, had a servant to wait upon them, and one of the younger Monks to come to talk to and to amuse them. These were the men whom the Abbot sent to console and to win over the excommunicate. It may, however, be asked, "Would not the delinquent know from having read the Rule that these men were simply playing into the Superior's hands, and that without his leave they could not speak to him?" Several commentators answer, "He may, indeed, suspect this, but he cannot be quite sure of it, because some theologians think that it is lawful to speak to an excommunicate if this is done for the good of his soul."

Besides, one in his position is, ordinarily speaking, in so great confusion of mind, that at the moment he does not advert to these points of Rule. Moreover, he may think that in their charity his visitors have asked leave to see him, and have, so to speak, extorted an unwilling assent from the Abbot, who would, perhaps, prefer that he should be left without comfort or consolation of any kind. Therefore, notwithstanding his knowledge of this chapter in the Rule, he would always have room to suspect that the Superior had not sent these men to console him, or to prevent him from being swallowed up by over-much sorrow, or to persuade him humbly to submit, and to repent of that for which these stringent measures had been taken against him.

CHAPTER XXVIII. .

OF THOSE WHO BEING CORRECTED DO NOT AMEND.

METHOD OF PROCEDURE.—The various steps which were taken by Superiors before having recourse to ignominious expulsion from the cloister are as follows: (1) an admonition given once or twice in secret; (2) a public reprehension; (3) excommunication—minor excommunication for a small fault, major excommunication for a grievous sin; (4) fasting; (5) scourging; (6) public prayer for the delinquent; (7) expulsion.

SHARPER CORRECTION.—That is to say, sharper,

more grievous, in the estimation of the imperfect sensual Religious ; for in itself excommunication is a far heavier penalty, in the eyes of an intelligent and virtuous man, than the bodily pain inflicted by the rod.

BEATEN WITH STRIPES.—It was a tradition, transmitted no doubt from the Jews, that the number of stripes inflicted upon the bare shoulders of the culprit should not exceed thirty-nine. These stripes were usually administered by the Abbot, as father of the monastic family, and it was always in his power to repeat the remedy as often as he judged that the delinquent required it.

A WISE PHYSICIAN.—All Superiors are taught by this passage to bear in mind the nature of their office, which deals with the moral infirmities of those who place themselves under their guidance. They are consequently to act with their subjects as a physician acts with the sick. They must be patient with their whimsical fancies, careful in their treatment of their maladies, and watchful in marking the varying phases of their diseases. They must adapt their remedies to the nature of the evil which these are destined to counteract ; and just as the physician uses gentle remedies for trifling disorders, so must they employ the fomentations and the ointments of mild and secret correction for light faults ; the medicine of the Holy Scripture to give weight and pungency to the public reprimand, by which they endeavour to check grave faults ; and when these fail to produce any effect, they must have recourse to the extreme measure of excommunication, just as the

physicians of that day had recourse to fire to burn out a sore which threatened to mortify and destroy life. To excommunication there was added scourging, "in order," as Isaias¹ says, "that vexation might make them understand what they hear." If admonition and public reprehension and excommunication, accompanied by corporal chastisement, proved of no avail, as a last resource the whole community betook themselves to prayer. They raised their voices in humble petition to the Master of all hearts, to take away the stony heart from the bosom of their offending brother, and to give him a heart of flesh, which would be sensible to all the efforts which were made for its healing and salvation. If the continual prayer of the just man availeth much, what might not be expected from the united and assiduous prayers of so many just and faithful children of God? If the delinquent is incorrigible—that is to say, if he offends, not through weakness nor through ignorance, but through contempt; if he fears not to sin, but either does not submit to the penalty of his sin, or if he submits to it, is not improved by it—then Superiors have one other remedy left, and that is, to expel the wretched man from the cloister, lest those who are virtuous may be tainted by his wickedness and drawn into his sin.

¹ Chap. xxviii.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHETHER THOSE WHO LEAVE THE MONASTERY
OUGHT TO BE RECEIVED AGAIN.

HIS OWN FAULT.—In this chapter St. Benedict speaks of two kinds of culprits: those who flee from the monastery, and those who are expelled from it. With respect to both these he discusses three points: whether they are to be received again; how they are to be received; and how often. Whether they have left the monastery through their own fault, or have been ejected from it by the authority of Superiors, they are to be received back when, like the prodigal, they return repentant. The words “through his own fault” are inserted in order to discriminate between those who have a legitimate reason for leaving the monastery, and those who depart from it of their own accord and through their self-will. A person is considered to have a legitimate reason for leaving a monastery, if he wishes to enter an Order in which stricter discipline is observed, or to embrace the eremitical life. If, after trying the more severe method of religious discipline, he finds that his strength is unequal to it, he is again to be welcomed back with joy. But if through levity of mind, or inconstancy of purpose, or fear of discipline, he runs away from the monastery; or if he is thrust forth on account of his pride, his contumacy, and his other vices, and returns, he is also to be received on the conditions and in the manner prescribed in this

chapter. In the English Benedictine Congregation a Monk is considered to be a fugitive, a runaway, if he leaves the monastery without the Superior's permission—no matter under what pretext he may go forth—and does not return on the same day. When he returns, the Superior is bound "in virtue of holy obedience" to receive him.

CONDITIONS FOR READMISSION.—The runaway is once again admitted to the monastery on condition that he promises amendment of that fault which induced him to quit his religious home, or for which Superiors felt themselves justified in thrusting him forth as a diseased member, which menaced the whole body with infection and death. Amendment consists in two things: in due satisfaction for the fault committed and for the scandal given, and in abstention from again committing the fault.

HOW RUNAWAYS ARE TO BE RECEIVED.—The discipline of different Orders and of different Congregations varies very much in this respect; but as a general rule, some such ceremony as the following was ordinarily observed. When the culprit came back and asked for admittance, he was detained in the guest-house or in the almonry for some few days, but was not allowed to speak to any of the brethren, except to those whom the Abbot sent to converse with him and to strengthen him in his good resolutions. On the day appointed by the Abbot, he came into the chapter-house stripped to the waist, carrying his cowl across his left arm, and holding a rod in his right hand. Casting himself upon his knees in the presence of the assembled community,

he humbly submitted his shoulders to the blows of the scourge. He then withdrew to a room close at hand, clothed himself in his cowl, and returning to the chapter-house, asked pardon for the faults which he had committed, for the scandal which he had given, and promised amendment. He was then put in the lowest place, and began that course of penance which each Order prescribes, and continued to perform it till the time determined by the Abbot had expired. At the present day, a fugitive is punished in a much milder manner than he was during the ages of faith. His penance usually amounts to a public reprehension in chapter ; fasting on bread and water for one day ; confinement to his room or cell for three days ; and standing last in the community for eight days. If he repeats his fault, these punishments are increased in proportion to his delinquencies. Those who need these penalties find the monastery gates thrown wide open for their egress.

HOW OFTEN ARE THEY TO BE RECEIVED?—St. Benedict says that after the third relapse all return to the monastery shall be denied them. Commentators, however, are of opinion that this binds the fugitive, but not the Abbot, who may mercifully receive the returning prodigal as often as he comes and asks for pardon. It was the custom in some monasteries to receive them again, but not into the community. They were lodged in some dependency or in some house belonging to the Order, and maintained at its expense. Those who persisted in their sin and in their rebellion were left to themselves, according to that saying of St. Paul : “ If the faithless one depart, let

him depart.”¹ To search for these fugitives, to bring them back, and to compel them to do penance, was a measure of discipline introduced at a later date, when the civil power lent its aid to enforce the observance of ecclesiastical and of monastic laws.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW CHILDREN ARE TO BE CORRECTED.

MEASURE OF CORRECTION.—In every species of government there resides the power of correction and of punishment. But that punishment and that correction must not descend like an unreasoning machine, with an equal weight upon all offences and upon all offenders alike. There must be in it that spirit of discernment which proportions the penalty to the malice of the offence and to the age of the offender. As, therefore, there were in the monasteries founded by St. Benedict persons of all ages and of all conditions of life, from the tender child to the aged man, from the unlettered clown to the cultured citizen of imperial Rome, it was necessary that he should legislate for the correction of the junior and less intelligent portion of his children. These he divides into three classes children, youths, and the uncultured.

CHILDREN.—Boys were called children (*pueri*) from their seventh till the completion of their fourteenth year. They were received at a very early age

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 15.

to be educated for the monastic life, and in later times to be prepared for the various professions and the positions of worldly life.

YOUTHS, or those who were under age (*adolescentiores*).—The time of youth extended from the fifteenth to the twenty-eighth year.

THE UNINTELLIGENT or uncultured.—In this class were comprised not only boys and youths, but persons of all ages and of various conditions, who through stupidity, or ignorance, or the absence of refinement and of sensibility, were proof against the disgrace incurred by excommunication, and indifferent to the losses and the dangers which usually resulted from it.

THEIR PUNISHMENT.—Whenever these boys or these youths were proud, or insolent, or disobedient ; and whenever any of those who were old, but too uncultured to care for excommunication, committed faults, which in the case of the more intelligent would be visited with that heavy penalty, they were corrected, first by fasting, and secondly by the application of the rod.

RIGOROUS FASTING.—St. Benedict calls this *excessive or rigorous fasting*, but the words are not to be taken in a strict but in a wide sense, meaning hard, difficult to bear. In this, as in all things else, he was guided by that wise spirit of discretion, without which the possession of all other good qualities is rendered nugatory. Those who were punished in this way either were not deprived of all food, but of only some portion of it, or were compelled to defer their meal till a much later hour than that at which the rest of the

community were accustomed to take theirs. A fast was considered to be rigorous if only half the amount of food and of drink was allowed. Some, however, are of opinion that by "a rigorous fast" was meant only a quarter of the ordinary measure of food and of drink.

SHARP STRIPES. — This is the second way in which the faults of boys, of youths, and of the unintelligent were punished and corrected. Those who in these luxurious days advocate the abolition of corporal chastisement in the education of boys, would not find favour in the eyes of St. Benedict. He looked upon the rod as a healthy corrective, an effective deterrent, and a swift avenger of their faults, and with the wisest of men considered that an unmanly dread of its use ordinarily results in the spoiling of the child. But, while advocating the use of corporal punishment, he was wise enough to guard it against abuse. It was administered at the command of the Abbot, by a calm, unimpassioned man, and in that measure and in that degree which were proportioned at once to the age of the culprit and to the gravity of the fault which he had committed.

The boys who were educated in the monastery attended the Divine Office by day and by night. They were employed in singing the Psalms and the antiphons. If they were sluggish in rising from bed, they were caned; if during the course of the service they fell asleep, they were made to hold one of the large choir-books and to stand till they were quite awake; if they made any mistakes in singing the antiphons or the Psalms, so as to cause any confusion, they were

caned. This was done by their master with the Abbot's permission, but never if there were any seculars in the church. For irreverence in church, or for any unbecoming behaviour, their hair was pulled; but they were never struck with the hand or with the foot.

THE LESSON which we may learn from this legislation is, to use the scourge upon ourselves when we perceive that we have the passions, the faults, and the ideas of children. The rod is useful to tame the flesh "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection;" to withdraw us from evil, for the Apostle adds, "lest I become a castaway;" to atone for faults; to help us to merit the joys of heaven; to make us participators in the sufferings of our Lord; to aid us in our pursuit of prayer; to procure graces for ourselves and for our neighbours.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CELLARER.

CELLARER.—This word is derived from the Latin word *cella* or *cellarius*, the chamber in which all the necessaries of the monastery were preserved. He who had the charge of all these, and the administration of the temporalities, was called Cellarer, Procurator, Provisor, Syndic. He was probably chosen by the Abbot with the advice of his council, and St. Benedict specially mentions that he should be taken from the community, in order to exclude the employment of secular persons in the domestic affairs of the monas-

tery. In the English Benedictine Congregation this official is nominated by the Superior with the advice of his council. He cannot be one who is that Superior's relative within the third degree. In his hands is the administration of all the temporalities, but under the Superior's direction. Without consulting and obtaining his consent, he can do nothing of any importance. He keeps the accounts, carries the purse, is, in virtue of his office, a councillor, and has a general permission to go round all the places belonging to the monastery. Within three months after the Superior's installation in office it is his duty, with two others, to examine the accounts, and after the examination, to sign them. This office cannot be refused by any member of the chapter who is resident in the monastery.

HIS QUALITIES.—In pointing out the qualities requisite in him who is to hold this office, in describing his duties, and the manner in which these duties ought to be performed, our Holy Father has given to all Superiors an excellent lesson which they ought to study and endeavour to reduce to practice. In the character of a good Cellarer which he paints for them they have an exact counterpart of that which he himself must have been to all the Monks who put themselves under his firm and gentle sway. For it is impossible that one so eminent for prudence and sanctity should order any subject to be anything different from that which he himself was, or to do anything different from that which he himself did.

WISE.—Therefore the first quality which he says must pervade all the actions of him who is put in this

responsible post is wisdom, which we might, perhaps, render into English by our word "common sense"—that sound practical wisdom which never suffers those who are possessed of it to run into any excess, or to be guilty of any foolish act.

RIPE IN MANNER.—The maturity which is looked for in him is not merely that which only years can give, but that which is begotten of a holy life and of an evenly-balanced mind, for "the understanding of a man is gray hairs, and a spotless life is old age."¹

SOBER.—By sobriety, St. Benedict means that temperance and moderation which the Greeks express by the adjective *σώφρων*. It is not simply abstemiousness in point of meat and of drink, but that self-control by which one has one's self completely in hand. Therefore the word is used here in its wider signification, without, however, excluding the idea of temperateness in food and in drink.

NOT A GREAT EATER.—These words afford an additional proof that something higher than "temperance" is meant by the word *sober*. The Cellarer was doubtless required to be one who had his appetite under control, because of the many temptations to indulge it to which his office would expose him.

NOT HAUGHTY.—His character ought to be such that he would not be elated by the power which was put into his hand, so as to become arrogant, bold, and imperious towards his brethren, because of the "little brief authority" in which he was dressed.

NOT TURBULENT.—We think that this word faithfully renders the idea contained in the word

¹ Wisd. iv. 8.

turbulentus of the Latin text. That word signifies "unquiet, troublesome, having the face clouded with care, wanting in calmness and serenity." Responsibility has the effect of causing certain characters to show all these signs in their outward behaviour. Men of this stamp would be a source of endless annoyance and of unrest to their brethren, especially in an office like that of the Cellarer, in which they would be frequently brought into contact and collision with them in the course of even one day.

NOT INSULTING either in the matter or in the manner of his speech while treating with them.

NOT SLOW in executing the commissions which are given to him ; nor in distributing to his brethren the necessaries to which they have a right ; nor in attending to the requests which they sometimes have to make to him ; but brisk, cheerful, obliging, and attentive.

NOT WASTEFUL.—He must remember that he is not absolute master over the substance committed to his keeping, but only the steward, the dispenser. Consequently he must not be too free and lavish in his expenditure, but wise and prudent, as being accountable to another for everything which passes through his hands, and therefore careful to see that there is abundance without any waste.

GOD-FEARING.—This is the well-spring of all the preceding good qualities. "He that feareth God neglecteth nothing." It is to Him that he is ultimately accountable. God's eye sees everything, and His justice will call him to judgment. Therefore, though the Superior may not see and may not under-

stand, though he may think that all is as it should be, and, on the appearance of rectitude, bestow his words of approval, yet there is One who cannot be misled by a fair outside. It is for Him that the God-fearing man works; it is for His approval that he sighs; and therefore he must perforce be all that St. Benedict desires, if he has this fundamental quality.

FATHERLY.—Dealing with his brethren as if they were his children. Loving them all with equal affection; solicitous for their well-being. Watchful to find out and to anticipate their wants. Glad whenever an opportunity offers itself to do them a kindness or a service. Careful, diligent, merciful.

CARE OF ALL THINGS.—The Cellarer had the care and the administration of all the substance which belonged to the monastery—the corn, the wine, the oil, the flocks of sheep, the herds of cattle, the stores of food, the garments of the Monks, the rolls of stuff from which they were made, and, in one word, everything belonging to the external well-being of the community. His power over these was not, as we said before, absolute, but restricted by the amount of authority which it might please the Abbot to intrust to him. It was at the Abbot's will that he did everything. Yet, although not independent, Superiors usually leave to their officials in a broad and liberal-minded spirit a sufficiently free hand to enable them to carry out all the duties of their various positions. It is necessary, however, that those who are thus put in authority should always bear in mind that their power is of this limited nature. For unless they do, they will gradually lose sight of their dependence, and

begin to act as if they were absolute masters and proprietors.

MUST NOT SADDEN THE BRETHREN.—By treating them in a disdainful, supercilious way ; by addressing to them sharp and biting words ; by questioning their permissions ; by showing unwillingness to give them that for which they ask, or of which they stand in need ; by putting them off ; by acting towards them in a gruff, off-hand manner. How beautiful, how wise, how great-hearted is the advice of our Holy Father to the Cellarer, respecting those who pester and annoy him, and who are unreasonable in their demands ! “ Do not grieve them,” he says, “ by disdainfully and contemptuously denying them that for which they ask, even though they ask it in an unbecoming manner ; but with reason and with humility deny them—that is to say, let your refusal be couched in terms of so great charity, and be made in such a winning way, that they will not feel aggrieved at it.”

HAVE REGARD FOR HIS OWN SOUL.—This is a very seasonable piece of advice for one who is usually so engrossed in secular business as it is the lot of the Cellarer to be. It is, of course, his duty to occupy himself with these temporal cares ; but, at the same time, he must not suffer himself to be so taken up with them as to neglect his own eternal well-being. The question which he must frequently put to himself is : “ What will it profit me to have been a wise and prudent steward of the monastery, if, through my devotion to it, I have become a faithless steward to my God ?” Therefore he must take measures to secure

his own salvation ; he must watch over it, and use those means which will enable him to remember that he has not here a lasting city, but is hastening with rapid strides to an eternal home. Consequently he will make it his business not to absent himself from choir, unless there is a manifest necessity for so doing ; he will endeavour to be present at all the regular exercises ; and will not regard as a privilege any exemption which he may enjoy in this respect, but as a peril of which the results may be disastrous.

THE SICK, THE CHILDREN, ETC.—St. Benedict commends these to the Cellarer's special care, because they are not so well able to help themselves as those who attend the regular exercises. Therefore the Cellarer must take particular care that those who are appointed to supply the wants of the sick, the little children, the guests, and the poor, do not neglect them, and cause them pain and inconvenience. He must keep a watchful eye upon these officials, and sharply rebuke any remissness on their part ; because he may take it for granted that, unless he be somewhat of a martinet, negligence and remissness will creep into their service, and much needless suffering be caused to the helpless portion of Christ's flock.

THE VESSELS, ETC.—St. Benedict received this idea from the ancient Fathers, who did not regard monastic property in the same light in which they would look upon secular property, but as something sacred and consecrated to the service of God. It must not, however, be supposed that he wished his children to treat the vessels and the substance of the monastery with a degree of respect equal to that which we

pay to the vessels which are used in the Holy Sacrifice, but only with a more special degree of *care*, avoiding all danger of loss or of destruction. Hence everything belonging to the monastery must be carefully guarded and preserved; the utmost cleanliness must be maintained, and efforts made to ward off all that may threaten its destruction.

NOTHING TO BE NEGLECTED.—This and several other passages in the Rule point out and inculcate economy. There must be no waste, and therefore small things must be cared for, and not despised because they *are* small. Both the Cellarer and all the Monks of the monastery must remember that they have vowed poverty. Therefore, like the poor, they must husband their resources and avoid all useless expenditure. Their aim must be not to discover that of which they may, perchance, have some need, but that of which, as a superfluity, they may deprive themselves.

NOT COVETOUS NOR PRODIGAL.—Each of these extremes is bad. Virtue stands midway between them. Hence, though told to be sparing and saving, he is not to be so desirous of guarding against expense as to be niggardly; and in striving to avoid this he must not be so profuse in his liberality as to be prodigal and wasteful of the property of the monastery.

ABOVE ALL THINGS HUMILITY.—It is not to be wondered at that one who was so great a master and lover of this fundamental Christian virtue, should specially recommend it to the practice of those who are vested with power to rule others. The possession of this power is oftentimes enough to vitiate

an otherwise good nature, to make it arrogant, overbearing, insolent, intolerable. Hence St. Benedict's words to the Cellarer, "*above all things have humility.*" So deeply impressed were some of the Monks of a later date with the necessity for this virtue, that in order to strike the imagination and to imprint upon the minds of officials the will of our Holy Father in this respect, they instituted an extraordinary ceremony, which was well adapted to secure both these ends. It was ordained by Lanfranc that whenever this chapter of the Rule was read in public the Cellarer should prostrate himself upon the ground before the whole community, and ask pardon for all the faults which he had committed in the discharge of his office. At Clugny it was the duty of the cantor or of the master of the ceremonies to warn the Cellarer three or four days before the date on which this chapter was to be read, in order that he might make arrangements to be present. On that occasion he came to the chapter-house, and humbly asked pardon for his shortcomings. At the end of the ceremony the *Miserere* was recited, then *Kyrie eleison*, *Pater noster*, &c., *Salvum fac servum tuum*, *Dominus vobiscum*, and the prayer, *Omnipotens, sempiternus Deus, miserere famulo tuo*, &c. On that day the Cellarer was empowered to give the brethren an extra dish at dinner in order to show them his goodwill.

A GENTLE ANSWER.—This gives us another glimpse of the clear insight into human nature possessed by St. Benedict. He knew full well all the worry and the annoyance to which this office would

subject the Cellarer, and the drain upon his stock of patience which the continual application to him for various necessaries would most certainly be. He was well aware that, in spite of rules to the contrary, many would make their requests out of due time and at awkward moments ; that they would ask for that of which they had but little need ; that their manner of asking would be provoking ; that their very tone of voice and their carriage would irritate and annoy. Therefore he counsels great meekness, long-suffering, and patience to him who must needs meet with all sorts of characters. If he has nothing else to bestow, he must give at least a gentle answer to those who come to him. Let his face be unclouded, his manner cheerful and pleasant, his address kind and encouraging, that the timid may not fear to ask for that of which they stand in need.

WITHOUT ARROGANCE.—The word in the Latin text which we render into English by the word *arrogance* is *typhus*, a Greek word (*τυφος*) signifying “swelling, arrogance, pride.” The ordinary reading is *tyfus*, but this is generally supposed to be an error for *typhus*.

WITHOUT DELAY.—He must take care that their meals be given to them at the appointed times, and that they be not forced to wait for them. The reason assigned for this, is to avoid giving to them any occasion of scandal. For if it were frequently to happen, they would naturally attribute it to the carelessness and the sluggishness of the Cellarer. They would consequently give way to murmuring ; they would regard this negligence as a kind of slight put

upon the community ; thence would arise contentions, uncharitable thoughts, biting words, and trouble in the house of God. Besides, any carelessness of this nature is the cause of great inconvenience in a monastery ; for as the various hours of each day are portioned out for all the different exercises, when any delay is caused in the fulfilment of one, all the rest have to be postponed, and some of them to be omitted altogether. It is with good reason, therefore, that St. Benedict orders the Cellarer to give the brethren their “appointed allowance of food” without any delay.

HELPERS.—In order to lighten his labours in communities which were numerous, the Cellarer had several subordinates to perform certain portions of his duty. Of these, one was usually a man of so great capacity that he could, if necessary, be the Cellarer’s substitute ; a second had charge of the stores ; a third, of the wine-cellar ; a fourth attended to the garden ; a fifth cared for the fish-ponds, &c.

SUITABLE HOURS.—In order that the Cellarer might not be continually pestered with applications for various articles, our Holy Father ordains that there should be suitable hours set apart for the purpose of giving that which had to be given. The appointment of these was doubtless left to the Cellarer’s own choice. Unsuitable hours would be those devoted to study, to rest, to silence, to manual labour, and all the time which intervened between Compline and the hour of Prime. By adhering strictly to the time indicated for asking and for receiving, “no one will be either troubled or saddened in the house of God.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE MONASTERY.

SUBSTANCE.—That is to say, all the movable goods of the monastery, such as corn, barley, hay, cattle, food, raiment, and the like.

IRON TOOLS (*ferramenta*).—These were the agricultural implements which the Monks used in their field labour, and consisted not only of iron, but of wood; they were such things as picks, spades, axes, ploughs, and the rest. Special mention is made of the *iron* tools, because they are more costly than those of wood, &c.

CLOTHES.—The garments of which the brethren had need; the stuff out of which each of them was made; everything pertaining to their beds, linen, shoes, &c.

ANY OTHER GOODS.—The charters and the deeds of gift belonging to the monastery; the gold and the silver vessels which it possessed; the precious vestments for the Holy Sacrifice; the books; and, in a word, all other things which were considered to be of any worth.

BRETHREN OF WHOSE LIFE, ETC.—From that which has already been said in the preceding chapter, about the cellarer, we may form for ourselves some idea of what nature would be the character of those men whom the Abbot appoints to these offices. It must be taken for granted that their lives would be exemplary and irreproachable. That, however, would

not be enough to satisfy St. Benedict. He would require them to have capacity to fulfil the duties of their respective offices. If they had not, they would speedily be removed, and competent men be put in their places. Hence we may rationally suppose that the librarian would be a man skilled in book-learning; the sacristan conversant with church furniture; the cellarer a good administrator; the infirmarian, somewhat of a physician; and the cantor a good musician.

A LIST (*breve*).—This word has various significations: (1) an inventory; (2) a memorial, to call things to mind which are worthy of note; (3) orders issued by a Superior and written in brief; (4) a catalogue of names; (5) Brevia or Briefs, apostolic letters issued by the Popes; (6) lists of choir officials; (7) notices of death. The Abbot always kept by him this list or inventory of the monastic property, in order that whenever there was a change of officers he might know whether anything had been lost.

SLOVENLY OR NEGLIGENT.—If in the discharge of any office, or in the use of anything belonging to the monastery, there was either slovenliness or neglect; if, for instance, the tools were brought back covered with mud, or were allowed to become rusty; if the food was spoiled, or the clothes were torn or suffered to become dirty, those through whose fault this occurred were sharply rebuked for not being filled with the spirit of poverty, which studiously guards against anything that would entail either loss or expense.

REGULAR DISCIPLINE.—Those who when first rebuked did not amend the faults for which they had been corrected, were made to pass through the various

grades of punishment. These were as follows: (1) a secret correction; (2) a public rebuke; (3) excommunication; (4) scourging; (5) the public prayers of the community for their amendment; (6) expulsion.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHETHER ALL OUGHT EQUALLY TO RECEIVE WHAT IS NEEDFUL.

VICE OF PROPRIETORSHIP.—As all Monks at their profession took the vow of evangelical poverty, St. Benedict calls all proprietorship in their case a *vice*. This is to be mercilessly cut out of the monastery by the very roots—that is to say, from the *heart*, in the affections of which towards worldly possessions this vice consists; then from the *actions* of the Religious, by not giving, nor receiving, nor having anything without leave; and lastly, from their *words*, by not suffering them to say that anything is their own.

TO WHAT THE VOW OBLIGES.—From this it is easy to see that the vow obliges Religious (1) not to have, nor to possess, nor to use anything as their own, with an affection and a will to retain it, as if by right or by title, independently of the Superior's will. This would make them proprietors. (2) Not to give away anything without his leave. (3) Not to distribute any of the goods intrusted to their care at their own pleasure, but in exact accordance with his will. (4) Not to lend without his permission anything

which they have for their own use. But in some monasteries there exists a sort of custom sanctioned by the Superiors, which gives a kind of general leave to lend and to give to one another such things as pens, paper, and the like.

TABLETS.—These were made of wood, or of ivory, or of any other material, over which there was spread a thin coating of wax. On these tablets the Monks wrote what they had to do, their notes upon that which they had read, their own secret thoughts or the state of their conscience, in order to be able to make to the Abbot a more thorough manifestation of their interior.

GRAPHIUM OR PEN.—This was also called "*a stylus*," and was usually made of iron, of silver, of gold, or of brass. At one end it was sharply pointed, in order to mark the wax of the tablets; at the other end it was flat, in order to make erasures by smoothing over the wax in which the wrong word had been marked. Hence in classical language *vertere stylum* means to make a correction.

BODIES AND WILLS.—By saying that the very bodies and the wills of the Monks are not their own, St. Benedict means that by their vows of chastity and of obedience their bodies and their wills are entirely consecrated to God's service, and, therefore, must not be employed except in the doing of those things which are allowed by obedience. His argument is: "If in this sense Religious may not possess that which is so peculiarly their own, as are their bodies and their wills, with far greater reason may they not possess such trifling articles as pens and tablets."

NECESSARIES. — These are not only food and clothing, but all those things which are requisite for becomingly and conveniently leading a monastic life. These are a cowl, tunic, shirts, shoes and stockings, a handkerchief, drawers, a knife, pens, needles, &c.

FATHERS OF THE MONASTERY. — The Abbot, the cellarer, who is ordered to act as a father to all the brotherhood, and very probably the other Superiors under whose jurisdiction the Monks happened to be placed.

TO CALL ANYTHING ONE'S OWN. — In former times this was enforced with much rigour, and even in our own day many who are either scrupulous or narrow-minded carry this rule to ridiculous lengths, thereby bringing contempt both on religion and on themselves by what is, after all, only a means to an end—namely, a reminder of our dependence on the will of Superiors. Hence we think that, admitting this principle of entire dependence upon our Superiors for everything that we possess, and assuming that this is known and admitted by all who have even a superficial notion of religious life, we need not astonish the world at large by saying “our” instead of “my” when speaking of anything which is given to us; we may use the ordinary language of every-day life and say “my,” because it is well known that whatever we possess is ours only at the will of Superiors. However, we do not presume to blame those who pursue the other course, if they do so in a broad liberal spirit, and with a view to keep the state of poverty well before their minds.

THE PUNISHMENT. — Those who offended against

this law of poverty were punished in the usual way ; that is to say, they passed through the various grades, from private admonition to expulsion, if there was not any amendment.

ACCORDING TO NEED.—The model which St. Benedict proposes to his children in this matter of the use of temporalities is the first Christian community at Jerusalem. Those among its members who had lands sold them, and gave the proceeds to the Apostles for the general use. Those who had money brought it, and laid it at their feet. From this common fund distribution was made to each of the faithful, according as he had need. The principle which guided the Apostles in the division of these temporal things must guide each Superior. All his subjects are not equally to receive of these, but only in proportion to their needs. If their needs are few, then only few things must be given to them ; if they are many, then none of them must be left without its corresponding help.

CONSIDERATION FOR INFIRMITIES.—By laying down necessity or need as the principle which is to guide him in his distribution of temporalities, St. Benedict prevents all “accepting of persons.” Personal affection, private friendship, worldly consideration must have nothing to do with it, but simply and solely the wants of the individual Religious. These he must take into consideration, and, regardless of what others may think, make his distribution accordingly. Among the members of his community he has men who are weak and delicate ; or men who have come from the upper class of society ; or men

who are elderly and who have held positions of trust in the world ; also he has others who are of a robust constitution ; or who have lived in straitened circumstances ; or who are young and inexperienced, and accustomed to the strict discipline of school life. Now, it is but natural that these latter will need far less consideration and attention, and far fewer of the little creature comforts which are almost necessities to some men, than will the former. All these various circumstances must have their weight with a Superior, and to his sagacity and penetration it is left to determine in what measure these various needs of his subjects must be supplied.

THOSE WHO NEED LESS.—When the robust perceive that many indulgences are granted to their fellow Religious, and that the austerity of discipline in clothing, rest, and food is somewhat softened for their more delicate constitutions, they must not repine, nor wish that an equal amount of consideration should be shown to themselves. They do not need it, and because they do not need it they ought to give God thanks for that strength with which He has endowed them, and for the virtue of abstinence, which they are in consequence able to practise.

THOSE WHO NEED MORE.—These are not to be puffed up with pride because of the mercy which is shown to them. And with good reason, for their manifold necessities are not so many grounds for self-congratulation, but for sorrow, inasmuch as they are marks of misery. They are the occasion unto them of many spiritual losses ; they cause them, in a certain sense, to be a burden to the community ; they make

them beholden to their brethren for the performance of many services, which it is humiliating to have executed by another; they expose them to the danger of murmuring, of sloth, and of tepidity; they fill them with many pains, and sometimes with shame and confusion. Hence those who stand in need of many helps, which the healthy members of the community are able to dispense with, will find more to move them to self-humiliation than to pride, if they will but look at their position in the light which these reflections throw upon it.

NO MURMURING.—Without ever uttering a single syllable of complaint, a person may be guilty of murmuring, if he is displeased with his Superior's action, and revolts against it in his heart. Again, he may be guilty of it by suffering the discontent which is surging up within him to find a vent in words. If there is a reasonable ground either for the one or for the other, this murmuring is without fault, provided, of course, that no one is scandalised by the expression of his discontent. But if there is no such reasonable ground, then his murmuring is sinful. Does St. Benedict allow his disciples to murmur in these last two cases? No; his words are: "Above all things take heed that neither by word nor by sign the evil of murmuring show itself upon any occasion or for any reason whatever." Hence the obligation of Superiors to do all that they are able, by means of watchfulness and of prudent foresight, to remove all occasion of grumbling. Also subjects must remember that if the action of Superiors does not meet with their approval, the way to have it rectified is not the way either of

secret or of open murmuring. A humble and modest representation to the Superior is the best means to effect that which they desire, and if that fails they have the consolation of knowing that they have done their duty. By pursuing the other method they offend God ; they do an injury to their Superior ; they turn the minds and the hearts of his subjects against him ; and they afford to those with whom they converse, and before whom they are guilty of grumbling, an occasion of falling into the same detestable sin. Besides all this, grumbling is generally rash and unjust. It is rash, because the grumbler, ordinarily speaking, has no knowledge whatever of the motives or the reasons which cause his Superior to pursue the line of policy which he has thought fit to mark out for himself. These are hidden in the Superior's own heart. He is not obliged to take all his subjects into his confidence ; consequently, to condemn him upon the mere appearances which the matter wears is to be guilty of a rash judgment. It is also unjust, because any condemnation of an act, without a previous hearing of all that the condemned party has to allege in his defence, is a breach of the usual procedure of justice, and an injury to the person who is condemned. Hence it is with good reason that St. Benedict never suffers his disciples upon any occasion or for any cause to murmur against Superiors.

PUNISHMENT.—In the case of other faults, his usual sentence is, “ Let the offender be subjected to regular discipline ” —that is to say, let him pass through the various grades. But here he orders that the culprit be at once subjected to the more severe

discipline. It is thought that this was to pass from secret reproof to excommunication or to scourging. We may say, then, that a *districtior disciplina* is the non-observance of one or of more of the steps in these penal procedures.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

OF THE WEEKLY SERVERS IN THE KITCHEN.

NO ONE EXCUSED.—When we read this chapter, and then compare the practice of the Benedictines of the present day with that which was seemingly so strongly insisted upon by our Holy Father, we are inclined, perhaps, to think that the Order has departed, without much reason, from this exercise of charity and of humility. A little reflection, however, will help to set us right, and to show us that our present custom not only would meet with St. Benedict's approval, but is actually provided for in this very chapter, from the legislation of which we have apparently gone completely aside. In the first place, it must be borne in mind that in the monasteries which he founded there were usually not more than twelve Monks, of whom probably not one was in priest's Orders, or in any Orders at all. They were, to all intents and purposes, that which we should call "lay brothers." It was, therefore, but fitting that they should serve one another in the office of the kitchen as the Rule ordains. None of them was exempted, unless, as the same Rule is careful to point out, he was hindered from this duty by sickness

or *by business of more profit*. In large communities St. Benedict himself exempts the cellarer and those who are more profitably employed. Therefore, acting upon the principle laid down by our great legislator, Superiors withdrew from this menial service those of their subjects whose talents were available for work of greater profit; and as in course of time the Benedictine Monk, from being an agricultural labourer, became a cleric, a priest, a man of letters, useful in preaching, in teaching, in hearing confessions, and in exercising all the works of the ministry, those who held sway over him withdrew him from the scouring of pots and of pans, from the cooking and the serving up of meats, to the professor's chair in the schools or in the university, to the pulpit and the altar, to the artist's easel, and to the laboratory of the scientific man. In so doing they had St. Benedict's approval, and acted in accordance with his express will; for they employed their subjects in work of greater profit. Even among those who offered themselves to the monasteries for the express purpose of devoting themselves to the menial service of their brethren, not all were suffered to perform the cook's office in the kitchen. There were some brothers who exercised the tailor's or the shoemaker's craft; others were bakers; others were millers; in one word, each had his own department of labour marked out and assigned to him, from which Superiors did not move him, mindful of the proverb, "*Ne sutor ultra crepidam*," and having compassion on the digestive powers of their subjects, whose stomachs they did not wish to be trifled with by the tentative efforts of amateur cooks. The discipline

which in this respect is in force at present is that one of the lay brothers who has sufficient skill in the art of cooking should be appointed to fill that office; the rest of the brethren comply with as much of the will of our legislator as is compatible with their other and more important duties, by waiting at table, each in his turn, for a week. This seems to have been the custom in England for several centuries, for in an unpublished manuscript of Father Baker's there is cited, in testimony of that which we are here advancing, an extract from a sort of abridgment of the Rule, which must have been written about the year 1380. The words which he quotes are as follows: "No one is to be excused from the dressing-board in the kitchen without they be sick or otherwise occupied for the common weal of the convent." By the "dressing-board" is meant serving the brethren while they sit at table, by carrying in the meat and the drink, which were set forth on this side-table by the cook who presided in the kitchen.

A GREATER REWARD IS GOTTEN THENCE.—This is said to be the reason which St. Benedict assigns for not excusing any one from serving in the kitchen. But although this meaning may be given to the phrase, yet its position in the text is such as to leave it quite doubtful whether it refers to the clause which orders all to serve in the kitchen, or to that which exempts from this menial duty those who are employed in offices of greater profit. Some commentators think that it has reference to the first, and some that it has reference to the second. Those who favour the first opinion read the sentence thus: "Let no one be ex-

cused from the office of the kitchen (because a greater reward is gotten thence), unless he is hindered by sickness or by business of more profit." Those who favour the second read it thus: "Let no one be excused from the office of the kitchen, unless he is hindered by sickness or by business of more profit, whence there is gotten a greater reward." If it should please any one to follow the first reading, he must remember that this labour of serving in the kitchen may be looked at in two ways. First, with respect to the humility which it forces men to practise, and the charity towards their brethren which it enkindles in their hearts. Viewed in this light, that lowly service is unquestionably of greater merit to the individual Religious. Secondly, with respect to the whole community. From this point of view there are undoubtedly several other offices which are more important and profitable, whether we regard them from a temporal or from a spiritual standpoint.

HELP FOR THE WEAK.—If the community is numerous, or if the brother whose turn it is to serve in the kitchen is weak, others must be appointed to help him, in order that he may not be overburdened, and, in consequence of this, go about his work with a weary body and a sad heart. By the "situation of the place," St. Benedict means that if the monastery either is so built or is in such a part of the country that the garden is at a distance from the kitchen; the well far removed from it; the place in which wood, &c., is stored is not close at hand, there should be given to the cook helpers to procure for him all the necessaries for his office. Ordinarily speaking,

those who planned the building of a monastery took special care that it should have within its own enclosure everything necessary for monastic life, and that these things should be within easy reach of all the various offices for which they were required. But, notwithstanding all the foresight and the prudent care of those to whom the construction of the buildings was intrusted, the very nature of the spot selected might be such that some of the most necessary articles could not be found close at hand. It is of places like these that St. Benedict speaks, when he talks of the "situation" of the monastery requiring that help should be given to the cook who presided in the kitchen.

HIS DUTIES.—Besides his ordinary labours in preparing, cooking, and helping to serve up the food of the brethren, the cook for the week had several other duties to perform. On Saturday he had to clean all the vessels which were used in the kitchen ; these were then inspected by the cellarer, to see that their number was the same as on the preceding Saturday, that they were all sound, and free from every spot or stain of dirt. In addition to cleansing the vessels of his ministry, the cook usually swept out the monastery, and washed the towels with which the brethren wiped their hands and their feet. Either before Vespers or before Compline, aided by his successor in the kitchen, he procured towels and water, and washed the feet of all the community. This ceremony took place either in the cloister, or just outside the chapter-house. In some places it was done in silence, while in others certain Psalms and prayers were sung. This cere-

mony, like many others which in the early ages of the Church and of monasticism were profitable and edifying, has fallen into desuetude. A vestige of it is left in the washing of feet which takes place on Maundy Thursday.

PRIVILEGE.—Towards the end of the hour which preceded the common refecton, the cook and his assistants were allowed to take a draught of wine and a little bread, in order that they might not feel faint and weary in serving their brethren. We have translated the word *biberis*, *biberes* (nom. plur.) by the word *draught*, because it signifies a small vessel containing as much liquor as could be taken in one draught—about the third part of the measure of drink which was allowed at meals. The bread which was given with it would weigh about four ounces. This, as some commentators maintain, was not taken from their ordinary portion, but was given over and above, as a compensation for their extra labour in the kitchen. On Sundays, however, this concession was not allowed. They had to fast in order to receive Holy Communion at Mass. The same regulation held good for all the great solemnities, because on these it was their custom to approach the Holy Table.

Besides receiving something over and above the appointed allowance, the incoming and the outgoing brother were publicly prayed for at the end of Lauds. This ceremony is still observed. The blessing which the outgoing brother receives is the following prayer : “ Grant, we beseech Thee, O Almighty God, that an eternal reward may be given to this Thy servant for the office which he has fulfilled, through Christ our

Lord." The blessing of the incoming brother is: "May the Lord guard thy incoming and thy outgoing, and take away from thee the spirit of pride: Who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen."

CHAPTER XXXV.

OF THE SICK BRETHREN.

THE INFIRMARY.—In every monastery there is a place set apart for the special use of the sick. It is usually divided into several rooms or cells, for the greater comfort and convenience of those who are labouring under any disease. To look after and to attend to all their wants, a special brother is chosen and appointed by the Abbot. The qualities which fit him for this office are specified by St. Benedict. He must be a God-fearing man, observant of regular discipline, and careful in the fulfilment of duties committed to his charge. This last qualification will prevent him from forgetting the necessities of those who, in their helplessness, are dependent upon his good pleasure. It will make him look forward to all possible contingencies, in order to anticipate their wants, and to give no occasion of grumbling to those who, by reason of their state, are so keenly alive to any apparent neglect.

THE SICK.—In all the Rules of the ancient Religious, care of the sick is specially enjoined; but in none is the order to attend to their wants conveyed in

more weighty terms than in that of St. Benedict : "Before all things, and above all things," says our great patriarch, "special care must be taken of the sick." They are to be served as if they were Christ Himself ; and because they represent our Divine Lord, it is their special duty to put that model of patient suffering before their mind's eye, and to imitate Him in the endurance of the pains and the miseries which are incident to their malady. Hence they must keep a watch over themselves, in order never to cause any grief or sadness to those who serve them for the love of God. The sick are often the occasion of much pain and inconvenience to their attendants by the low spirits by which they suffer themselves to be overcome ; by their complaints, their impatiences, their murmurs, and the injurious language with which they sometimes outrage those who from them deserve nothing else than unbounded gratitude. They are satisfied with nothing. Their medicine is unsuitable ; their food is not to their taste ; their place of abode is hurtful to their bodily well-being. They refuse to take the prescribed remedies ; they ask for those which it is either difficult or impossible to procure ; they desire those things which the spirit of religious poverty proclaims to be unsuitable to their condition. Sometimes their folly is so great that they pine for that which would be either absolutely hurtful to them, or, if not hurtful, utterly useless. At the same time that the sick are cautioned against giving pain to the infirmarian or to his assistants, the infirmarian and all those who are in any way employed about the sick are exhorted to bear patiently with all the morose-

ness, the pettishness, and the injurious treatment which may be heaped upon them. They must remember the pitiable condition to which ill-health reduces the noblest minds ; how it obscures the intellect, and fills the imagination with gloomy images. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that those who are sick should sometimes forget themselves, and treat with rudeness and with ingratitude those who are lavishing upon them all the tenderness of a mother. By bearing this in mind they will win for themselves that greater reward, which is bestowed as a crown upon the patience of the meek and long-suffering soul.

THE ABBOT'S DUTY TO THE SICK.—The Abbot's duties with respect to the sick may be divided into two classes : those which regard their bodily welfare, and those which regard their spiritual welfare. It is his place to see that whatever is necessary for the healing of their maladies and for the alleviation of their pains shall be provided for them, in food, bedding, and medicine. Also it is incumbent upon him to warn them of the danger which threatens their life ; to procure for them the Sacraments of Penance, Extreme Unction, and the most Holy Eucharist ; and frequently to visit and console them during the days of their illness.

It was the custom in many monasteries for those of the sick who were not labouring under very serious diseases, to attend a daily Mass, to recite the Canonical Hours, and at table to observe as far as possible the silence prescribed by the Rule. Holy Scripture was read to them ; they went frequently to confession ; and every night after Compline they were

sprinkled with holy water. To insure careful attendance upon the sick, the Abbot is reminded that any remissness on the part of officials in their service in the infirmary, and, we may add, in any of the offices which are intrusted to subordinates, will be laid to his charge. But yet we must not from this general principle draw the sweeping conclusion that all the delinquencies of inferiors are attributed in the just judgment of God to those who are vested with authority. They are accountable only when through culpable negligence they have neither eyes to see the faults and the deficiencies of their officials, nor ears to listen to the complaints which are uttered against their maladministration. They are, therefore, warned to guard themselves against any such faulty indifference, with respect to the way in which their subordinates conduct themselves in their various offices. A Superior must bear in mind that in his monastery he is the mainspring by which the machinery of government is kept in motion. He must not be slack. He must not withdraw the constraining power, otherwise those who work under him will fall out of gear. They must all feel, be it ever so slightly, that there is an impelling something above them, by which they are kept in motion. While caring for the sick and seeing that others also care for them, the Abbot, and all who have to deal with them, must have the discrimination necessary to see who are really unwell and who are not; otherwise they will be imposed upon by those who, through idleness or through love of better fare, have recourse to the childish trick of feigning illness, in order to be sent to the infirmary. Among school-

boys this is common enough ; but we are of opinion that among Religious it is very rare. When a man puts on the holy habit, he ordinarily has laid aside the things of a child. We have drawn attention to this point because the Abbot Smaragdus in his Commentary has gone to the trouble of giving elaborate rules by which the pretended illness of these grown-up children may be tested.

THE USE OF BATHS.—The use of baths is not prohibited ; yet our Holy Father speaks very guardedly when mentioning them, and says : “ They may be *offered* to the infirm.” These baths were, of course, within the enclosure of the monastery. They were seldom granted to any but the infirm. St. Augustine allows nuns the use of the bath once in each month. St. Benedict does not specify the number of times, but merely says that they are to be slowly, reluctantly granted to the healthy and the young. Some explain this to mean three times in the year, at Christmas, at Easter, and at Pentecost. Others maintain that the use of the bath was granted more frequently than this, especially to those who were engaged in manual labour in the fields. In examining this question, it must be remembered that the Roman bath, with which St. Benedict was familiar, was not the simple contrivance of which we make use in these modern times. It was a species of luxurious enjoyment, and not merely a means to cleanse the body of its impurities. In this respect, therefore, it is natural that our Holy Father should be somewhat rigorous. At the present day, however, we must take a broad and liberal view of this matter.

Our relations with society are very much changed from what they were in the early days of monasticism. We are more frequently and more closely brought into contact with all sorts and with all classes of men than were the Monks of those primitive times. Society itself is more exacting in its requirements in this special respect. If we are to have any influence upon it, we must take care not to offend its notions, not to rouse its susceptibilities in those things which after all are merely accidental and not essential. It is true that we are Monks, but we need not be *dirty* Monks. Dirt is not an essential quality of holiness. To be unsavoury is no mark of solid monastic virtue. Therefore let the use of soap and of water be regulated by that which our position requires, and by that which the ideas of the present day imperatively demand of those who wish to mingle with men, in order to carry into their midst the leaven of the Gospel.

THE USE OF FLESH-MEAT.—This was given to the sick and to the weakly. The weakly are children, who, the younger they are, the more weakly they are; the old, who are weak in proportion to their age; the young who are labouring under any malady, or whose strength is not fully matured. Hæften defines the weakly to be “those who are neither sick nor well.” The sick are understood to be those who are recovering from some serious illness, who need flesh-meat in order to reëstablish their shattered health. As soon as they had regained their former health, they returned once again to the ordinary observance.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

OF OLD MEN AND OF CHILDREN.

OLD MEN.—A man is considered to be *old* when he has reached his sixtieth year. Ecclesiastical law then exempts him from fasting, and monastic law usually exonerates him from the burdens which younger shoulders are easily able to bear. St. Benedict does not fix any age at which this consideration is to be shown to the elderly Monks, but leaves that to be determined by each person's ability to follow regular discipline.

CHILDREN (*infantes*).—Some ancient authors give six ages or periods in the life of man. Till the seventh year any one was considered to be a child. Boyhood extended from the seventh to the fourteenth year. From the fourteenth to the twenty-eighth was the period of adolescence. Youth began at twenty-eight and ended at fifty-six. From fifty-six to seventy-three a man was considered to be in his old age; and from that time till death he was in his decrepitude. St. Benedict, however, uses the word *infans* for a boy till his fifteenth year.

DISCIPLINE IN THEIR REGARD.—The same discipline was enforced with respect to the old and the young which was observed with respect to the sick and the weak, as far, at least, as food was concerned. More was given to them and more frequently and of a better quality. If the brethren had their chief meal at midday, the old and the children had

some kind of refection at about nine o'clock. If the chief meal was at three in the afternoon, these had something to eat at midday. By this was meant "leave to eat before the regular hours."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE WEEKLY READER.

READING AT TABLE. — Mindful of our Lord's words to the devil, "Not in bread only doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God," monastic Superiors have always been careful to provide for their children mental food as well as corporeal nourishment. Hence while they sit at table it is a universal custom that one should read from a book something to occupy the mind, and take it off the merely sensual pleasure which is derived from eating. This practice is said by Cassian¹ to have been introduced by the Monks of Cappadocia and to have been taken up by all who made profession of monastic life. They were so sensible of its utility that those who went to the "second table" with the cellarer and the servers were not deprived of it. Even those who were in the infirmary had a book read to them while they ate; and whenever the Monks worked indoors and were assembled in one place, it was usual for one to read while the rest laboured, that the mind might be usefully occupied

¹ Instit. lib. iv. cap. 17.

while the hands were engaged in their daily round of toil.

THE READER.—So important was this duty of public reading considered to be that it was not intrusted to every one in turn, as was the task of serving and of working in the kitchen. Only those were to read in public who could “edify the hearers” —that is to say, who could read correctly and intelligibly. Those who found difficulty in deciphering the manuscripts, whose eyes were weak, whose voices feeble, and those who could not render the sense of the volume before them were excluded from the reading-desk, lest by their bad pronunciation they should create laughter, or by their unintelligible muttering provoke the brethren to impatience and to murmuring. Hence our Holy Father forbids any one to read in the refectory, or, in fact, anywhere else, who shall take up the book at haphazard. He must be chosen for that public office ; and as it is one in which there is requisite some skill, from the exercise of which there is danger of vainglory, the person appointed to this duty entered upon it on the Sunday after he had assisted at Mass and had received Holy Communion. Moreover he came forth into the middle of the oratory, and there asked the prayers of his brethren that he might faithfully perform his office. Thrice he repeated the verse, “O Lord, Thou shalt open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise.” After each time the rest of the brethren took up the prayer. He then fell upon his knees, and the Abbot or the Superior, who chanced to preside in choir, offered up for him the usual collect, with its preceding versicles

These are as follows: " *V.* Save Thy servant. *R.* Who hopeth in Thee, O my God. *V.* May He send thee aid from the holy place. *R.* And from Sion defend thee. *V.* May the Lord guard thee from all evil. *R.* May the Lord guard thy soul. May the Lord guard thy going in and thy going out, and take away from thee the spirit of pride: Who liveth and reigneth world without end. Amen." In order to comply with St. Benedict's wish, and to read in such a way as to edify the hearers, the reader should always take care to prepare the matter which has to be read, so as to know the proper pronunciation of each word, the various stops, and the true meaning of each sentence and of each period. When actually fulfilling his office he should read in a clear, distinct, leisurely manner, and in a tone of voice loud enough to fill the refectory, without being so loud as to stun the ears of those who listen.

THE HEARERS.—The brethren who sit at table are to listen to that which is read to them. Their eyes are not to wander about from object to object, but to be modestly cast down. No word, no remark about that which is read is to escape their lips. There must be no coughing and no hissing, in order to catch the attention of the server. The word *mussitatio* conveys this idea to us. The silence observed in the refectory is not the ordinary simple silence which may be dispensed with for any slight necessity; but the solemn silence, *summum silentium*—such as was enjoined during the stillness of the night. If anything in the way of food or of drink is required, some conventional sign must be used, but no word must be

uttered. The reason which is given for this is to prevent any occasion being offered to the devil to tempt the brethren to laugh, or to murmur, or to be guilty of any unbecoming behaviour.

THE PRIOR.—Only the presiding Superior was allowed to make any remark upon the reading, and to correct the mistakes of the reader. If there occurred any difficult passage which might be either misconstrued or taken in a bad sense by the Monks, it was in his power to explain the matter then and there. It is thought that our Holy Father in this place has designedly used the word "*Prior*," and not "*Abbot*," because the latter was usually with the guests, and not at the table of the community; whereas it was the cloistral Prior's place to preside in the refectory during his absence.

A DRAUGHT OF WINE.—In the Latin text, the word which we have thus rendered into English is *mixtum*. In some editions this is translated by the word *pottage*. It is termed *mixtum*, because the Monks drank wine which was mingled with water. The wine offered up in the Sacrifice of the Mass is often, in ancient writers, called *mixtum*, because there are a few drops of water mingled with it. In a preceding chapter we have seen that the servers and the cook were allowed to take "*biberes et panem*" — a draught of wine and a morsel of bread. It is probable, therefore, that the same indulgence was granted to the reader, and that he broke two or three morsels of bread into the small vessel of wine which was given to him. This may have been the origin of the word *mixtum*. Two reasons are assigned for granting this

favour : first, the reverence due to the Holy Communion received at the Mass, lest some *particle* should be cast forth by coughing or by spitting ; secondly, to sustain the strength of the reader, and enable him to perform his duty without grave inconvenience.

AFTER MASS.—In the Latin text the word is in the plural, *Missas*. The reason of this is that the Mass was divided into three parts : first, the catechumens' Mass, which ended at the Offertory ; secondly, the Mass of the faithful ; this ended after the priest's Communion, when those who did not partake of the Blessed Sacrament were allowed to leave the church ; thirdly, the Mass of the communicants, because those who approached the Holy Table remained till the end.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE QUANTITY OF MEAT.

THAT THERE BE TWO DISHES.—In the Rule there is mention of only two meals in the day ; that is to say, dinner and supper. It was customary for the Monks, on ordinary days which were not fasts ordained either by the Church or by the Rule, to dine at the sixth hour, that is, at midday. On fast-days appointed by the Rule this meal was taken at the ninth hour, that is, at three o'clock. The supper was taken in the evening. But in Lent, and on other days throughout the year when a fast was prescribed by the law of the Church, they had but one meal, and that in the evening.

Concerning the two dishes allowed at these meals, there is a great divergence of opinion among the commentators, who on this point may be divided into two schools: first, those who maintain that there were two dishes at each of the refectations; and secondly, those who contend that there were only two for both, and consequently that a portion was reserved for the second meal, just as a portion of bread was held over for that by the cellarer, as the Rule itself prescribes. The first school is favoured by the adhesion of the "Regula Magistri," by several other very ancient monastic codes, by the practice of the Carthusians and of the earlier Monks. The second school is followed by an equally respectable train of adherents. But into the various reasons which they adduce to support their theories it would be profitless for us to enter. One of the ablest among these learned men, after stating all the arguments employed by the contending parties, leaves the reader to choose between the two. We cannot do better than imitate his liberal spirit. In some editions, instead of "*omnibus mensibus*," at all seasons, we read "*omnibus mensis*," at all the tables. Therefore those who dined at the second table and those who dined at the Abbot's table were limited, like the rest of the brethren, to these two dishes.

In the Latin text, the word which we translate by *dishes* is *pulmentaria*. In pure Latin, this word means any kind of food. In Latin of a later period, it means anything that is eaten in addition to bread. Thus in St. John's Gospel¹ it was used in this sense

¹ Chap. xxi. 5.

when our Lord asked His disciples, "Children, have you any meat?" Hence, as employed by St. Benedict, it may be used to designate a dish of cooked herbs, pulse, eggs, fish, cheese, &c.

The reason why there were two kinds of food placed on the table was to enable those who could not eat enough of the one to supplement their meal with the other. There was not any rule which, by restricting them to the one or to the other, forbade them to partake of both. However, it was left to the choice of each to confine himself to that which best agreed with him, and thus consult for his bodily infirmities.

A THIRD DISH.—In addition to the two hot or cooked dishes there was usually a third, made up of uncooked vegetables. We have rendered the word *poma* (apples) by the general term *fruit*; because *pomum* was used in good Latin for any kind of fruit which grew upon trees—apples, nuts, pears, grapes, &c. As for *legumina* since it is derived from *legere* to gather, we may under that general designation place all garden herbs, such as beans, peas, lettuce, cucumbers, melons, and the like.

ONE POUND WEIGHT OF BREAD.—The pound weight, it must be remembered, is not the same in all countries. Hence, in order to know how much bread per day St. Benedict allows to each of his Religious, we must find out how many ounces there ever have been in the Italian pound. With us a pound contains sixteen ounces. Among the Romans it consisted of only twelve ounces. Therefore the question is, did St. Benedict use the ancient Roman pound, or the pound of a later date?

The general opinion seems to be that he did not use the old Roman pound of twelve ounces, but that which was called the *libra mercatoria*, employed in the public markets for weighing merchandise. This is considered to have consisted of sixteen ounces. The reasons adduced for thinking that our Holy Father used this last-mentioned weight for the bread given to his Religious are : (1) That he gave a bread weight to St. Maurus, when the latter was going to Gaul in order to found a monastery. Now, it is only rational to think that he would never have done this had the pound weight in Gaul been the same as was that which was used in Italy. In Gaul, at that time, the Roman weights were everywhere in use, so that in order to maintain uniformity of practice there was given to the Abbot of the new foundation a bread weight similar to that used at Monte Cassino, consisting of sixteen ounces. (2) When the Cassinese Monks fled before the Lombards, and came to Rome, they brought with them the manuscript of the Rule, and the bread weight. At the restoration of the monastery, Pope Zachary sent back to the Religious the weight which had been kept at Rome. This would have been superfluous had the Roman pound been the one which they were accustomed to use. (3) Charlemagne, wishing to restore monastic discipline in Gaul, sent to Monte Cassino for exact models of the bread weight and of the wine measure, that there might be uniformity of practice in these important matters.

We have now to inquire whether this weight, or an exact model of it, has been preserved. The Cassi-

nese maintain that they have the bronze weight used by St. Benedict. It is kept in the sacristy of the monastery. Therefore we have now some chance of arriving at a correct estimate of the number of ounces in the Benedictine pound weight. What, then, is the weight of this pound? A most trustworthy authority says that it contains thirty-nine Neapolitan ounces. Besides this bronze pound there is another of iron. This latter is hollow, but has the hollow part filled with lead, and weighs forty-eight ounces. How, then, are we to explain the theory which holds that St. Benedict's pound consisted of sixteen ounces, when we discover that what is reputed to be the identical weight used by him is more than twice that weight in one instance, and three times that weight in the other?

Dom Calmet thinks that the only rational way to account for these discrepancies is to conjecture that the thirty-nine ounce weight was meant for a loaf which consisted of a little more than two pounds weight *before* it was baked—*libra propensa*—a pound weighed out beforehand, *i.e.* before baking. This was divided between two. The other weight was probably for a three-pound *baked* loaf to be divided among three persons. Thus we arrive at the conclusion that the Benedictine pound weight of bread consisted of sixteen ounces.

IF THEIR LABOUR BE GREAT.—There were certain seasons of the year in which a great deal of additional labour fell upon the Monks. In the hay-making season they were labouring hard all the day. When autumn came they had to gather in their corn,

their barley, their grapes. To meet this additional drain upon their strength it was necessary to have additional food, in order to sustain their bodily force.

Not only of manual labour must these words be understood, but also of every other kind of labour. Hence on days, on which they had to be longer in the church and to sing the Office, their strength was taxed as much as it was in field labours. At all these times it was left to the discretion of the Abbot to add somewhat to the usual amount of food, by increasing the quantity of the bread or of the other dishes. All that he had to guard against was any abuse either in eating or in drinking; for nothing is so opposed to the monastic profession as a fit of illness brought on by surfeiting or of drunkenness from an intemperate use of wine.

ABSTINENCE FROM FLESH-MEAT.—In forbidding the use of flesh-meat to all except to those who are very weak, and to the sick, St. Benedict has employed a form of words which has given rise to much discussion. “Let them abstain,” he says, “from eating the flesh of four-footed beasts.” Does he by these words forbid the use of only the flesh of quadrupeds, and thereby allow the use of fowl; or does he likewise interdict the use of all flesh-meat, whether of fowl or of quadrupeds? There are two opinions on this matter. The first is that only the flesh of quadrupeds is forbidden; but that it is lawful to eat the flesh of fowl, inasmuch as, deriving their origin, like fish, from the water, they may be said to belong to the same genus. In favour of this we may, among other authorities, cite Theodmar, Abbot of Monte

Cassino in the time of Charlemagne, Rabanus Maurus, St. Symbert, Bishop Theoderic, Abelard, and St. Hildegard. St. Jerome held this opinion in his day, and wrote to that effect to a person who consulted him on the matter. The second opinion is that the flesh of fowl is forbidden both to the healthy and to the sick, and that only the flesh of quadrupeds is to be given to the sick and to the weakly to help them to regain the strength which they had lost. By a dispensation granted by Pope Benedict XII., in the year 1336, we are allowed to eat meat; and in so doing we may consider that, owing to the general decay of strength in the constitutions of men in these days, we may come under the category of those whom St. Benedict would consider to be in a weak state of health.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE MEASURE OF DRINK.

HIS PROPER GIFT FROM GOD.—These words may be understood either of a natural or of a supernatural gift. For abstinence from wine, of which there is here question, may be the result of some quality in the natural temperament which enables a man to do without drink; or it may be a grace by which he is empowered to curb and to hold in check the craving for drink which is within him. Therefore, as these gifts, bestowed by God, differ in their nature and in their degree in various classes of men, so that some

are able to dispense with much food and drink, while others require for their sustenance a much larger amount both of the one and of the other, it is with evident reluctance, and with great hesitation, that St. Benedict proceeds to legislate for the quantity which will hit the golden mean between that which is insufficient and that which is excessive. This is especially difficult in the matter of drink. Therefore, after taking into consideration all the circumstances of a Monk's life, and leaving a discretionary power in the hands of Superiors to add to that which he fixes as the measure of drink, he is of opinion that he will meet the requirements of those who are in weak health, whether that weakness is a moral or a physical weakness, by limiting them to one *hemina* of wine each day.

THE "HEMINA."—But now comes the difficulty. How much did this measure contain? The answers given to this question are multitudinous, interminable, various. The commentators marshal their authorities in bristling array, one contending for more, another for less, till the dust raised by their conflicting statements renders it well-nigh impossible to grope one's way to any satisfactory conclusion. However, after much contact with the numerous combatants who have entered the lists upon this subject, and close attention to that which they have to say in support of their respective views, we are convinced of three things: first, that no one has thus far settled what the measure of the *hemina* really is, and that in all likelihood no one ever will; secondly, that there are three classes among the commentators: (1) those who maintain that the *hemina* is a half-pint measure; (2)

those who maintain that it holds a pint; (3) those who maintain that it holds a quart;¹ thirdly, that the true measure of the *hemina* will probably be some medium measure between a half-pint and a quart, for we are told "*in medio stat virtus*;" therefore we are likely to find the truth.²

In the letter of Theodmar, Abbot of Monte Cassino, to Charlemagne, we find the following words relative to the wine measure: "We have sent to you a drink measure, for portioning out that which ought to be given to the Monks. There is one for their drink at dinner, and another for their drink at supper. These two measures, as we have received from our predecessors, constitute the *hemina*."

From these words, it is evident that the *hemina* was divided into two measures, of which the one served for dinner, the other for supper. Also it is clear that the two were not equal in size; for if they were, it would have been superfluous to have sent two. Consequently the lesser of the two was that in which the wine was measured out for supper. If we may reason from analogy, we should infer that this lesser measure contained about one-third of the amount of wine which was given at dinner; for, as we saw in the preceding chapter, the cellarer reserved a third part of their pound of bread, whenever they were to sup, and set that quantity before each in the refectory for

¹ Father Baker, after closely examining a goodly number of commentaries, maintains that the *hemina* is a quart measure.

² Momsen and Boekh, the most recent writers upon this subject, maintain that the *hemina* contains about a quarter of a litre—that is to say, nearly half a pint.

the evening meal. The same discipline may have been observed with regard to the wine.

As, then, the majority of the commentators fix this evening draught of wine at about six ounces, and some at even eight, we may conclude that the measure at dinner contained from twelve to sixteen ounces. Therefore the weight of wine in a *hemina* would be either eighteen or twenty-four ounces. In all likelihood, therefore, the *hemina* contained somewhat more than a pint. Those who contend that it held no more than half that quantity may be right; for as the Monks drank their wine diluted with water, this weaker element may have raised the quantity up to that which we have said that the *hemina* contained.

THE SITUATION OF THE PLACE.—By this St. Benedict means that if the monastery is built in a hot, dry place, which naturally engenders thirst, the Prior is empowered to increase the quantity of the drink allowed by the Rule. Another reason which calls for his dispensing power in this respect is the greater labour which, at certain seasons of the year, fell to the lot of each community. Lastly, the summer season, of which the heat in Italy is sometimes exceedingly intense. It is conjectured that St. Benedict designedly mentions the Prior as the person who is to grant this indulgence, because he is more in the company of the Monks than the Abbot, and would consequently be better acquainted with their necessities. But even so, it is always the Abbot's will which is carried out; for the Prior acts with his authority, and rules on the lines laid down by him.

WINE NOT THE DRINK OF MONKS.—By saying

“we read,” St. Benedict probably alludes to the sixth chapter of the book of Numbers, in which, speaking of the Nazarites, we are told that when these men—the prototypes of the Monks who were to follow in the fulness of time—had consecrated themselves to God, they were ordered to abstain from wine and all that could make a man drunk. Also he alludes to that saying of the Fathers, which is mentioned in Cassian, “Neither wine nor anything else which can make one drunk must be taken by those who are dead to the world, and to whom the world is dead.” Another reason why Monks should be careful, and on the watch lest they be surprised and overcome by drink, is that there is in drink something so insidious, something which so lets loose the evil passions within us, that it causes even those who are wise and long tried in God’s service to fall away from Him and to quit the narrow path of justice. Therefore they ought sparingly to partake of it, and never to drink unto satiety. If they live in those countries in which wine is a rarity, and a luxury in which they cannot indulge; and if, through the poverty of their Monastery, they cannot be treated to it even in countries in which it is the ordinary drink; instead of murmuring, they should give thanks to God, Who has providentially removed this incitement to sin far from their reach.

In concluding this chapter, our Holy Father once again shows his horror and detestation of murmuring by exhorting us to avoid it more than other evils, because of the terrible and irreparable mischief which it works in that religious community among the members of which it has once gained a firm footing.

CHAPTER XL.

TIMES OF REFECTION.

EASTER UNTIL WHITSUNTIDE.—In the two preceding chapters St. Benedict has treated of the quantity of food and of drink which he deems sufficient for his disciples. In the present chapter he appoints the hours at which they are to take this their simple and scanty fare. For this purpose he divides the year into four periods, and in each of these fixes the number of their meals and the time at which they are to take them. The first of these periods is from Easter to Pentecost, during which, in accordance with the ancient discipline of the Church, there were not any fast-days, although some few fasted on Fridays even during this time, in order to reverence the Passion of our Lord. St. Benedict consequently at this season grants to his Monks two meals—dinner and supper. The dinner was taken at midday, and the supper at sunset. But although these two meals were given, the quantity of food measured out for them was the same as that which was served to them on days of strict fast. The only difference which existed between the two was the time at which the meals were taken.

FROM WHITSUNTIDE TILL THE THIRTEENTH OF SEPTEMBER.—This was the second period of the year, during which our Holy Father appoints two fast-days, one on Wednesday and the other on Friday. His motive for choosing these days was very probably to perpetuate the custom of the early Christians, who

were wont to observe them as fasts, because it was on Wednesday that Judas made his compact with our Lord's enemies to deliver Him into their hands, and on Friday that Jesus suffered the disgraceful death of the Cross. As these were not ecclesiastical fasts, but only those ordained by Rule, the Superior had a discretionary power to dispense the brethren from them whenever they had to do field labour, or whenever the summer heat was excessive. The only difference in their ordinary fare on these days was not one of quantity or of quality, but of time. The dinner-hour was changed from midday or the sixth hour, to the ninth hour—that is, somewhere between two and three o'clock; for at the equinox, according to our method of computation, the ninth hour ends at three o'clock. At other seasons of the year it varies: sometimes it is later, sometimes earlier. On all the other days of the week they dined at the sixth hour, or midday. The Superior had power to fix this hour for dinner even on fast-days, if there chanced to be labour in the fields, or if there was great heat. All that St. Benedict bids him aim at is the salvation of souls, and not at the carrying out in a wooden sort of way of any merely disciplinary regulation. To our Holy Father it was a matter of very little moment whether they dined at twelve or at three; but it was a matter of the deepest interest to him that neither the strength nor the patience of devout Religious should be overtaxed for the sake of a mere piece of ceremonial observance.

FROM THE THIRTEENTH OF SEPTEMBER TILL LENT.—This is the third period of the year. The

hour for dinner at this season was always the ninth hour—that is to say, about three o'clock. An exception, however, was made on Sundays and on the great festivals. On these days the dinner-hour was mid-day. The Council of Aix-la-Chapelle¹ gives the following list of the days upon which the Monks had two meals: Christmas and its octave, and also the octaves of our Lord's feasts; the Epiphany, Easter, Ascension Day, St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, Holy Innocents, the Assumption, all the feasts of the Apostles, St. John the Baptist, St. Lawrence, St. Martin, and the patrons of the churches. On all the festivals which occurred during Lent there was no change whatever, but the strict fast was observed.

Any one who reads the forty-seventh chapter, and then compares with it that which is said here, namely, "From the thirteenth of September till the beginning of Lent let the brethren always take their meal at the ninth hour—that is to say, about three o'clock," will be somewhat puzzled to understand how it is that St. Benedict orders his Monks to take some short rest upon their beds after their *midday meal* during all the period which intervenes between Easter and the *first of October*. In order to harmonise these apparently conflicting statements, all that is necessary is to remember that in the present chapter our Holy Father means from the thirteenth of September exclusively; while in the forty-seventh chapter he includes all the days which intervene between the fourteenth of September and the first of October.

FROM LENT TILL EASTER.—This is the fourth

¹ A.D. 816.

period of St. Benedict's monastic year. During this time he fixes the hour for refection at about five o'clock in the evening. When we consider that the Monks of his day rose at about two o'clock, chanted the *Matin Office*, and occupied themselves during the rest of the day in manual labour and in devout reading, we may well look upon the discipline of these days as soft. These holy men did all this, without breaking their rigorous fast, till close upon sunset. Let us humble ourselves to the very dust when we reflect upon their mortified lives, and endeavour by fervour of spirit to make some little amends for the absence from our lives of that rigorous austerity which the decay of bodily vigour in these our days, and the exigencies of the times in which we live, render possible to only a privileged few. The taking of this one meal, which was allowed during Lent only towards the evening, was not restricted to the Monks. Even laymen were accustomed, in those days of faith and of fervour, to emulate the asceticism of the cloister.

St. Bernard in the following words bears witness to this custom. Addressing his Monks, he says: "Up to the present time of the year only Monks have fasted until the ninth hour; but from this time forth, during the whole Lent, all the world will keep us company in our fast till evening—kings and princes, clergy and people, noble and simple, rich and poor."²

ALL THINGS TO BE DONE BY DAYLIGHT.—This is a general order for the whole year. How, then, could this be carried out in January, in December,

² Serm. iii. in Quadrag.

and in the other winter months? We must remember that he speaks of Italy, in which the days are not so short as they are in northern countries. Also, it is uncertain whether from the fourteenth of September until Easter supper was given to the Monks on those days upon which they dined at midday. It was certainly not given to them when they dined at three o'clock. Therefore it is quite possible that they could do without lamps all through the year.

Again, it is conjectured that these words may refer not only to the hour for meals, but also to the hours for saying the Divine Office. In his zeal for carrying out to the very letter these words of the Psalmist, "Seven times a day have I sung praises unto Thee," St. Benedict may have wished that the day hours should always be said without lights. Therefore Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline were recited while there was daylight. The Nocturns or Matins were said when it was dark, and a light would be used only by those who read the lessons at the lectern. This is the solution which Father Baker offers in explanation of the words, "Let all things be done by daylight." However, the general consensus of the commentators seems to restrict these words to the hours for the evening refection.

CHAPTER XLI.

THAT NO ONE MAY SPEAK AFTER COMPLINE.

STUDIOUS OF SILENCE.—This means much more than merely keeping silence ; it means that Monks ought to *love* silence, and through their love of it to keep their lips sealed. Yet it does not imply that they are perpetually to close their lips. This is an extreme from which St. Benedict, much as he loved this lowly virtue, studiously kept aloof. There is, as the Scripture says, a time for everything ; therefore, if there is a time for silence, there is also a time for speech. This time for speech in the Monk's case is that in which either obedience calls upon him to use his tongue, or some reasonable cause unlocks the gates of his lips. On all other occasions he must keep in strict custody that unquiet evil, which, when loosed from its bonds, works such frightful havoc among the children of the world. By holding it in check, and taming it in the bands of silence, men are enabled to enjoy that peace of soul for which so many sigh in vain. They become conscious of God's ever-abiding presence. They attend to all the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. Of all these inestimable privileges they would be deprived if they once lost over their tongues that control which they acquire by being ever studious of silence. "The sources of sinlessness are solitude, silence, peace."

CONFERENCE ON DAYS NOT OF FAST.—We must remember that in the monastic year there are three

kinds of days. First, those which are neither days of fast appointed by the Rule, nor days of fast determined by the law of the Church. These we may call *free days*. On them the Monks both dined and supped. It was *immediately* after supper on these occasions that the brethren assembled for the reading of the "Conferences."

ON FAST-DAYS APPOINTED BY THE RULE.—Secondly, those which are fast-days appointed by the Rule. On these days there was not any supper, and dinner was put off till about three o'clock. Vespers were recited at the usual time in the evening; and then, after a brief interval, which gave time to all those who chanced to be occupied with some duty to assemble for the conference, the reading began, and lasted till the signal was given for Compline.

FASTING-DAYS OF THE CHURCH.—Thirdly, fasting-days appointed by the Church. On these days there was but one meal, and that in the evening after Vespers. Although St. Benedict does not in this place speak of these fasts, it is generally supposed that the brethren went straight from the refectory to the reading of the conference, and that the lecture was continued until the servers and those who had been engaged in the kitchen had finished their meal. After their arrival in the oratory, Compline was begun, and thus all were present together, to end the day in the praises of God.

"COLLATIONES" (Conferences).—This is the name given to a work written by Cassian. It contains the conferences of the Hermits and the Religious who dwelt in the Egyptian deserts. It was the

custom of these holy men to meet together, from time to time, to confer upon spiritual matters. On these occasions, questions were asked by the new-comers and the inexperienced, and the answers to them were given by those who had had a long and practical experience of the ascetical life. As time went on, and as men who were capable of speaking authoritatively upon these subjects became fewer, the conference was changed into a lecture, and the wisdom which had formerly flowed like a stream from the teacher's mouth was now doled out from the pages, into which admiring disciples had collected the refreshing waters of spiritual instruction. Although changed in form, the old name "*collatio*" still cleaved to those lectures.

COLLATION.—At the present day this name is given to the slight refectio which on fasting-days is taken instead of supper. How this came to be so called is somewhat interesting, and an explanation of it very properly finds its place here. It seems that in course of time there had grown up a custom of giving to the brethren assembled at the conference a drink of wine or of water. Probably this concession was made out of consideration for the labour in which they had been employed during the course of the day, or because of the heat of the season. As this drink was served to them either before or during the reading of the conference (*collatio*), it came to be called by the name of that duty during which it was bestowed. To drink without having at the same time something to eat was, in the lapse of years, considered to be hurtful; and the custom of having a morsel of bread with the drink was gradually introduced. But because

some persons found that either bread and wine, or bread and water, were heavy for the stomach and somewhat indigestible, other food was allowed at the collation. Thus, in the course of ages, we have arrived at the present discipline, which is sanctioned by the Church, so that all the faithful are allowed to take this indulgence, even on days of the most rigorous fast.

THE LIVES OF THE FATHERS.—This is a volume made up of the lives, the sayings, and the miracles of the great Saints and the Fathers of the desert. Many of these lives were written by St. Athanasius and by St. Jerome. Others are to be found in the pages of the conferences themselves, and were, perhaps, either culled thence and gathered together in one volume, or were marked by the Abbot and given to the lector to read before the brethren.

THE HEPTATEUCH.—This word is derived from two Greek words which signify “the seven books.” These are the five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; the two books, Josue and Judges. To these there is usually added the Book of Ruth, inasmuch as it is considered to be only an appendix to the Book of Judges. At the hour preceding Compline, St. Benedict forbids the reading of this part of the Holy Scriptures, and also of the four Books of Kings. His motive for this prohibition is probably to prevent the minds of his Religious from being disturbed by the accounts of wars; of genealogies, and of certain other matters which are to be met with in the pages of these books. He deemed it better for them to retire to rest with their minds filled with the holy and peace-

ful thoughts engendered by the simple narratives of the lives of saintly men, and with the sound principles of asceticism, delivered in some quaint and striking form of words by the Solitaries of the great desert.

NO SPEAKING AFTER COMPLINE.—On going forth from the church or oratory after the recitation of Compline, the solemn silence of the night began. This has always been deemed most sacred, and no one ever dares to break it without some serious necessity, and with leave obtained from the Abbot. If any guests arrived during this time, they were received and entertained. But yet the Monks to whom this office was committed endeavoured to let it be seen by their behaviour, and the subdued tones of their voices, that it was the “great silence” of the night. Even the Abbot must observe this rule, and if he has occasion to break through it, it must be for some reasonable cause. We learn from the “*Regula Magistri*” that these words were said at the beginning of the “great silence:” “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips.” This silence lasted until the chapter which was held after Prime on the following morning. The breaking of this rule was visited with a more than ordinarily severe punishment.

REASONS FOR EXPLAINING THESE OBSERVANCES.—On reading the preceding explanations of these various observances, and of many others about which we have already spoken, it may to some persons seem strange that we should enter with such minute detail into these matters, some of which have fallen into disuse. A little reflection, however, will show

that this is not labour spent in vain. For, in the first place, if it serves no other purpose, it helps us to understand more clearly, and to remember more easily, those parts of the Rule which are in use and practice among us. In consequence of such disquisitions we can see those parts of St. Benedict's legislation which remain intact, and those which Superiors with good reason and through necessity have thought it incumbent upon them to change, and to adapt to the altered circumstances of these our modern times. If we were never treated to such explanations we should sometimes be at a loss to know what is in practice and what is not. But by having an accurate knowledge upon this point we obtain a firmer grasp of the Rule as a whole, and a clearer insight into the bearings of its various enactments upon one another. Moreover they enable us to see in what matters, and for what reasons, Superiors have made many changes in the Rule. That Rule, we then begin to perceive, is the same Rule of St. Benedict, notwithstanding all these various alterations which it has undergone. For, in spite of these, it is in all essential points identically the same Rule which our Holy Father himself observed, and gave as a guide to all those who wished to tread in his footsteps. Only in the merely accidental parts of it has any change been made ; and in these the alterations have the sanction of our great founder himself, who has expressly, in the pages of his own legislation, told Superiors to introduce these changes as often as necessity or any other just reason shall call for them. Take, for instance, any of the various points in which the present practice is at vari-

ance with that which was ordered by St. Benedict, and you will see at a glance that in substance our practice is the same, and only in the mode of observance has it suffered any change. St. Benedict orders all things to be done by daylight, and we do many of our duties by gaslight ; he allows only two meals per day, and sometimes only one, while we have either two, or even three ; according to him the Abbot should read the Gospel at the end of Matins, and we allow the precentor for the week to do this ; he prohibits the use of flesh-meat, and we eat it. In these, and in many other matters, there is nothing which is so vitally important that, if it were wholly eliminated from the practice of Religious, they would cease to be that which they pretend to be. Is it for a single moment to be thought that a man of such breadth of view and grasp of mind as St. Benedict undoubtedly was would force his children, in spite of numberless inconveniences, and the omission of other more important duties, to say all the Office by daylight ? Would he restrict to any particular measure of food those who could not execute their daily round of profitable work without much more than he prescribes ? Can we imagine him obstinately insisting upon the Abbot reading the Gospel, when the ceremonial of the Church has ordained it otherwise ? Would he insist upon total abstinence from flesh-meat in this age of the world, and in these northern climates, when, in consequence of the observance of such abstinence, many far more important works for the salvation of souls would have to be abandoned ? We think not. Provided that his spirit is cultivated

among us, that prayer is made the business of our lives, that we withdraw ourselves from the spirit of the world, that we sedulously guard the main points of monastic discipline, we may feel quite sure that we shall satisfy both our great legislator and our Master and Father Who is in heaven. Like our Divine Lord, we are convinced that it is not that which entereth the mouth which defileth a man, but murmuring, impertinent talk, worldly conversations, uncharitable remarks, and biting criticism which go forth from his mouth. These are the things which defile him. It is for these reasons that we have deemed it fitting to enter into all the details of the Rule, and to be minute about even those parts of it which are no longer in practice, and those which, by the legitimate action of Superiors, have been somewhat altered to meet the necessities both of the subjects who are trying to serve God under their guidance, and of the times in which we are living.

CHAPTER XLII.

OF THOSE WHO COME LATE TO THE "WORK OF GOD," OR TO TABLE.

LAYING ASIDE WORK.—In the mind of St. Benedict, the "work of God," that is to say, the Divine Office, held the first place. It was his aim, as may be seen by that which he has said in several other passages of the Rule, to fix this same idea in the minds of

his disciples. "Nothing else must be preferred to it." It must never be set aside, nor be made to give place to anything else. First in importance, first in dignity—always, of course, excepting the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass—it was to be said at the appointed time, and on the first signal which intimated to the brothers that the moment had come for them to perform this duty of prayer and of praise, they were to disengage themselves *at once* from every occupation in which they might chance to be employed, in order to show their high appreciation of that work which, by reason of Him for Whom it is performed, as well as for its own intrinsic worth, must stand first in their esteem and in their love. In complying with these wishes of St. Benedict, we must remember that he was preëminently a man of sound, practical common sense; and, consequently, that we shall not please him, nor carry out his wishes, unless we endeavour to do so in a way which would meet with his approval. Therefore we must use that measure of common sense which has been dispensed to us by Providence. When we read in this chapter that at the signal for Divine Office we must *at once* disengage ourselves from anything in which, at the time, we happen to be employed, we must take care to do this in a way which will not bring ridicule and contempt upon ourselves and upon religion. For there are some persons who, in their misguided zeal for literally obeying our Holy Father's injunctions, drop from their hands (*exoccupatis manibus*) that which they are holding, start from their seats as if they had received an electric shock, and sometimes thus suddenly quit the company of guests,

who remain startled and almost breathless with amazement. This, of course, is prompt obedience of a certain kind; but if there is any one who thinks that, in these circumstances, it is either praiseworthy or edifying, the sooner he disabuses himself of the illusion the better it will be for himself. It is not praiseworthy, because it is unwise; and it is not edifying, because it gives people a notion that those who embrace religious life leave their common sense behind them in the world. Therefore, whenever a Monk is engaged in the performance of any act which cannot *at once* be discontinued without danger of loss, or of harm, or of disedification, or of any other inconvenience, St. Benedict does not look for that promptitude of obedience which, when none of these obstacles stand in the way, is so pleasing both to him and to our Divine Master. If any one is drawing wine, he must not start off and leave the tap running, nor the half-filled vessel uncovered. If any one is serving the sick, he must not abandon them. If any one is entertaining guests, he must with that grace and polish which sit so well upon the Monk excuse himself and then retire, after providing for their wants and their amusement until his return. There are times, of course, in which guests must not be left to themselves, and on all these occasions Superiors take care that leave is given for absence from choir duties.

Speaking of the promptitude with which Religious should obey the signal for the "work of God," the author of the "Regula Magistri" says: "As soon as the signal indicates that the hour for performing the

‘work of God’ has come, let those who are labouring at once give over their work ; let the craftsmen drop their tools ; let not the copyists finish a letter ; let the whole brotherhood cease from that in which they are engaged, and speed to the oratory with gravity of mien and with recollection of heart.” In these days, however, we would suggest that all tools which can conveniently be carried to some place of safety should first be deposited there ; and we once again venture to repeat that common sense must guide to a rational interpretation of this and of many other similar counsels those who wish to follow the example of holy Religious.

THOSE WHO COME LATE TO MATINS.— The ninety-fourth Psalm is said slowly at the beginning of Matins, in order to give time to the Monks to be in their places for the first Psalm of the Nocturns. If any one comes when this part of the Divine Office has begun, he is not allowed to join the rest by going to his accustomed seat, but is ordered to stand in the place which is appointed by the Abbot, and to remain there until the conclusion of the Office. In this ordinance St. Benedict made a departure from the discipline which had been previously observed among Religious. The laggards were altogether excluded from the choir, and punished in various other ways. The reason for this divergence from the practice of the Monks who had preceded him in the monastic life is given by himself, when he says that he did this in order that they might neither go back to the dormitory and spend in sleep the time for prayer, nor give themselves up to idle talk while standing out-

side the oratory, and thus afford an occasion to the devil to lead them into sin.

THOSE WHO COME LATE TO THE OTHER HOURS.—If any Monk comes to the choir after the “Deus in adjutorium,” and the “Gloria Patri,” which follows the first Psalm of any of the other hours, he must stand in the place indicated for those who in this way offend against discipline, and make that satisfaction which is appointed by Rule. This formerly consisted either in kneeling or in prostrating till the presiding Superior gave the signal by which he intimated that the offender might go to his place in the choir. In addition to this public punishment, other penalties were imposed upon those who were systematically late for the “work of God.” The discipline at present in use is that those who are late advance to the steps of the sanctuary, and, if they are juniors, cast themselves upon their knees till the Superior gives them a sign to rise and return to their places. When a senior is not in time for the Office, he approaches the steps of the sanctuary, and there profoundly inclines till permission is granted him to join the choir.

THOSE WHO COME LATE TO THE REFECTORY.—The grace said before dinner is begun by the cantor singing “Benedicite ;” this word is repeated by the rest, and the cantor then intones the versicle, “Oculi omnium in te sperant Domine.” The versicle with which the grace after dinner is begun is “Confiteantur tibi Domine.” Before supper, the versicle, “Edent pauperes et saturabuntur,” is sung ; after supper the versicle, “Memoriam fecit mirabilium.” Any one who through negligence, or through his own

fault, is not present in the refectory before these versicles are sung, for the first and second offence is corrected, very probably by words only. If these prove unavailing, the delinquent is not suffered to eat at the common table, but is made to dine or to sup apart from the rest, and his portion of wine is taken from him. If there is neither fault nor negligence in his absence from grace, he merely kneels at the door of the refectory till he is told to go to his place. Seniors, when late, bow profoundly till the Superior gives them leave to go to their places. The penalties for being away from the grace after meals are the same as those inflicted for absence from the grace before meals.

Eating out of meal-time was always, and is now, prohibited under somewhat severe penalties. With respect to that which is said at the end of this chapter concerning those who refuse to accept any food offered to them by the Prior, the general impression among commentators seems to be that our Holy Father is speaking of those who have been punished by Superiors for not being in time for meals, and who, in consequence of that punishment, are angry, and, like children, refuse to eat the food which is placed before them. St. Benedict wishes that these silly people should be made to fast until they have acknowledged their fault, and, by humbly asking pardon for it, have merited forgiveness. From this little piece of domestic legislation we may form some estimate of the difficulty which some men must feel in ridding themselves "of the things of a child."

CHAPTER XLIII.

HOW THOSE WHO ARE EXCOMMUNICATED ARE TO
MAKE SATISFACTION.

SATISFACTION FOR GRIEVOUS OFFENCES.—As there are two kinds of excommunication, the greater and the less, there are also two ways in which expiation must be made for the faults on account of which this severe penalty is launched against offenders. These ways are described in this chapter. When the Abbot perceives that the humiliating course of penance has produced its effect, he usually calls to the chapter-house all the brethren, with the exception of the excommunicate. He there consults with them about the offending brother, and asks them whether it seems good to them that he should now be absolved. If they deem it advisable that he should once again be admitted to favour, the Abbot sends for the delinquent. As soon as he presents himself, he prostrates before the Abbot and then before the assembled brothers, asking both him and them to pray for him. The form probably was : “ Pray for me, brothers.” Then there was generally inflicted upon him the penalty of the scourge. After this, the Abbot appointed for him a place in which to stand in choir. He chanted the Divine Office with the rest, but was not allowed to intone a Psalm or to read a lesson, unless a special order to this effect was issued by the Abbot. After each of the hours he cast himself prostrate upon the ground in the place in which he stood, and continued

to do this until the Abbot gave him an order to desist from this act of humility.

SATISFACTION FOR SLIGHT FAULTS.—He who for lighter faults is punished with the lesser excommunication is excluded from the refectory, but not from the choir. In choir, however, he is not allowed either to intone a Psalm or to read a lesson. The manner in which he makes satisfaction for the faults which he has committed, and for which he has been excommunicated, is as follows: at the end of each hour in choir, he prostrates in the place in which he stands until the Abbot, seeing that he has been sufficiently humbled and punished, gives him his blessing and says, "It is enough." He blessed him by making over him the sign of the Cross, and saying, "God bless thee, because thou hast well performed thy penance."

As to the form which was used in excommunicating delinquents, it is not quite certain whether there was any fixed one in use in the monasteries. In all probability the Abbot summoned the brethren to chapter, and calling the guilty person into the midst of the room, bade him kneel, and then declared that for such and such a fault, he excommunicated him, in accordance with the precepts of the Rule, and in virtue of the power vested in his person by St. Benedict. If the faults were grave, he said, "I excommunicate you from the choir, the refectory, and the company of your brethren. No one must speak to you, under penalty of incurring a similar punishment." For light faults he said, "I excommunicate you from the refectory, and in the choir I forbid you to intone a Psalm or to read a lesson." As all these enactments

were well known to the brothers, it was not requisite for the Superior to specify the mode of punishment, unless he thought fit to do so. All that he had to do, was to declare the person excommunicate by the great or by the less excommunication, and all were at once aware of what it was necessary for them to do.

CHAPTER XLIV.

OF THOSE WHO COMMIT ANY FAULT IN THE ORATORY.

MISTAKES IN CHOIR.—These may occur in one of these three ways: (1) A person may take up the wrong verse of the Psalm, or may mispronounce some words, and cause no inconvenience either to his immediate neighbours or to the side of the choir to which he belongs. In these cases, only the offender does penance. (2) He may cause by his mistake some slight confusion in his immediate neighbourhood without troubling the choir; then both he and those whom his mistake has led into error must atone for it. (3) The whole choir may be thrown out by his mistake, and led into error; then all atone for the fault. In different monasteries there are different modes of satisfaction for these faults; but as a general rule, those who err without causing any disturbance to others atone for this by kneeling in their place for a short time, or by touching the ground with their hands or with some part of their habit, and then raising their hand or their habit to their mouth and kissing it.

If others are led into error, they also either kneel, or act as we have just described. But if the whole choir is led into error, then the person who has caused the confusion goes to the steps of the sanctuary, and, if he is a junior, kneels; if he is a senior, inclines until the Superior gives the signal for him to return to his place. In all these matters there is a great variety of practice, which can be learnt only by consulting the ceremonials of the different religious houses.

THE PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN.—These were the boys who were offered by their parents to the monastery, and were intended afterwards to embrace the religious state. Whenever these made mistakes in singing the Psalms, the responsories, or the lessons, they were chastised by the rod, and that at once; so that vengeance was swift of foot, and trod closely upon the heels of offence. Hildemar forbade this punishment to be administered in the public choir or in the chapter-house. Their own schoolroom was usually the scene of these floggings. We may feel quite sure that the hand which wielded the scourge was a light and merciful one, as our Holy Father specially orders any one who went beyond the bounds of moderation in this respect to be severely punished for his brutality. If, from the occasional glimpses given to us in monastic annals, we may judge of the life which these little scholars led in the cloister shade, we have every reason to believe that the occasions when they were forced to shed tears under the sting of the correcting rod were few and far between.

CHAPTER XLV.

OF THOSE WHO OFFEND IN LIGHTER MATTERS.

CONFESSION OF FAULTS.—Whenever a Monk commits any fault which is the result of carelessness or of negligence, our Holy Father wishes that he should humbly confess it to the Abbot, and then, at the public chapter of faults, acknowledge it in the presence of his brethren. The faults thus confessed are external faults which others have either seen, or might have seen had they been present. Among those which St. Benedict mentions are the breaking of any of the vessels used in the kitchen or at the table ; the spilling of flour in the bakehouse ; the making an ill use of the garden tools, and causing either noise or confusion in silence-time ; speaking without necessity ; talking to guests without leave ; receiving letters without permission, and the like.

CHAPTER OF FAULTS.—These ordinary external faults against discipline were usually confessed in the presence of the brethren in the chapter-house. This chapter, as it is called, used to be held every morning after Prime. In some monasteries there were chapters three times in each week. After the reading of the Rule, it was usual on these occasions for the Abbot or the person who presided to say, “Let us speak about our Order.” Then any of the brethren who had committed a fault rose from his seat, came into the middle of the room, and prostrated himself upon the ground before the Abbot. Thereupon the Abbot said to him,

“What sayest thou?” The brother answered, “I confess my fault.” The Abbot then told him to rise. The brother at once obeyed, and mentioned the fault of which he had been guilty, received whatever penance the Superior might think fit to impose, and returned to his place. If there were any novices present, they were the first to confess their faults, and having done so, were dismissed from the chapter. Lay brothers also retired before the professed choir Monks confessed their faults.

DENUNCIATION.—It is evident that if the delinquent did not make known his fault, it was usual for some of the others to denounce him to the Abbot. This was probably the office of the Monk’s immediate Superior, or perhaps of one of those who were present when the fault was committed. No doubt there was some time fixed for the confession of these misdemeanours, and if they were not acknowledged before the expiration of it, the task of informing the Superior of them devolved upon the persons who were appointed for that office. A very unenviable post, we should think, and one which needed great prudence, charity, and discretion. Among the members of our own Congregation no such office either exists, or would be tolerated by Superiors. If anything goes amiss, and is of so great importance that the Superiors should have cognisance of it, there are those who will fearlessly and conscientiously discharge their duty ; but as for running to those who are in authority with an account of every small fault which either envious or jealous eyes may detect, it does not exist, and if any one shows a tendency to be a talebearer, the

Superior has the good sense either to shut his eyes to that which is thus brought before his notice, or to give the informer such a reception as will not encourage him to exercise his self-imposed duty a second time.

CONFESSION OF SINS.—Our Holy Father makes a wide distinction between the confession of faults committed against discipline, and the faults and the sins committed against the law of God. These last are not to be made the subject of the public chapter, but are revealed in the sacred tribunal of penance to the Abbot or to the priests of the monastery. It is thought that as the Monks ordinarily approached the Holy Table on Sundays and on the great festivals, they must have confessed at least once in each week. The place for receiving these confessions was the chapter-house. He who wished to confess approached the spiritual father, and laying his hand on his own breast, thus intimated to him his desire to approach the Sacrament of Penance. The priest then led the way to the chapter-house, and took his seat. The brother prostrated before him. When ordered to rise he did so, and then sat down beside his father confessor. The priest then said, "Benedicite." To this the penitent answered, "Dominus." The priest thereupon said, "May the Lord be with us." To which the penitent answered, "Amen," and straightway confessed all the faults of which he was guilty. At the end of his confession he said, "Of these and of all my other sins I confess myself guilty, and ask pardon." The priest then imposed upon him some penitential exercises, gave him abso-

lution, and dismissed him with some few words of exhortation and of encouragement.

When the boys of the monastery went to confession—which was, perhaps, once in each week—they were conducted by their Master to the Abbot, or to the priest to whom they wished to confess. While confessing, instead of sitting, as the Monks did, they stood by the side of the priest; and after confession were conducted back again to their schoolroom by their Master.

CHAPTER XLVI.

MAKING KNOWN THE HOUR FOR THE "WORK OF GOD."

ANNOUNCING THE HOURS.—It may, at first sight, seem strange that the duty of giving the signal for the Divine Office should have been assigned by St. Benedict to the Abbot or to some careful brother. But if we bear in mind that all the other duties of the day depended upon the time at which the work of God was begun, that this service of praise held the highest place in his esteem, that there were not any clocks upon which he could depend, we shall cease to wonder that a task which is now intrusted to novices should have been by him confided to the chief authority in the monastery, or to some person in whom that authority could repose implicit trust. It was necessary that the person charged with this duty should be careful and vigilant; that he should be able to calculate the flight of time; that he should have

some skill in marking from the position of the stars, from the degree of light, from the other signs which nature gives, what progress the hours had made. The Abbot, from long experience in monastic life, would naturally be the person who would be most likely to possess this skill, and if hindered from performing so important an office, would procure some brother as well skilled as himself to fulfil its duties for him.

There were various ways of making known the time for the Divine Office. In places in which there were not any bells the brethren were summoned by the sound of a horn, or by striking with a mallet upon a wooden box, or by crying in a shrill tone of voice, 'Alleluia.' In the daytime, the person whose duty it was to give these signals was guided by the sundial in his computation of the hours. If the sun was obscured, he probably relied upon the hour-glass or on the water-clock. It was necessary, therefore, that some of the officials should take it in turns to watch, while the rest of the brethren were asleep, in order to wake them in due time for the *Matin Office*.

THE PSALMS AND THE ANTIPHONS.—It seems that the Abbot used to intone the first Psalm or the first antiphon; after him the rest of the choir-brothers, each in his order, intoned the Psalms and the antiphons which followed; also, that no one presumed to do this unless the Abbot had ordered him to undertake this honourable office, either by previously telling him to act as antiphoner or as cantor, or by writing his name upon the list of those who were deemed capable of fulfilling this duty. For it is

to be remembered that this was not a duty which fell to the Monks in order. Only those persons were suffered to read or to sing who could do so in such a way as to quit themselves creditably of the one or of the other, and who, as St. Benedict expresses it, were thereby able "to edify the hearers."

Some interpreters maintain that the Abbot was exempted from the duty of intoning the Psalms and the antiphons by the words: "After the Abbot, let those who have been appointed," &c. But the other view, which holds that he usually began the Psalms, is more in accordance with St. Benedict's mind. However, now that so many other important duties are laid upon his shoulders, and that there are so many who are well able with credit to perform this office, the Abbot has been justly freed from this task, except on the great festivals. By the words, "Let them do this with humility, with gravity, and the fear of God," those who are appointed by him to perform the public function of cantor, or of antiphoner, or of reader, are cautioned against the spirit of pride which may endeavour to insinuate itself into their actions.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MANUAL LABOUR.

AN ENEMY OF THE SOUL.—Idleness is called an enemy of the soul, because any one who is slothful is filled with a multitude of evil desires, which destroy the life of the soul. Idleness is the fruitful source of

every species of trifling: it is as hard and as cruel towards the virtues which ought to be cultivated by the soul, as a stepmother is proverbially said to be towards the children who are not her own. When it enters and takes possession of a man's heart, it does not enter alone; there is with it a numerous following of many other vices, which work his destruction. Idleness is an occasion of very dangerous temptations: it begets in the mind a brood of the most hurtful thoughts; it paints before the imagination scenes of the most bewitching pleasures; it fills the soul with the thirst of curiosity; it makes it restless; it actually tempts the evil spirits to come and to take up their abode in the unclean lodging which it prepares for their dwelling-place. To conquer this enemy, St. Benedict puts into our hands three very effective weapons—prayer, manual labour, and holy reading. As he has already in preceding chapters treated at length of the first weapon, he confines himself in the present chiefly to the other two, and mentions the hours for prayer, as it were, only incidentally.

OBLIGATION OF MANUAL LABOUR.—There have at various times been many controversies as to whether St. Benedict meant that which he says in this chapter concerning manual labour to be a precept or only a counsel. Those who maintain that he wished it to be a precept, binding upon all who tread in his footsteps, rest their argument upon the words which he uses in speaking about this subject. They point out that he says, "The brethren *ought* to be employed in labouring with their hands." It is, therefore, a part of their *duty*; a debt which they

contract by entering the Order; a debt which they must pay, if they wish to remain in it. Work is imposed upon them by the example which their predecessors have put before them. These, in imitation of the Apostles, made it a kind of solemn obligation to live by the labour of their hands. A further reason proving this is drawn from the very nature of a monastic life, which is of necessity a penitential life. Therefore labour which enters so largely into the idea of penance, labour which is the penance imposed on man by God Himself, must constitute one of its primary duties. To these reasons we may add one other, which is that the absence of labour from a solitary life would be a positive peril, endangering the mental as well as the moral well-being of those who undertake it, when robbed of that which is undeniably one of its necessary safeguards.

On the other hand, those who contend that manual labour is enjoined by St. Benedict only as a counsel, support their view by the following arguments. Manual labour cannot be so essential a feature of the monastic order that if it were abandoned and eliminated from the practice of Monks, they would cease to belong to the religious state. For many of its brightest ornaments, both in learning and in sanctity, never practised this duty of manual toil. But though not engaged in this commendable and useful exercise of penance, they considered that they fulfilled the spirit of the Rule by labouring at that which has effectually secured the end intended by St. Benedict in prescribing manual labour, that is to say, the avoiding of idleness. Moreover, they thought that if

they gave themselves up to external works, the internal spirit of piety would be very materially weakened. They were led to dispense with manual labour, or rather they were dispensed from it by competent authority, not only for the reasons already alleged, but also by the altered circumstances in which they found themselves. For monasteries were not built as of old in vast solitudes, nor in places which were comparatively removed from the abodes of men, but were constructed in the very heart of great cities, in which it would be impossible for Monks to find these laborious occupations without mixing in the crowded streets with all classes of men. Besides, they saw that even in our Holy Father's monasteries several of the Monks were necessarily exempted from going forth to field labour, or to works of that kind, because they were engaged in offices with which such toil was incompatible. Moreover in these days, and in fact for many centuries previously, the Monk has ceased to be occupied as a manual labourer. He has become a cleric, a priest, a teacher, a preacher, a ruler in the Church of God ; and by working to the best of his ability in these various capacities, he complies with the end which St. Benedict had in view, in ordering his Monks to labour. As for the example of labour set us by the Apostles and by the great religious men of antiquity, all that can be said is that they adapted themselves to the circumstances of the times in which they lived, and if they had found themselves environed by circumstances similar to those with which we are surrounded, they would have cast aside the spade and the pickaxe, and have taken up that

mental labour in which for centuries past the Monks have been almost entirely engaged.

FROM EASTER TILL THE FIRST OF OCTOBER.—After thus stating the views of the opposing parties on the question of manual labour, we may now proceed to consider the times which St. Benedict specifies for work, for prayer, and for reading—the three remedies offered to us by him as antidotes for the pernicious evils of idleness. Before doing so, we beg leave to recall to the mind of the reader that our Holy Father assigned twelve hours to the day and twelve hours to the night, that these hours were equal only at the equinox; consequently, that the night hours were longer in winter than in summer, and the day hours longer in summer than in winter. The following table will enable him to see at a glance to what hours St. Benedict's first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth hours correspond according to our method of computation.

DAY.

MORNING.

<i>St. Benedict's Time.</i>	<i>Our Time.</i>
Prima hora, first hour . . .	Seven o'clock.
Secunda hora, second hour . . .	Eight „
Tertia hora, third hour . . .	Nine „
Quarta hora, fourth hour . . .	Ten „
Quinta hora, fifth hour . . .	Eleven „
Sexta hora, sixth hour . . .	Twelve „

AFTERNOON.

Septima hora, seventh hour . . .	One o'clock.
Octava hora, eighth hour . . .	Two „
Nona hora, ninth hour . . .	Three „
Decima hora, tenth hour . . .	Four „
Undecima hora, eleventh hour . . .	Five „
Duodecima hora, twelfth hour . . .	Six „

NIGHT.

BEFORE MIDNIGHT.

<i>St. Benedict's Time.</i>	<i>Our Time.</i>
Prima hora, first hour . . .	Seven o'clock.
Secunda hora, second hour . . .	Eight „
Tertia hora, third hour . . .	Nine „
Quarta hora, fourth hour . . .	Ten „
Quinta hora, fifth hour . . .	Eleven „
Sexta hora, sixth hour . . .	Twelve „

AFTER MIDNIGHT.

Septima hora, seventh hour . . .	One o'clock.
Octava hora, eighth hour . . .	Two „
Nona hora, ninth hour . . .	Three „
Decima hora, tenth hour . . .	Four „
Undecima hora, eleventh hour . . .	Five „
Duodecima hora, twelfth hour . . .	Six „

In speaking of the hours for reading and for labour, we will use our method of computing time, and the reader will be able to refer to the table to see with what hours these correspond in St. Benedict's method of reckoning. During the whole period which intervened between the feast of Easter and the first of October the brethren went forth to labour after the hour of Prime, which was said at seven o'clock. They remained at work until close upon ten, leaving just sufficient time before that hour to recite Tierce. From ten till twelve they devoted to reading. At midday Sext was recited, and then they took their refection. Immediately after this meal, those who pleased were allowed to repose upon their beds until two o'clock. The shortness of the nights and the summer heats required this midday rest. Those, however, who preferred to read during this

time were at liberty to do so, and were told to avoid everything which might disturb the brethren who had retired to the dormitory to rest. At two o'clock None was recited, after which they once more went forth to labour, and persevered in it till the hour for Vespers, which were either said or chanted at four o'clock. At five they had their supper, the conferences were read at six, and the day ended with Compline.

FROM THE FIRST OF OCTOBER TILL LENT.—Prime was said at seven o'clock, after which the brethren read until nine; then Tierce was said, followed by manual labour till twelve; at twelve Sext was said, followed by labour till the first signal for None. This was given shortly before three o'clock. At three None was recited. Dinner followed immediately after this hour. From the end of dinner until Vesper-time, at five o'clock, they gave themselves up to reading, and to the study and the learning of the Psalms. There was not any supper allowed during this season. At six the usual reading of the conferences took place, followed by Compline, and then they retired to rest.

FROM LENT TILL EASTER.—During this holy season the brethren devoted themselves to spiritual reading from the end of Prime till ten o'clock, at which hour Tierce was recited. From the end of Tierce until three they were engaged in manual labour, with the exception of a short time at midday, during which Sext was recited. At three None was recited, and at four Vespers. After Vespers there must have been some little interval till five o'clock,

at which hour they took their single meal. The conferences were read at six, and the day ended as usual with Compline.

ON SUNDAYS.—On these days the Monks read from the end of Prime until nine o'clock, at which hour Tierce was recited. Mass and Holy Communion occupied the time until midday, at which Sext was recited, followed during Paschal-time by dinner. After dinner there was either the usual repose or reading. From two till three was devoted to reading or to prayer. None was recited at three, Vespers at four; supper during Paschal-time was at five; the conferences were read at six, and the day ended in the usual manner.

NIGHT HOURS DURING SUMMER.—They retired to rest at seven, rose for Matins at midnight, recited Lauds at four o'clock, and devoted the rest of the time till Prime to the usual monastic studies.

NIGHT HOURS DURING WINTER.—As usual, they retired to rest after Compline, rose at about half-past two, began Matins at three; devoted the time which intervened between the end of Matins and six o'clock to the study of the Psalms, &c.; and at six recited Lauds.

NIGHT HOURS ON SUNDAYS AND ON FEASTS.—The hour for retiring to rest was, as usual, after Compline. At about half-past one they arose; began Matins at two; after Matins, Lauds immediately followed; and the rest of the time till Prime was given to any practices of devotion in which the Monks chose to employ it.

DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS.—In the time of St.

Benedict books were so rare that they were as precious as are silver and gold at the present day. Oftentimes they were not in sufficient number for each of the Monks to have one volume assigned to him for his own use. They were usually kept under lock and key in a strong chest in the cloister, until as time went on and their number increased, large libraries were built for their preservation. The time chosen by St. Benedict for the distribution of these volumes among the brethren was the beginning of Lent. In some monasteries this was made on Ash Wednesday ; in others, on the first Sunday in Lent ; in others, on the Monday which follows the first Sunday. Hildemar describes for us the manner in which in his day this ceremony was performed. In the chapter-house there was first spread before the Abbot's chair a carpet, upon which the librarian deposited, with the assistance of some of the brethren, all the books which were on the shelves of the library or in the chest in the cloister. When the brethren were assembled, the librarian first read out a list of the books which had been distributed in the preceding Lent, and also the name of the brother to whose care each volume had been intrusted. As their names were read out, each brother deposited on the carpet the book which had been given to him. When this was done the Abbot gave to each a volume from those which were lying before him, adapting the work, no doubt, to the capacity of each of his subjects.

With respect to reading, it is St. Benedict's special injunction that each brother should read the volume thus committed to his keeping, not in a desultory

manner, but from the beginning to the end in an orderly and complete way, avoiding all levity and inconstancy. In order to insure this, he commands the Abbot to select one or two of the elders who are so mature in mind and so grave in manner as to compel the respect of all, and to commission them to go about the monastery during the hours which are devoted to reading, to see that all are pursuing their studies with that earnestness and attention which so profitable an employment deserves. It was their duty to mark those who were slothful; who gave themselves up to idleness, or to talking, or to trifles; and who, by this misconduct, not only themselves failed to gather any fruit from their books, but were a positive hindrance to others, by distracting their attention, and by preventing them from applying to their studies with that concentration of mental power which is productive of such excellent results. Any one whom they discovered misconducting himself in any of the afore-mentioned ways they reported to the Abbot, who first secretly reprehended him once or twice, and then, if no amendment followed, subjected him to that severer course of penance which usually had the effect of winning him over to a more becoming and reasonable method of action. Those who were either so unlearned or so fickle as to be incapable of concentrating their thoughts upon the pages of a book were set to do some work which would occupy them, and prevent them from being a source of trouble and of distraction to others. The work given to them on Sundays was not manual labour, but some service in the kitchen or in the

refectory. Even the weak and the delicate were not exempted from labour. If they could not read, and thus usefully occupy their time, there was imposed upon them some light and easy task, which, while keeping them from the evil of idleness, was not so oppressive as to be beyond their strength, and to cause them to abandon the pursuit of the monastic life.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE OBSERVANCE OF LENT.

LENT.—Our English word *Lent* does not, like the Latin word *Quadragesima*, give us the idea of the forty days' fast. Its Anglo-Saxon meaning is the spring-time — *Leneten*; therefore the spring fast. This penitential season is generally supposed to have been instituted by the Apostles in order to commemorate our Lord's fast. We find it mentioned by St. Ignatius of Antioch, Tertullian, St. Iræneus, St. Basil, and St. Ambrose, as being everywhere received and practised by the Church. But although universal in its observance, Lent was not uniform in the manner in which it was kept, nor in the number of days of which it consisted, nor in the date at which it began. Throughout the West, even in our Holy Father's time, it began upon the first Sunday, and consisted of thirty-eight fasting-days; for the Sundays were not days of fasting.

In the reign of Gregory the Great, the four days

beginning with Ash Wednesday were added. In the East, Lent began on the Monday of Sexagesima week, and both the Saturdays and the Sundays were excluded from the fast. From Monday in Sexagesima till Monday in Quinquagesima they abstained from flesh-meat; but from Quinquagesima Monday until Easter they abstained not only from flesh-meat, but also from eggs, milk, and fish, and limited themselves, in addition to this, to only one meal a day. In former times it was usual to keep four Lents: (1) the forty days before Easter; (2) the forty days which preceded the feast of SS. Peter and Paul; (3) the forty days before our Lady's Assumption; (4) the forty days before the festival of Christmas.

MONASTIC LENT.—St. Benedict, considering the nature of a Monk's life, which is one of mourning, of penance, and of separation from the world, and remembering how all the great ascetics of former days were given to the practice of fasting, and to a very austere method of life, tells us that our lives also ought to resemble a continual Lent. But because few, even in his days, were able to endure the bodily rigours which the fervour and the strength of former times enabled our predecessors to undergo, he exhorts us, at least in the time of Lent, to emulate them by a somewhat more severe treatment of ourselves, and suggests to us a variety of holy practices, by which we shall be able to make amends for our want of fervour at other seasons of the year. These practices may be reduced to three heads: the avoidance of sin; the doing of good; the practice of some works of supererogation.

THE AVOIDANCE OF SIN.—We are here “to live in all purity,” by which he means the avoiding not only of all grave sin, but of even those which are usually looked upon as mere trivial defects. Without this, bodily abstinence will be but little worth. Therefore, in these days of Lent, let the Monk repress the curiosity of his eyes ; the itching of his ears to catch whatever news may be afloat ; the volubility of his tongue in speech ; the affection of his heart to cling to creatures. Let him look to his sluggishness in obedience, reluctance of will to submit, and rebellion of heart against the ordinances of rule.

THE DOING OF GOOD.—This is the time in which to devote himself more especially to his duty of prayer, and to banish from it all the defects which have been suffered to creep in. It must not be a sleepy, listless, inattentive, distracted prayer, but energetic, vigilant, absorbing the whole mind in the intensity of its fervour. By tearful prayer, St. Benedict does not mean that we should weep material tears, but that our tears should be the tears of the heart ; a sorrow founded upon reason ; not evanescent, but abiding in the fixed resolve never again to betray Jesus Christ. Besides giving himself up to prayer, the Monk must apply his mind to reading, in order to acquire that sound doctrine which will save him from error, and fill his mind with a store of learning profitable alike both to himself and to others. In prayer he speaks to God ; but while reading, it is God Who speaks to him, and whispers into the ear of his heart the suggestions of the Holy Spirit, by Whose guidance he is led onward from one degree of perfection to another, till at last

he stands upon the topmost round of the ladder which enables him to reach the gate of heaven.

WORKS OF SUPEREROGATION.—In addition to his ordinary monastic measure of service, he is exhorted to add somewhat in various ways. He may, over and above the Divine Office which he says in choir, offer up to God other prayers, and devote some further time to holy meditations upon the Passion of our Divine Lord. He may withhold from himself some small portion of his food by not taking all that is allowed, by abstaining from wine, and drinking only water at his meal. He may refrain from going to rest for an hour or more, and may rise more seasonably for the morning Office, and devote to prayer or to reading the time that is thus stolen from sleep. He may be more observant of silence during these holy days, or, as Lanfranc ordained, he may on three days each week abstain from the usual recreation. In these and in various other ways, which a soul that is desirous of suffering with Christ will know how to invent and to multiply, a devout Religious will be able to add to the usual sacrifice of his ordinary daily measure of service.

WITH LEAVE OF THE ABBOT.—With prudent foresight, St. Benedict ordains that no one shall ever undertake any of these extra works of mortification without first acquainting his Abbot with that which he wishes to do, obtaining his permission to do it, and being assisted by his counsel and his prayers. He knew full well that, without some such safeguard, there would be many who, carried away by an indiscreet zeal, would presumptuously attempt to do that which is beyond their strength; who, if they succeeded for

a time in emulating the virtue and the austerity of holier souls, would be in consequence puffed up with vainglory, and fail in winning the heavenly reward. Therefore he orders every one who wishes to perform any such acts of mortification to obtain permission to practise them, and to ask his Superior to pray that God would bless and make them fruitful in many graces. The "Regula Magistri" describes the ceremony which was observed on these occasions. It seems that in the beginning of Lent the Abbot first of all gave a general permission to perform these penitential works of supererogation, in some such form as the following: "Brethren, he who wishes spiritually to labour for his soul's well-being, and to abstain from something which he may lawfully enjoy, has my permission to undertake this good work. But he who does not wish to act in this way shall receive the usual Lenten allowance." After this permission, which was probably given in the chapter-house, each of those who were willing to perform some work over and above his accustomed task came before the Abbot in the oratory, and, humbly kneeling in his presence, first thanked him for the leave which he had given, and then told him the particular act of mortification which he wished to perform during Lent. The Abbot took into consideration the bodily strength of each of his children, and either allowed them to carry into effect that which they had suggested for his approval, or modified it in such a way as that it would not overtax nor be a drain upon their strength. Finally, he gave them his blessing, and prayed God to aid them in their penitential exercises.

CHAPTER XLIX.

OF BRETHREN WHO ARE EITHER AT A DISTANCE FROM THE MONASTERY, OR ON A JOURNEY.

THOSE WHO ARE AT A DISTANCE.—In this chapter St. Benedict instructs those who are working at a distance from the monastery, and those who are on a journey, as to the manner in which they are to say the Divine Office. It is not left to the judgment of the first to determine what that distance must be which will excuse them from attendance in choir. That is a matter for the Abbot's prudent consideration. If he sees that time will be lost in travelling to and fro, that the work will be postponed which ought to be performed at once, and that the brethren will be needlessly inconvenienced by having to traverse some considerable distance, he may dispense them from joining the bulk of the community in the oratory. He does not, however, exempt them from the duty of performing the divine service, although some are of opinion that in his time, and long after it, there was not any grave obligation which bound even professed Monks to recite the Office.¹

MANNER OF PERFORMING THE WORK OF GOD.—Therefore those who are exempted by the Abbot

¹ Previously to the fourth Council of Carthage (398), we find no law which enforces the recitation of the canonical hours. It was very probably in consequence of the forty-ninth canon of this particular Council that St. Jerome spoke and wrote about the Divine Office as being obligatory upon Religious as well as upon Ecclesiastics.

from joining the brethren, who, at the signal of the "work of God," have hurried to the oratory, are ordered by our Holy Father to mark the time at which these more favoured ones are engaged in worshipping God, and at the same time to join them in spirit by performing their measure of divine praise in the place in which they are labouring. When he bids them *fall upon their knees* in order to do this, we must not suppose that he requires them to remain kneeling during the recitation of the Psalms. All that is intended by this phrase is, that they should kneel at those portions of the Office at which the ceremonial prescribes kneeling, and on those days and at those seasons in which this act of reverence is enjoined. Nor must we suppose that the Monks cast themselves upon their knees in the place in which they stood, if it happened to be a wet, miry soil. They had too much wisdom so narrowly and so literally to interpret the words of one so preëminently broad-minded and considerate in all his enactments as was our Holy Father. It is to be presumed, therefore, that they selected some suitable place in which to say the Divine Office, and there performed it with all the reverence which their devout hearts could command.

THOSE WHO WERE ON A JOURNEY. — If any Monk was sent upon a journey, he was cautioned against suffering the usual hours of prayer to pass by without offering, during the course of them, his wonted meed of praise. But he was not expected to observe all the ceremonies which were looked for from those who were simply engaged in labour, and who would have many more facilities for these observances than

he could have. For if he were riding on horseback, or were seated in a wagon, it would be most inconvenient for him to dismount or to leave his conveyance in order to kneel; and, therefore, all that St. Benedict requires from him in these circumstances is to recite the Divine Office "as best he can." The Cistercians, however, were so zealous for the literal fulfilment of the Rule that, when journeying on horseback, they were accustomed to dismount in order to bend the knee at the *Pater noster* and the collects which occurred in the course of the Office. Because the Cluniacs did not do the same, they cast their non-observance of this rubric in their teeth, as a departure from the injunctions of the Rule. In answering this objection, Peter the Venerable says: "Whatever the Rule ordains on the subject of genuflections during the course of the canonical hours, we with the utmost care observe; for before the beginning of every hour we religiously bend the knee out of reverential fear for the Divinity. Sometimes we are hindered from observing this ceremony by rain, or by snow, or by the miry condition of the roads. On these occasions we are accustomed to recite the *Miserere*, as a sort of compensation for the omission of this act of reverence."²

² Epist. xxviii. lib. i.

CHAPTER L.

OF THE BRETHREN WHO DO NOT GO FAR OFF.

NOT TO EAT WHILE ABROAD.—Whenever a Monk was sent from the monastery to transact any business, he was strictly forbidden to eat while abroad, even when invited to do so, unless he had the express permission of his Abbot. This was rarely given, unless the errand on which he had gone forth detained him more than one day. At first sight this seems a hard rule ; and one is surprised that a man of so great gentleness and mildness as was St. Benedict should have made and enforced it. But when we come to consider the dangers and the abuses to which the opposite line of conduct would open wide the door, we cannot but admire the far-seeing prudence which dictated this measure. Some have suggested that one of the reasons which may have moved him to enforce this precept was to insure a prompt execution of the mission upon which any one was sent, and a speedy return to the monastery.

WITHOUT LEAVE OF THE ABBOT.—St. Benedict himself says that discretion is the mother of virtues. Therefore he does not make a hard and fast rule which would banish her from the Abbot's councils, and abolish the office committed to her care of smoothing away all asperities from his legislative measures. Consequently the Superior must always take into account the circumstances of each case. He must consider the season of the year, the distance

of the place, the nature of the road, the strength of the Monk who is about to execute his commission ; and if he finds that it would be a burden for him to wait until he returns before taking his refection, he must give him leave to eat with those by whom he is charitably invited to refresh himself.

TRANSGRESSORS TO BE EXCOMMUNICATED.—If any one without leave presumed to eat while away from the monastery, he was on his return, and after confessing his fault, punished by the lesser excommunication, which separated him from the common table. If this fault was repeated, or if there were in it circumstances calling for a more severe measure of punishment, the culprit was first warned and privately reproved. If no amendment followed, he was subjected to the usual course of monastic discipline. St. Gregory, in our Holy Father's Life, tells us of some of the Monks who transgressed the very rule of which we are speaking. St. Benedict had sent them out to transact some business, and as they were detained longer than they expected, they accepted the invitation of a certain religious lady to eat at her house. On returning to the abbey late in the evening, they went, as was usual, to receive the Holy Father's blessing. "Where," said he to them, "have you eaten?" "Nowhere," they replied. "Why do you tell me an untruth?" said he ; "did you not go into such a woman's house, and eat such and such kind of meat, and drink so many cups?" Seeing that he was cognisant of all that they had been doing, they fell trembling at his feet, confessing that in disobeying the Rule they had done wickedly. He straightway

blessed and pardoned them, being convinced that they would never again repeat their fault.

CHAPTER LI.

THE ORATORY OF THE MONASTERY.

THE ORATORY.—At first there was no distinction whatever between an oratory and a church, except, perhaps, in size. But when the parochial system began to be more defined, several distinctions began to be introduced, the chief of which was that on Sundays and on festival days Mass could not be celebrated in an oratory. After a time it was ordained that without the Bishop's leave, Mass could not be celebrated in oratories, such, for instance, as are those which are in the houses of private individuals. Then came another distinction: some oratories were called private and others public. A private oratory is that to which the public have not access; a public oratory is that to which there is a door giving free access to all comers. In this latter kind of oratories, in the oratories of Religious, and in his own palace, a Bishop may give leave for the celebration of Mass. Also he has the power to do this in the case of even private oratories; but only for a time, and when there is some just cause which calls for this privilege. Only the Pope can give a permanent permission for Mass in a private oratory.

In our Holy Father's time the word "oratory"

signified the chapel of the monastery. It was the place in which the Holy Sacrifice was offered and the Divine Office chanted. There the Monk made his vows to God; there the Abbot exhorted and preached; there the Holy Eucharist was dispensed. When faults were committed, expiation was made for them in the oratory; when any one wished to read or to learn the Psalms he went thither; above all things, when any one wished to pray, it was in the calm and silent oratory that he poured out his soul to God. St. Benedict wished it to be used for nothing else than for prayers, or for something which had a close connection with prayer. "Let it be that which its name signifies—a place of prayer." It is God's house, and He has said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer."

Therefore nothing else than the service of prayer must be carried on there. No one must use it for the transaction of any business, for walking, for talking, for laughing, and each must do his utmost to keep it strictly as a house of prayer. Nothing must be stored away or kept there. It is God's house, it is the abode of the angels, it is the resting-place of the relics of the sainted men who have been raised for their holy lives to the altars of God's Church.

AFTER THE WORK OF GOD.—When the Divine Office was ended in choir, all had to leave their places at the sign given by the Abbot, and "in exceeding great silence" to quit the oratory. This was enjoined in order that a deeper impression might be left upon the minds of those who had been conversing with God, and standing in the presence of the

dread Judge and of the recording angels. Another reason for this strict silence was that those of the brethren who might wish to return and spend some time in devout mental prayer might not be distracted and disturbed by the sounds of talking. Before leaving the divine presence they were to make a reverence to the altar, or rather to the most Holy Sacrament. At that time this reverence was not a genuflection, as at the present day, but a profound bow or inclination towards the Tabernacle.

It is worthy of remark that St. Benedict, neither in this chapter nor in any other part of his Rule, imposes upon his disciples the obligation of purely mental prayer, although it is evident in what esteem he held it, from the extraordinary precautions which he takes to prevent any from being disturbed in their practice of it. The reason why he prescribes that they should remain in the oratory for this purpose is because it was the most private place in the monastery. The Monks in his day had not, as we have, private cells in which they could pray, but only a public dormitory, in which there were necessarily many things which would distract and disturb them. Hence the oratory was naturally assigned to them as the place for this exercise. For many centuries it has been the custom in our Order to have fixed times each day for the exercise of mental prayer, which is now taken in common; for Superiors, no doubt, saw that their subjects would not and could not make so great progress in perfection by the aid of only vocal prayer as they would by the addition of mental prayer. Besides, they understood from what St. Benedict has

ordained for its encouragement in this and in the twenty-second chapter, how pleased he is that his children, in addition to the vocal prayer of the Divine Office, should give themselves up also to the practice of purely mental prayer.

CHAPTER LII.

ENTERTAINMENT OF GUESTS.

THE RECEPTION OF GUESTS.—Hospitality has ever been a distinguishing feature in the Benedictine Order from its first foundation even unto the present day. All who presented themselves were received and entertained as if they were each Christ Himself. This was possible in the early ages of the Order, and even necessary, as the monastery was, often enough, the only place at which entertainment for man and for beast could be obtained at the end of a wearisome day's journey. In the present age, however, circumstances have so changed in this matter that great discrimination is requisite in admitting to hospitality those who present themselves, so that only those who are worthy may be received to partake of our bread and to drink of our cup. Moreover, the face of society has undergone such a change since those days of indiscriminate hospitality, and the conveniences for travellers are so many and so luxurious, that few would care to trouble the monastery for its simple fare and its modest lodging. Even in our Holy Father's time some discrimination was always used in

the entertainment of guests, as we may see from the fact that more special honour was paid to those who were "of the household of the faith;" by which is meant not only those who professed the Catholic religion, but also those who were Monks, and were consequently received as members of the same family. Besides discrimination with regard to the persons who were admitted to hospitality, there was a considerable difference made in the particular degree of external honour and reverence which was paid to guests. Each had given to him that honour which was his due. A Bishop was received differently from a priest, a priest differently from a layman, a noble differently from a peasant. The charity with which each was entertained was the same, but the honour shown to different classes of men varied according to their worth and to their respective positions in society; for the Monks aimed at fulfilling the apostolic precept of giving honour to whom honour was due, and in the measure in which it was due. No doubt the Abbot went to meet the more distinguished, while some of the brothers received those who were of inferior degree.

MODE OF RECEPTION.—As soon as a guest was announced, the Abbot, or the Prior, or the brethren, went forth to meet him. That is to say, if the guest was a noble or a Bishop, the Abbot received him; if a priest or a Monk, the Prior; if a layman of ordinary degree, some of the brothers, as we have already said. The first thing that was done was to pray together: either the Monk who received the guest said, "Benedicite," and the guest answered, "Deo gratias," or the

guest was conducted straightway to the oratory, and there some few moments were spent in prayer. Only after this prayer was the kiss of peace offered to the stranger. When St. Benedict orders this, he says that this token of affection must not be given till after prayer, "because of the illusions of the devil." By these words he refers to several well-authenticated cases, in which, as it is recorded in the lives of the fathers of the desert, the devil appeared to them in bodily shape. Lest anything of the kind should happen to his own children, he ordains that by means of holy prayer, before which the evil spirit vanishes and becomes powerless to work us ill, there should be applied to every stranger who asks for their hospitality a test, against which no evil spirit can stand. Any one who will read the life of our Holy Father, and mark how often he was molested by the angels of the most wicked one, either in his own person or in that of his children, will not be surprised that he should have deemed such a precaution necessary. In this age of unbelief men will perhaps smile at what they will deem to be the superstition of a credulous Monk, forgetting that it is the devil's policy to make men ignore his existence, and that the Prince of the Apostles was also superstitious enough to warn us that "the evil one goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." However, whether the devil does actually appear in human shape, or does not, the prayer which a Religious in these days says in his heart before receiving a guest will serve at least to help him neither to do in the presence of his guest nor to say anything which might be to him a

source of disedification. Also, it will enable him to preserve himself from suffering any spiritual harm from any disedifying or from any unbecoming topic of which his guest may chance to speak.

In this monastic salutation of guests all humility must be shown. The mind of him who gives the salutation must subject and put itself beneath him who is received ; the body must manifest humility by showing the reverence which is felt by the mind. To persons of ordinary degree only the head was bowed ; but when prelates or any other Church dignitaries came to the monastery, those who were sent to entertain them either fell upon their knees before them or prostrated on the earth in their presence. This was done, not to the man, nor for the man's sake, but to Christ, for Whose sake he was received to hospitality.

AFTER THE RECEPTION.—After this short prayer, either the Abbot or some of the brethren sat with the guest, and, while the meal was preparing, read to him either the Holy Scripture or some pious book. In later years it was deemed to be sufficient if the Monk entertained his guest with some edifying conversation. At the present day, however, and in these countries, all these ceremonies in the reception of guests have been wisely dispensed with, as they would astonish even Catholics, and very probably fill the minds of non-Catholics with alarm. If, however, the guest be admitted to the refectory, the rule will there be carried out for his edification, inasmuch as during all the meals the divine law and some useful book will be read to him. All courtesy, both in word and in deed, is then shown to the guest. If he should chance

to come to the monastery on a day when, by Rule, abstinence is enjoined, the Abbot, or the person who is sent to entertain him, will break the abstinence in order to keep him company. If, however, his visit falls on a fast-day appointed by the Church, that ecclesiastical enactment cannot, of course, be set aside, because over it the Abbot has not any ordinary dispensing power. In former times the Abbot used to pour water on the hands of his guest, and the whole brotherhood used to assemble to wash his feet, which were probably sore with travel. Not, of course, that *all* either did or could take part in this office of charity, but by their presence, and by their chanting of the Psalms, which usually accompanied this ceremony, they might be said morally to take part in it.

THE POOR AND STRANGERS.—St. Benedict knew quite enough of human nature to understand that, in spite of all his legislation, it would assert itself, and dominate the best intentions of even the most exemplary. Therefore, after reminding his Religious that it is Christ Whom they are to respect, to honour, to entertain in their guests, and not their wealth, or their rank, or their dignity, he furthermore takes care to recommend to their special care and charity *the poor and strangers*, who bear a greater resemblance to our Lord, Who for our sake became *poor*. The glamour which surrounds a titled personage, or one who is rich, or one who is powerful, is quite enough to secure him obsequious attention. Not so the poor, who, notwithstanding that they are our Lord's representatives, would often enough be treated with but scant courtesy, unless men strive to keep alive

their faith, and to make the words of our great Law-giver ring in their ears with a peal so shrill that no worldly consideration can drown them.

THE ABBOT'S KITCHEN.—Our Holy Father gives the chief reason why this, as well perhaps as the guest-house, and the table at which the guests dined, should stand apart from the rest of the monastery. Guests were nearly always either coming or departing, sometimes in considerable numbers ; and consequently the work in the kitchen was well-nigh continual. If the same kitchen had to serve for the community and for the guests, there would undoubtedly be occasions when the preparations for the simple meals of the brethren would be disturbed, and the order of the monastery seriously interfered with. To avoid this, the Abbot's kitchen was therefore a building distinct from that of the monastery. Another reason might be that more dainty fare had to be cooked in the Abbot's kitchen, for the sake of the distinguished guests who not unfrequently honoured the Monks with their company. We may infer this from the fact that two brethren, who doubtlessly had some skill in cooking, were deputed for the service of this kitchen for a *year*. The brethren did not succeed one another in this department, as they did in the monastery kitchen, in which very little skill was required to prepare the Lenten fare of which they ordinarily partook. Whenever there was a more than usual influx of guests these two brothers were aided by some others, in order that they might not be overworked, nor their patience overtaxed to such a degree as to cause them to give way to murmuring, which St. Benedict held

in such utter detestation. But if ever it chanced that there were either very few guests, or perhaps not any, the cooks had to take their share in the common labour in which the rest were employed. Not only the cooks, but all the other brethren who were intrusted with any office, were helped in their duties, whenever, through some unforeseen circumstances, a more than usual strain was put upon their strength.

THE GUEST-MASTER. — It is evident from the Rule that this official did not exist in St. Benedict's day. There was, indeed, an official whom we might call "a guest-brother," inasmuch as the care of the guest-house was intrusted to him. He was one over whose heart the fear of God held sway, that, in consequence of his continual intercourse with externs, he might neither receive any spiritual harm, nor by his evil behaviour give an occasion of scandal to those who came to the monastery to be edified. At the present day there is in every monastery one of the Fathers who is chosen by the Prior for the express purpose of receiving and of entertaining guests. He is usually a man who is prudent in speech, polished in manner, and modest in demeanour. His duties are to see that all the guest-rooms are kept neat, clean, and well supplied with all necessary furniture. When a guest is announced, it is he who goes to meet him, and, before doing anything else, conducts him to the Superior. He provides for all his wants, keeps him company, and shows him all that courtesy which St. Benedict orders. The rest of the brethren do not speak to the guest, unless he is introduced to them by the Superior. If any of them is accosted by a guest,

he must speak to him with all politeness, and, after answering his questions, excuse himself with the best possible grace from holding any further converse with him, on the ground that all such intercourse is forbidden by the Rule.

CHAPTER LIII.

RECEPTION OF LETTERS OR OF PRESENTS.

LETTERS.—St. Benedict, treading in the footsteps of those saintly men from whom he had learnt all the discipline of the monastic life, forbids his children to receive from others, to send to them, or to one another, any letters, unless for so doing they have the permission of their Abbot. Why was he so careful to shut even this door of communication with the outside world, and to suffer it to be opened only with his leave? It was to hinder those who had, with mature deliberation, turned their backs upon the world from wistfully looking out upon it once again; for, by means of letters, they would be able to keep alive with worldly men that familiarity which might induce them to repent of the step which they had taken, and thus make their solitude distasteful to them. After once burying themselves in its peaceful depths, it was their duty to avoid everything which might disturb its repose. Letters would undoubtedly do this; for they would recall memories, and revive affections once entertained with joy, but now sacrificed for a higher good; they would awaken anxieties; they

would provoke curiosity ; they would, in one word, introduce a disturbing element which might so seriously trouble that Benedictine *quies* which it was our Holy Father's aim to establish in the heart, as to induce him who had come to seek it in the cloister to fancy that he was in pursuit of what could not there be found, and to make him once again launch out upon the sea of a secular life. Therefore it is that he wisely prohibits his subjects either to send or to receive letters, unless for so doing they have the Abbot's leave. This will doubtless be given only to those who will make a discreet use of it, and to whom such a concession will not bring any harm.

TOKENS (*eulogio*, εὐλογία).— There are various meanings given to this word. *Eulogia* may be taken to mean : (1) any gift which is bestowed out of affection for any other person : in the Scripture it is called a *blessing* ; (2) gifts of sacred relics or of objects of piety ; (3) bread destined for the Holy Eucharist ; (4) the Holy Eucharist itself ; (5) altar-breads blessed and distributed before the principal meal to those who had not communicated at Holy Mass ; (6) any object which has received the blessing of the Church ; (7) common bread sent as a token of benevolence or of love ; (8) good words spoken in praise of any one. It is thought that St. Benedict takes *eulogia* to mean something which is superadded to the letter, a small gift, such as a picture or a relic, or anything of that kind. The word *munuscula* (small presents), which follows, seems to indicate that this is the idea which he wishes to convey. He prohibits these as well as letters, in order that neither useless nor dangerous

friendships may be fostered between a Monk and any one whom he has left in the world, or between one Religious and another. Such friendships are often very destructive of the true monastic spirit, and therefore must be carefully avoided.

THESE GIFTS ARE AT THE ABBOT'S DISPOSAL.— If any presents are sent to any Monk, either by his relatives or by his friends, he cannot accept them without leave of the Abbot; and when they are accepted, the Abbot may give them to whomsoever he pleases. Why is this? It is because Religious by their vow of poverty cannot be the proprietors or owners of anything. Ownership in all things belongs to the community. But as all authority is vested in the Abbot, who rules the community, the power to distribute the goods of the community, or, at least, those goods which are not of any great value, is in his hands. He has the power not only to distribute, but also to transfer the ownership from the community to any one else. This power, however, is now modified and regulated by the canon law of the Church. Whenever, therefore, any present is sent to a Religious, he must remember that it is not his, and that he cannot accept it unless permission is granted by his Superior. If that permission is withheld, he must not be grieved; he must look upon whatever has been sent as the community's public property, over which he has not any more right than any other member of the brotherhood. It is very important that these ideas should ever be kept clearly before the mind. If they be not, there will creep in the vice of ownership, than which nothing is more destructive of the religious spirit. Our Holy

Father orders that all those who presume to receive these letters, tokens, and little presents, without first obtaining leave for them, shall be subjected to the punishments which are appointed by the Rule. As we have already, in several other parts of this work, spoken about these, nothing further need here be said about them.

CHAPTER LIV.

CLOTHING.

CLOTHING.—We may infer from the words with which St. Benedict opens this chapter that he had some knowledge of the future spread of his Order throughout the world. Therefore it does not specifically mention either the quantity or the quality of the clothing which his followers are to use, but leaves that to be regulated in accordance with the requirements of the climate of the country in which they live. If it happens to be a cold, inclement place, then let them use woollen stuff; but if it is warm and genial, let them adapt their clothing to the temperature of the air in which they have to live and to work. The arrangement of all this is left, as usual, to the discretion of Superiors. Nevertheless, wishing to give some sort of standard from which they may judge of that which is necessary, he himself takes what we may call a golden mean, and for moderately temperate climates deems it to be sufficient for them to have a cowl, a tunic, a scapular, and shoes and stockings. In winter, this cowl is to be of thicker stuff; in summer, of some

material which will enable them, without grave inconvenience, to endure the heat of the sun. It would be useless to attempt to discuss all the details into which various commentators have entered with respect to the afore-mentioned articles of clothing. From that which they have written, we have been able to gather that at first the cowl was not so long as it is at present, and was without sleeves. The hood was almost conical in shape, and came down upon the neck. The tunic was short, reaching a little below the knees. The scapular, as its name implies, was at first destined to cover the shoulders, and by degrees became so long as to reach down to the middle of the body. To this, the hood, in later times, was attached. With this the Monks were clothed when they went forth into the fields to their daily toil. Although nothing whatever is said in this or in any other part of the Rule concerning linen shirts, or that which is equivalent to linen, yet we may infer from the fact that, in point of clothing, he leaves much to the discretion of the Abbot, and does not in this chapter speak determinately on the subject, but in a hesitating sort of way, saying "*we think*," we are inclined to believe that the Monks used to wear some such article of clothing under their tunics.

Our Holy Father did not require his children to go barefoot, but ordained that they should wear stockings and shoes. Some are of opinion that the stockings (*caligæ*) were a kind of hose reaching to the ankle; that in addition to these, the Monks had *socks* which joined the hose at the ankle, but which were not of one piece with it. Hence they translate the word *pedules* —

which is usually rendered *shoes* — by the word *socks*. They are induced to do this because they think that these were taken off when the Monks went to rest, but that the hose was not. Moreover, this division of the socks from the hose would facilitate the process of washing, which this part of what we may call their “stockings” would need more frequently than the hose. But if this is a true interpretation of the passage, what other enactment is there in the Rule which orders us to wear shoes? Those who have attached this meaning to the word *pedules* tell us that though St. Benedict does not elsewhere speak of shoes, yet he intends his children to wear them; for he never would wish the socks to serve as shoes. We must confess that we do not feel inclined to follow this interpretation. *Pedules* well very well bear the meaning *shoes*, while the other interpretation seems to us somewhat forced and unnatural.

With respect to the clothes which are given to them, Monks are specially warned not to complain either of their colour or of the coarseness of the material out of which they are made. From this it must not for a moment be supposed that the brethren were clad in raiment of different colours, one wearing black, another brown, another gray. All wore the same colour, but in that there may have been various shades, some being blacker than others. Also there may have been various degrees of coarseness. But of these merely accidental differences they were not to make any account, but to be content with that material which could be procured in the place in which they lived and be bought at a cheap rate.

Whatever clothing was given to them was so made as to fit them. Their tunics and their cowls were to be neither too short nor too long. If they were too short, they would make those who wore them ridiculous in the eyes of men ; if they were too long, they would give them the air of aiming at effect, by striving to imitate the pomp and the state of high dignitaries. When their garments were worn out, new ones were provided for them, and the old were laid up in the wardrobe for the use of the poor. As the Monks in our Holy Father's day and for centuries afterwards were accustomed to sleep in their habits, it was necessary that they should have two, one for day and one for night use. Also that they might have one habit to wear while the other was washing.

Whenever they were sent on a journey they were to receive a somewhat better habit than was that which they ordinarily wore, in order not to attract the attention of those whom they might chance to meet by the sordid nature of their garments, or by a too great trimness of dress. This conduct is just the reverse of that which is practised by those who, like the Pharisees, aim at making an impression, and therefore purposely put on a worse dress when they go forth among men than is that which they usually wear in the monastery.

BEDDING.—Passing from the clothes which they wore to those with which they were covered when they retired to rest, St. Benedict mentions four articles, the nature of each of which we must endeavour to explain.

MAITA.—At first, and especially among the

Egyptian Religious, this was a mat woven out of reeds, or straw, or grass. The Monks used this as a bed on which they slept during the night-time, as a seat upon which they rested during the day, as a stool upon which they knelt when they prayed, and, when strewn with ashes in the last moment of their mortal life, as a penitential instrument upon which they died.

SAGUM.—Among the Romans this was the name given to a long military garment, which soldiers were accustomed to wear over their armour. It was made of some thick coarse woollen stuff, approaching in texture somewhat the nature of a sack. Whether this was laid upon the mat as a kind of rug, or whether it was stuffed with wool or with hair, no one seems able to determine.

LENA.—Besides the *matta* and the *sagum*, St. Benedict allows what he calls a *lena*. This seems to have been a large square rug or blanket made of coarse woollen stuff. With this the Monks covered themselves when they lay down to rest. If we bear in mind that they slept in their habits, with the hood, which was fastened to their scapular, drawn over their heads, we shall see that they were plentifully supplied with clothing, and sufficiently defended against the cold of the winter nights.

CAPITALE.—Under the head of each Monk there was placed a *capitale* or bolster. This was in all likelihood stuffed with wool, with hair, or with straw, and served as a pillow.

We may say, therefore, that the word *matta* will represent a straw mattress; *sagum*, some woollen

substance stretched over it; *lena*, a thick rug or blanket; and *capitale*, a pillow or bolster.

Our Holy Father orders the Abbot frequently to visit these beds on which the Monks reposed, in order to prevent any of them who might be addicted to the vice of keeping anything without leave, from concealing these articles in his bed, which was the only place in which it was possible for him to hide them from the sight of his brethren. Hence, from time to time, when all were assembled at chapter, the Abbot called attention to this point of the Rule, and nominated several of the most discreet to go and perform this duty for him. These at once left the chapter-house, proceeded to the dormitory, and searched all the beds. If they found anything in the way of food, or clothing, or money, they brought it back with them, and laid it at the feet of the Monk in whose bed it had been discovered. If he could not satisfactorily account for it, he was punished in proportion to the gravity of the fault, and to the frequency with which he had been guilty of it.

ALL NECESSARY THINGS WERE GIVEN TO THEM.—In order to prevent them from having any excuse for these faults against the vow of poverty, St. Benedict orders the Superior of each monastery to give to his subjects all those various articles which he deems necessary for them. Of their clothing we have already spoken; but, in addition to this, he mentions several other articles, of which it will not be out of place to say a few words.

BRACILE.—As far as we can make out from the description which St. Isidore gives of this article of

dress, it seems to have been "a strip of linen or of woollen cloth, which, beginning at the arms, went up to the neck, crossed the back, was drawn round the waist, and fastened there." That which will perhaps give us the best notion of it is the priest's amice, which he puts upon his neck, draws the strings across his breast, under his arms, and then ties them round his body. Some commentators think that the *bracile* was a belt worn next to the skin, and that the hose which the Monks wore was fastened to it. If this meaning be accepted, the *bracile* would resemble our *braces*, especially if we remember how St. Isidore endeavours to describe the *bracile* for us.

CULTELLUS (a knife).—Of this we have already spoken, when treating of the way in which the Monks are to sleep. They carried it in a sheath by their side, and used it for all the various purposes for which we at the present day use this same kind of article.

GRAPHIUM (a pen).—Of this also mention has been made in a preceding chapter, in which we said that it was probably the *stylus* of the Romans, pointed at one end, for the purpose of writing on tablets covered with wax, with which also the Monks were provided, and flat at the other, for the purpose of smoothing away any mistakes which they might make in writing.

ACUS (needles).—The reason why each Monk was furnished with needles was to enable him to mend his habit whenever it was either torn or worn away in any place. Hence St. Benedict, by giving him these, insinuates his wish that his children should never be seen in torn or in tattered garments, and that they should never be ashamed either to wear

those which are patched, or to be engaged in the humble work of mending their own clothes.

MAPPULA (a handkerchief).—This was hung from the girdle, and was very useful and necessary for wiping off the perspiration which covered their faces in the laborious occupations in which they were daily engaged.

In distributing these various articles, and in supplying all the other wants of the less robust and of the very sickly and delicate, the Abbot is to be guided by the principle upon which the Apostles acted: namely, that the needs of each person are to determine the measure of that which is to be given to him. These needs he must keep always in view, and do his utmost to satisfy, turning a deaf ear to the murmuring and the dissatisfaction displayed by those who, either through envy, or through a niggardly spirit, exclaim against what to them may seem to be either over-indulgence or prodigality. Let him despise the judgment of such men as these, and strive to act in so upright a way as to win the approval of the just judgment of God.

CHAPTER LV.

THE ABBOT'S TABLE.

THE ABBOT'S TABLE.—This short and apparently simply and clearly expressed chapter, has given rise to a great deal of discussion among the commentators. "Did the Abbot's table," they ask, "stand

apart in another chamber distinct from the refectory of the community? or was it in the common refectory, but apart and somewhat raised above the tables at which the Monks took their refecton?" The answer to this question has divided these learned men into two opposite camps: first, those who maintain that the Abbot's table was in the common refectory of the monastery; and secondly, those who contend that it was not, but stood in the hall of the guest-house.

IN THE COMMON REFECTORY.—Those who uphold this view support it by these arguments. First, there is not in the Rule a single passage in which St. Benedict speaks of a particular room in which the Abbot is to dine with the guests. Therefore the Abbot's table must have stood in the usual place in which the brethren took their meals. Secondly, it is the wish of the Fathers of the monastic life, of whose sentiments on this very question there is abundant proof in the pages of Cassian's *Conferences*, that the Abbot should not absent himself from the common table of the Monks. Thirdly, in the thirty-eighth chapter of the Rule, St. Benedict, while strictly prohibiting any one from speaking in the refectory, or from asking any questions about that which is read during meals, makes an exception in favour of the *Prior*—by which title, say the upholders of this view, is meant the Abbot, inasmuch as the words Abbot and Prior are here synonymous. Now, if the Abbot were scarcely ever in the refectory, but had his meals in another room altogether distinct from it, this piece of legislation would be superfluous. Fourthly, this continual absence from the common table would give occasion

to the Abbot always to be in the company of secular persons ; always to have his ears filled with worldly talk and with worldly news ; always to be faring more daintily than did his brethren. From these and from other reasons they conclude that the Abbot's table was in the common refectory, but apart from the tables of the brethren.

IN A ROOM APART FROM THE MONASTERY.— It seems to us that this is the more reasonable opinion of the two, and that the proofs which support it are stronger than those which are adduced to defend the other. The Rule itself seems to point to a separate refectory when it orders that the Abbot's kitchen should be distinct from the common kitchen, in which the meals were cooked for the community. The reason assigned for this is that the brethren may not be disturbed by the arrival of guests, who are nearly always in the monastery. As these guests came at all hours, sometimes long before the brethren had their repast, sometimes long after it, it is but natural and reasonable to suppose that their host the Abbot would never make these faint and hungry visitors wait till the usual hour at which the brethren either dined or supped in the refectory. Therefore it is most likely that there was in the guest-house some special hall or room in which his table stood, at which he entertained those who arrived at unseasonable hours. Moreover, whenever there were but few guests the Abbot was empowered to invite to his table any of the brethren whom it might please him to honour in this way. St. Benedict by this ordinance doubtless wished to give the Abbot an occasion of showing his

paternal goodwill and tenderness to his children. Another reason which seems almost directly to imply the existence of a separate refectory for the Abbot is the remark which follows immediately after this concession. "Care must be taken," says our Holy Father, "that one or two seniors be always left with the brethren for the sake of discipline." Those who defend the other view would have it that this might refer to those large communities in which there were so many Monks that the Abbot's eye could not command them all. But if we remember the small communities of twelve or of twenty-four Religious, whom St. Benedict supposes to be numerous enough to place under the guidance of one Abbot, and that he did not contemplate the great communities which filled some of the more celebrated monasteries of the Middle Ages, this answer falls to the ground. Lastly, the permission given to the Abbot to break the fasts of the Rule, in order to keep the guests company, shows us almost beyond doubt that the Abbot had his table in a part of the monastery different from the refectory and the table of the rest of the Monks.

CHAPTER LVI.

ARTIFICERS OF THE MONASTERY.

ARTIFICERS.—The Spirit of God, breathing where-soever it may please Him, inspires and moves to embrace religious life men of every class in society. Not

only the learned and the wealthy, but the poor and the uncultured, many of whom, though not skilled in the learning of the schools, are yet adepts in the various crafts by which men are supplied with the necessaries and the conveniences of life, feel this gentle urging of the Holy Ghost, and, leaving all things, resolve to devote themselves wholly to the service of God. These gathered round St. Benedict, just as they gather round his successors at the present day. They are joyfully received, and when received must be supported. But as men are then truly Monks when they live by the labour of their hands, it was our Holy Father's will that the artisans who joined him should contribute somewhat to their own livelihood, by using that skill wherewith God had endowed them, in procuring bread for their own and their brethren's support. Yet, though glad of their aid in this important particular, he does not suffer them to exercise their various crafts without the permission of the Abbot. Why is this? Because when a man comes to religion, he comes to subdue and to subject his will. By his vow of obedience, his will, in all lawful matters, and his very body, are in the hands of his Superior, to whom for God's sake he subjects himself. Therefore, whatever art he may possess is at the Superior's disposal. If he should wish him to exercise it, he will tell him to do so; if he should not, the subject must not chafe under his apparent neglect of him, but humbly and simply bury his talent till such time as it shall please his Superior to bid him draw it forth and exercise it.

NOT ALLOWED TO WORK.—As one of the chief

ends of the religious life is to root out of the heart all pride, and to remove from the path of the Monk everything which tends to foster this malignant spirit, our Holy Father orders that the brother who is puffed up on account of the skill with which he is endowed should be forbidden to exercise his craft, of whatever nature it may be, until by self-abasement he has given sufficient proof that he has mastered the evil which was undermining his spiritual life. We must take notice that what is here said of handicrafts holds good also of all other excellences with which any one may be endowed. In these days there are among us but few painters, or carvers, or workmen skilled in any other of the various crafts. But there are men who are good preachers, good professors, good disputants, sweet singers, skilled musicians, able writers, prudent administrators, and the like. All these exercise their respective talents at the command of Superiors; and it is the duty of these Superiors to guard their subjects against the demon of pride. Therefore, whenever any of those who depend upon them give signs of being elated with the skill which he possesses, he ought straightway to be admonished; and if no amendment follows this admonition, he ought to be forbidden to exercise that talent which has become for him a snare, in which, being entangled, he may lose the life of his immortal soul.

SALE OF ARTIFICERS' WORK.—The Egyptian Monks were in the habit of selling the various articles which they manufactured. They did this both to procure for themselves the means of subsistence, and to enable themselves to help those who were in need.

St. Benedict in this respect follows their example, and allows the product of his children's labour to be sold for their support. It is generally supposed that the Deans had the full management of all these business transactions. Therefore they are especially cautioned against allowing the spirit of avarice to creep into their souls. To aid them in excluding this subtle demon from gliding in, the terrible fate which befell Ananias and Saphira is put before them. For if they were to act in opposition to St. Benedict's will, and to sell at a higher rate than he would have them sell, and keep the surplus, they would certainly incur the death of the soul, as the unhappy pair did the death of the body. From these words of our Holy Father it is thought that, like many very trustworthy authorities, he held that these two are not lost, but that only temporal death was inflicted upon them as a penalty for their sin. In order that his children might prove to those who purchased from them the various objects which they sold that gain was not their aim, but only labour, and the remuneration due to the workman for his toil, those who sold were ordered to sell at a somewhat lower rate than did the ordinary merchants who trafficked for gain. In this way glory would be given to God, not only by their labour, but also by that which resulted from their labour; thus in all things His glory would be the end and the aim of the Monk's existence.

CHAPTER LVII.

MANNER OF RECEIVING BROTHERS TO RELIGION.

THE POSTULANT.—It was usual in the early days of monasticism to receive to the brotherhood all those who asked for admission. It mattered not whether they were known to the community or were not, whether they came with letters of recommendation or without them : provided that they wished to seek God and to save their souls they were welcome, and were enrolled among the soldiers of the Cross. But though none were refused, yet all had to give a substantial proof of their earnestness. They were not at once admitted to serve in the ranks of those who were subject to the stern discipline of the cloister. Some reluctance was always shown to their reception. For it is not always God's Holy Spirit Who leads men to religious life. Many inferior selfish motives assume the place of that infallible guide, and often enough persuade men to believe that they are influenced by the Holy Ghost, whereas it is self-interest, love of what appears to be an easy mode of existence, blighted hopes, disappointed ambition, and a thousand other equally worthless reasons, which are impelling them to enter a service for which they are in nowise qualified. Hence the necessity for some test which will speedily make the spirit by which men are led declare itself. This test was usually a plain, straightforward declaration on the part of the brotherhood that they did not seek for postulants ; that they were not eager

to receive them ; that they suspected some unworthy motive on the part of the applicant ; that it was poverty, or inability to procure a livelihood, or disgrace, or a desire to better his condition, and not a firm resolve to serve God and to save his soul which brought him to the gates of the monastery. If, notwithstanding all this difficulty made about his reception, he persevered in his petition, leave to enter was ordinarily granted at the end of four or five days. Even after this he was not allowed to begin his year of probation, but was detained in the guest-house until the persons appointed to entertain strangers had had a sufficiently long time to discover his character, and the spirit by which he was actuated. Then he was either received into the novitiate, or told, in God's name, to depart, and endeavour to work out his salvation in some other path of life.

In these days, however, no one is admitted to be a postulant unless he is either known to the Superiors or has been recommended to them by those upon whose judgment they can rely. If he is a total stranger, he is received into the monastery, and lives with the community for about three months, or for even a longer period, that his natural character and his disposition may be seen by them. Thus they are enabled to form some estimate of his worth ; and when the time comes for deliberating about his admission, they are able to give a rational vote either for his reception or for his rejection.

RECEPTION TO THE NOVITIATE.—From the Rule itself we cannot gather whether there was any ceremony observed in accepting to the novitiate those

who made applications for that honour. But we can plainly see that those who were thus admitted did not at that time receive the monastic dress. They very probably wore the clothes in which they came to the monastery. At present there is a ceremony observed in the reception of novices. For eight days previously to their "clothing," as it is called, they devote themselves to the exercises of a spiritual retreat, under the guidance of one of the Fathers. During the course of this retreat they make a general confession of their whole life, that they may begin their religious career with a conscience perfectly at rest and free from every disturbing scruple. On the day upon which they are to be clothed in the monastic habit they approach to Holy Communion; and in the afternoon, when Vespers have been recited, and the community have been assembled in the chapter-house, they are introduced by the novice-master. As soon as they come before the Superior they prostrate upon the earth, and remain in this lowly position till he gives them a signal to rise. They at once obey, and, kneeling, await the question which he puts to them: "What seek ye, dearest brethren?" They reply: "If it should please God and you, I desire to save my soul among you, under the Rule of our most Holy Father St. Benedict." After making this humble petition they once again fall prostrate, and when the Superior gives them the signal to rise they do so, but remain kneeling as before. In a few words all the difficulties of the monastic life are then laid before them, and they are asked whether they are willing to persevere in their petition, notwithstanding these serious obstacles.

They reply, "It is my wish and my desire to do so, by the aid of divine grace." The Superior then says, "May God give you the grace effectually to accomplish your holy desire and to merit life eternal." To this prayer the assembled brethren answer, "Amen." Thereupon all kneel, and the Superior intones the *Veni Creator*, which the community sing in alternate strophes. After the first strophe the Superior rises, and taking his seat, begins the ceremony of the clothing by taking off each of the postulants the secular coat in which he is clothed, and vesting him in the tunic, scapular, cowl, and hood of the Order, accompanying each of these actions by an appropriate prayer.

When all are duly clothed, the prayers which are ordered in the monastic Ritual are said, and then each of the recently-clothed postulants, approaching the Superior, receives from him, and after him from each member of the community, the kiss of peace, in token of admission to brotherhood. At the end of this ceremony, once again kneeling before the Superior, they listen to a few further words of exhortation, and receive from him a new name, by which they are afterwards known in religion. From that moment their year of probation begins, and, as our Holy Father ordains, they are conducted by their master into the novitiate. In St. Benedict's day the novitiate stood apart from the monastery, and apparently those who were undergoing probation lived there, as it were, in quite a separate establishment. At present, novices are kept aloof from the community, as far at least as that is possible; but nevertheless they live in the same

monastery and attend all the ordinary duties, but are never allowed to speak with the professed Monks, unless they receive an express permission from the Superior and from their master. The time of probation lasts for a whole year, and cannot be shortened as it could be in former times, before the Church had legislated for all these matters. Novices are sometimes admitted to profession when they are threatened with death, but always on the condition that if they recover they must complete the full year of novitiate.

THE NOVICE-MASTER.—As soon as the novice is clothed in the religious habit and admitted to the novitiate there is placed over him as his master one of the seniors, to instruct him in all the duties of the monastic life. St. Benedict gives three marks which are to guide Superiors in their choice of the novice-master. He must, in the first place, be an elderly man, if not in years, then in virtue and in the maturity of his character. For no one can successfully instruct others in the science of spirituality by mere book-learning only. His knowledge must be experimental as well as scientific. He himself must have gone through all its duties and encountered its many difficulties, and tested the weight of the yoke which it imposes. This will give an authority to his words, and infuse into them a persuasive power which cannot be acquired either from books or from the closest mental application. In the next place, he must, as St. Benedict expresses it, “have the address of winning souls to God.” This consists in knowing how to point out to those who ask him for instruction the

surest way of going to God ; in being adorned with all virtues, so that his daily life will be the best commentary upon the doctrine which he imparts to others ; and in a wide and deep knowledge of spiritual things. This skill is acquired and developed by seclusion from the turmoil of worldly affairs, by the cultivation of repose and peace of soul, by an ardent love of God, by the repression of anger and of impatience, by the elimination of proud and vainglorious thoughts, and by constancy in the service of God. Lastly, he must be filled with solicitude for the spiritual well-being of those who are intrusted to his charge, and by every means in his power strive to advance them in the love of virtue and of God.

HIS DUTIES.—His chief duty is to discover the motive which has brought the novice from the world to the cloister ; to find out his aim and his spirit. The only attraction which the cloister has to offer is God. He who seeks in it anything else will find naught but disappointment, unhappiness, and a yoke of lead. Hence St. Benedict says that the novice-master “ must narrowly and carefully watch over the disciple who comes to him for instruction, in order to discover whether he truly seeks God.” To aid him in finding out this, he gives him three marks, which never fail to manifest themselves in the conduct of those who are called by the Spirit of God to religious life. Any novice who has these need not be troubled with anxious doubts about the genuineness of his calling ; and no Superior need hesitate for a single moment about admitting to his community any one upon whom God has set these three seals. The first

of these is "eagerness for the work of God." By the "work of God," St. Benedict primarily means the Divine Office. Therefore, if any one truly seek God, his aim will be seen by the promptitude with which he casts off all sluggishness and rises from his bed to be in good time for the performance of this all-important duty. During the course of it he will guard himself from distractions, he will observe all the ceremonies, he will not spare himself the labour which it entails, and he will do his utmost by previous study of the Psalms to enter into the spirit of these inspired canticles. There is, however, a far wider meaning attached to the word "work of God" than is that of the Divine Office. It may be taken to signify anything which in any way whatever has to do with the service of God. In this sense the novice's eagerness must show itself in the exactitude with which he applies himself to monastic studies, to holy reading, to prayer, to the observance of Rule, to fraternal charity, and to the fulfilment of those manifold duties by which men are formed to the spiritual life. The second seal impressed upon the character of those whom God has called to religious life is promptitude or eagerness for obedience. For they grasp the idea that this virtue constitutes the very essence of such a life. Obedience is its scope; therefore, to the exercise of it Religious direct all their energies. Hence no Superior ought to admit to profession any novice whom he perceives to be careless in the execution of works of obedience. But if he sees that there is in him a delicacy of conscience about carrying into effect even the slightest rule, that he is not daunted by acts which require the

setting aside of his will, which cost him many a pang, which crucify his fondest wishes, he may be quite at ease as to his vocation. The finger of God is there; he is one of God's chosen vessels, destined to occupy a place of honour in the kingdom of Jesus Christ; for he is a lover of that lowly virtue which our Redeemer practised in so heroic a degree as to become obedient unto death, and even unto the death of the Cross.

The third seal is an eagerness for humiliation. The spirit of a true Religious is always in the bosom of him who is lowly of heart, who thinks little of himself, and is willing that others also should have a poor opinion of him. Any one so disposed does not shrink from humiliation. He meets it with an undaunted heart. When he is reviled, he holds his peace; when he is derided, he accepts it as his due; when he is employed only in mean offices, he is filled with joy. His body is ready to endure rough usage, his mind to be filled with reproaches. He becomes as a beast of burden for God's sake. By these three marks or seals the novice-master is to judge of the fitness for the religious state of those who are put under his charge. If they show themselves to be sluggish for the "work of God," unwilling to obey, and cowards in meeting and in bearing humiliation, it were best that he should bid them depart. The monastic life will not suit them.

But when he perceives in his subjects the marks by which St. Benedict says that a true vocation is discernible, he must even so plainly point out to them all the rigour and the austerity which are insepar-

able from a religious life. He must not let them suppose that the life which they are aspiring to lead is an easy one or a poetical one ; it is not anything of the kind. It is hard and prosy. When the novelty has worn off, only a solid faith, the fear of hell, and the love of God can sustain the weary soul in its warfare, and successfully carry it to the end. It is his duty to impress this upon them. Nothing is left undone to make this clear to them. Thrice during the course of the year the whole Rule is read to them. It is generally supposed that this was done in former times probably because there was ordinarily but one copy in each monastery, and also, perhaps, in order that there might be witnesses present to testify that this had been done, and consequently that there was nothing hidden from the novice. In our congregation the ceremony which follows this is carried out at the end of every third month. The novice comes before the brethren assembled in the chapter-house, and prostrating himself upon the ground, is told by the Superior to rise. Then rising, but remaining in a kneeling posture, he is asked by him what that is for which he comes to ask. He replies that it is for leave to persevere. Then the difficulties of the state are explained to him, and he is at liberty to withdraw, or to go on with the course of spiritual training to which he is subjected. This training is at once theoretical and practical. He is made to study a sound course of ascetical theology, and he is exercised in all the virtues which that science puts before him. He is made to perform all the lowly offices of the monastery. His patience is tried, his humility is tried, his

will is tried. If he shows by his behaviour during this period of probation that the Spirit of God is in him, and that in religion he is seeking only God, then he is at last admitted to make his religious profession.

THE CEREMONY OF PROFESSION.—All the essential points of this solemn act, which are indicated in the pages of the Rule, are embodied in all the ceremonies of profession. These ceremonies, however, differ very much in the different branches of the Order. But as one will give a general idea of all, we will describe that which is at present in use in the English Benedictine Congregation. When the novice has been admitted to profession by the council of the monastery, he enters upon a spiritual retreat of eight days, preparatory to the serious and all-important step which he is about to take. On the eve of the day upon which he is to make his vows, the whole community assemble in the chapter-house after Vespers. On one side there is placed in full view of all, a secular dress, and on the other the cowl, the emblem of religious life. When all are seated, the novice enters, and, coming into the midst of the brethren, prostrates. When told to rise, he obeys, but remains kneeling. For the last time the Superior explains to him all the difficulties of the life which he is about to choose, and then says to him: "My dearest brother, you have now oftentimes read through the Rule under which you desire to serve, and also the constitutions of our congregation; moreover, you have, for a whole year, had a practical experience of how hard and difficult a task it is to observe them. If you can do so, enter; if you cannot, then with all freedom depart." In

answer to this, and to the permission once again to assume the secular dress and return to the world, the novice makes answer: "I have taken these and many other similar difficulties into consideration, and notwithstanding them all, I desire, with the help of heavenly grace, to live and to die in the habit of our most Holy Father St. Benedict." After this the Superior announces that the novice will be admitted to make his profession during the High Mass upon the following day. The novice then rises, and kneeling before the Superior, kisses his hand and returns to his place.

On the following morning, another ceremony takes place during Prime. The novice leaves the choir before the verse "Pretiosa," and having taken off his cowl, awaits, in company with his master or with the master of ceremonies, until this fifty-seventh chapter has been read. On these occasions it follows immediately after the Capitulum. He then enters the choir or the chapter-house, as the case may be, and having prostrated, is told to rise. He does so, but remains kneeling, and the Superior says to him: "What seekest thou, dearest brother?" He answers: "The blessing of my habit." The Superior replies: "It is granted." Then the novice comes, and kneeling before each of the brothers, is raised by him and receives from him the kiss of peace. After Prime he approaches Holy Communion, and awaits in silent retreat for the joyful moment in which he may offer up to God the holocaust of his liberty. This takes place immediately after the Offertory of the Mass. Standing in the middle of the choir, having on his

right hand the novice-master, and on his left one of the cantors, he sings in a high and clear tone of voice the formula of his profession, which he has previously written with his own hand. In this formula he promises in the presence of God, of His Saints, and of the persons there present, "Stability, conversion of manners, and obedience, according to the Rule of our most Holy Father St. Benedict." At the end of this formula he kneels till the priest who is celebrating the Mass has sung an appropriate prayer. Then rising, he chants the verse, "Suscipe me Domine," which is repeated by the choir. While the choir is singing these beautiful words, he advances several paces nearer to the altar, and taking a higher note, repeats the "Suscipe." This is again taken up by the choir, during which the novice advances to the sanctuary, and for the third time sings the "Suscipe" in a yet higher key. The "Gloria Patri" is this time added to the verse, and at the end of it the novice goes to the Epistle side of the altar to read the missionary oath, which is peculiar to our congregation. Then laying on the altar the paper upon which the form of his vows is written, he makes a cross with his pen before the place where his name is to stand, and puts his signature to the deed of his profession. This is signed by the priest who receives his vows and by two other witnesses. The document is then folded up and placed in the hands of the novice, who in the mean time has returned to the middle of the sanctuary. As soon as he receives it, he ascends the steps of the altar and lays it upon the outspread corporal, upon which the Body of the Lord is so soon to be consecrated.

After this he goes to the middle of the choir, in which a pall has been spread, and after covering his head with his hood, prostrates upon it while the Litany of the Saints is sung. At the end of this some beautiful and appropriate prayers are chanted by the priest. After these, the newly professed is conducted to the altar-steps, on which he kneels during the blessing of his habit. As soon as this has been done, the priest kneels and intones the *Veni Creator*. At the end of the first verse he seats himself; and having divested the newly-professed brother of his hood and scapular, proceeds to clothe him in the blessed habit. Some other prayers are then chanted by the priest, at the end of which the kiss of peace is given. Finally, the new brother kneels before the celebrant, who, drawing the hood over his head, fastens it with a pin. The hood is thus worn for the space of three days. On the third day the pin is removed and the hood thrown back, previously to the reception of Holy Communion. After the Mass the newly-professed brother is conducted to the Prior, who introduces him to the community, and "from that hour he is under the law of the Rule, and can neither leave the monastery nor shake off the yoke of the Rule, which after so long a deliberation he might have either accepted or refused

THE VOWS.—The three vows which are essential to the religious state are poverty, chastity, and obedience. It is almost needless to say that without these there is not, and there cannot be, a *Religious Order* in the theological sense of the term. But besides these three vows, there are annexed to certain branches and congregations others which are peculiar to them,

and which serve to distinguish them from one another. Thus the Carthusians make a vow of perpetual abstinence from flesh-meat ; the Jesuits, of obedience to the Pope with respect to missions ; and the Benedictines of "stability and of conversion of manners." As we have already spoken at sufficient length of the three substantial or essential vows, we will here say a few words on these two, which, after all, are, in a certain sense, implied in the vow of obedience, as are also the vows of poverty and of chastity. By the vow of *stability* or *steadfastness* Benedictines are bound never of their own will and without leave of Superiors to abandon their Order or the monastery of their profession, unless, indeed, it is to pass with the free consent and the permission of these same Superiors into an Order or a monastery of more rigid observance. Our Holy Father introduced this vow into the form of profession to prevent his children from treading in the footsteps of the Gyrovagi, who, as we have already said, were a species of monastic "tramps." It was his will that they should perseveringly serve God to the end of their days in the monastery in which they had made their profession, unless either necessity or the command of Superiors should otherwise ordain. In fact, he was so solicitous to guard them against the innumerable evils which had already resulted from the absence of some such regulation, and which were likely still to flow from it, that he is not content once only to inculcate the necessity for stability, but in several parts of the Rule puts it before them as one of the essential duties of their state. Thus at the end of the Prologue he says that "we are never to depart

from the school of obedience, but to persevere in the monastery even until death." When treating of humility, he says in the fourth degree that "whenever hard, contrary, and injurious orders are imposed upon us, we are to accept them with a quiet mind, and not to grow weary of enduring them, nor on their account to depart either from the monastery or from the Order, but to persevere, inasmuch as only those who do so will be saved." In the fourth chapter he exhorts us to make use of the "instruments" of perfection, not for a time only, but incessantly to the end; to remain in the "workshop" or cloister of the monastery, and to persevere in the congregation. All this clearly proves to us the deep insight which he had into the weakness and the instability of the human heart, and the accurate knowledge which he possessed of the temptations which usually come to shake the fixed resolve of religiously-minded men. There are times when they grow uneasy, restless, and anxious. They imagine that if they could but be translated to such a monastery or to such an Order they would be able more quietly to serve God; they would have a wider sphere for the exercise of their talents; they would meet with men of more cultivated minds. Moreover, they would be rid of this particular Superior, whose government does not meet with their approval, and so escape from this particular monastery, of which the situation and the rules are not all that might be desired. These and a thousand other reasons suggest themselves to a man who once allows his mind to be unhinged, or to waver in its purpose. Let him look well to himself, or he will probably sin

against his vow of stability, by giving his assent to these disturbing thoughts, even though he may not ever attempt to carry them into effect. An excellent means to scatter them to the winds is to remember that the centre of our uneasiness and of our instability is not in the circumstances with which we are surrounded, but in ourselves. Therefore, if we do succeed in persuading Superiors to effect the change which we imagine will rid us of all our discontent, and they remove us to the place for which we were sighing, we still carry with us the thorn which produced our unrest and our instability. We shall be as discontented, as fidgety, as ill at ease in our new place of abode, and under our new Superiors, as we were in that from which we fled, and among those whom we fancied to be the only bars which held us back from the promised land, flowing with milk and honey. When thoughts of instability thus come to ruffle the calm of our monastic life, let us look at our crucifix, and think of the steadfast purpose of Him Who hangs thereon. He remained kneeling in the garden of Gethsemani, though His whole nature shrank with shuddering horror from the sea of suffering which was surging in upon Him, and was so soon to flood His soul with bitterness unutterable. He did not come down from the Cross, though He might so easily have done so, but remained there fastened by the cruel nails, till the stream of His life-blood had ebbed quite away. He was steadfast to the end, and clung to the wood of the Cross.

Besides the vow of stability, the Benedictine Monk makes a vow of "amendment of manners"—*conversio*

morum. This conversion, to be worth anything at all, must be internal as well as external. First of all, the soul must be rid of the guilt of mortal sin, and of affection to mortal sin. Therefore the aim of the Religious must be directed to keep himself free from stain. In the next place, he must strive to regulate his outward man in such a way as to exhibit in his person that gravity and that decorum which all look for in one who wears the religious habit. His eyes must not be suffered to look hither and thither, as a man of the world may allow his eyes to wander; his hands must not be allowed that liberty which is pardonable in seculars; his gait must be modest and subdued; his whole carriage expressive of the humility and the holiness of one whose chief aim is to serve and to please God. In other words, he binds himself by vow to endeavour, during the whole course of his life, to put off the old man, and to clothe himself with the new man. This is not done in one act nor in one day. It is a lifelong work: a daily and an hourly struggle. It is that constant tending towards perfection to which all Religious are bound, even though it is not mentioned in their formula of profession, as it is in ours. Happy the Religious who, by earnestness, by fervour in prayer, by attention to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and by the aid of divine grace, is able to say, "I live: now not I, but Christ liveth in me;" for then in very truth he has accomplished that conversion or amendment of manners which he came into religion to carry into effect.

LEGISLATION OF THE CHURCH CONCERNING VOWS.—Previously to the year 1848 it was customary

for novices to make their solemn profession at the end of their year of probation. But the late Pope Pius IX., for many good and urgent reasons, ordained that after the year of novitiate all religious men should take the three simple but perpetual vows, and spend three years under their obligation, before they could be admitted to solemn profession. This decree, which at first affected only Italy, was in the year 1858 extended to the whole world. At the end of these three years passed in simple vows, Superiors are empowered to admit their subjects to solemn profession ; but if they have solid reasons for deferring it for some time longer, they have the power to do so, but only till the subject has completed his twenty-fifth year. After that date he can claim profession as a right, and then Superiors are bound either to accede to his request or to dismiss him. The earliest age at which any one can be admitted to simple vows is when he has completed his sixteenth year. The power to dispense from these simple vows is reserved to the Pope ; but if the General of the Order shall deem it fitting to *dismiss* any one, the person so dismissed is free from all the obligations which he contracted by the vows, and recourse need not be had to the Holy See for a dispensation. This power of dismissal lies in the hands of the General and of his council, and they have authority to delegate their power, and to commission certain good and prudent Religious—who should be at least three in number—to act in their name. No process, however, or judicial power is needed to execute the determination of the Superiors ; it may be carried into effect when the

truth of the facts for which they deem dismissal necessary has been made clear to them. While a Religious is in simple vows he cannot be promoted to holy orders, but only to the first tonsure and to minor orders. Moreover, although possessing radical dominion over his property, he cannot administer, nor make use of, nor spend anything, without special leave from his Superior. Therefore, before contracting the obligation of the simple vows, he must transfer the administration of his property either to some trustee or to his Order, until he shall make a final and complete renunciation of all his worldly goods at his solemn profession. This profession must be an express one, and no merely tacit contract will suffice. While in simple vows he enjoys all the spiritual privileges of those who are solemnly professed. Nevertheless, when absent from choir he is not bound to recite the Divine Office, and when present is obliged only by the Rule of the monastery in which he happens to be, which Rule does not claim his obedience under the penalty of grievous sin. If he should happen to be more than twenty-five years of age when he makes his simple vows, he cannot on that account be admitted any earlier to solemn profession, but must remain three whole years under their obligation before he is solemnly professed. This profession need not necessarily take place in the house of novitiate, but may be made in any monastery of his congregation in which the Religious happens to be when the period of his probation has expired.¹

¹ *Principles of Religious Life*, chap. xxviii. sec. i.

CHAPTER LVIII.

ADMISSION OF CHILDREN.

AGE OF ADMISSION.—From the *Life of St. Benedict*, written by St. Gregory the Great, we see that it was customary from the very foundation of the Order to admit children to the monastery to be trained for the monastic life. The earliest age at which they were allowed to be received was probably three years, though there is some reason to believe that there were instances in which they were accepted by the Monks at an even earlier age than this. In some monasteries boys were admitted at the age of five years, but the general rule seems to have been to receive them from the age of seven to twelve years. After the age of fourteen, parents were not allowed to offer their children to the monasteries in the way indicated in this chapter. This was forbidden either by the ninth or the tenth Council of Toledo.

CEREMONY OF OFFERING.—The manner in which parents dedicated their children to the monastic life is thus described by Hildemar and by various other writers. When the Gospel had been read at the Mass, and just before the Offertory was about to begin, the father of the child—or if the father was dead, the mother—led him to the altar. Holding the child before him, and putting into his right hand a paten, upon which was a host, and into his left a cruet, in which there was some wine, he raised that part of the cloth which hangs in front of the altar, and with it

covered the hands of the boy. Then he produced the written petition, and from it read the formula : " Before God and His Saints I promise for my son, stability, amendment of manners, and obedience." While this was doing, the witnesses brought for the purpose were standing by. As soon as the father had made his offering, the Abbot said to him, " What do you desire, brother ?" The father replied, " I wish to give my son to Almighty God, to serve Him in this monastery, because in the Law the Lord hath commanded the children of Israel to offer their sons to God." Whereupon the Abbot, turning to the witnesses, said to them, " Do you see what this man is doing ; do you hear what he is saying ?" They replied, " We have both heard and seen." The father then conducted his son to the place where the offering was to be made, and the celebrant took the bread and the wine from the child's hands. The petition or document was then given to the Abbot, who kept it in the archives of the monastery with the vows of the Monks.

PERPETUITY OF THE OBLIGATION.—It is evident from the words of this chapter, from the decrees of Councils, and from many examples of which we read in monastic histories, that the children who were thus dedicated to the service of God by their parents were bound to adhere to the method of life chosen for them, just as were the Monks, who in their mature age had made this choice for themselves.¹ The parents

¹ The formula, " *Monachum, aut professio, aut parentum devotio facit,*" which is found in the Papal decrees, and upon which this opinion rests for its authority, is gravely questioned

made for their child precisely the same formula of profession which the Monks made for themselves : " Let the parents make for him the aforesaid promise." They took an oath neither to leave him any property nor to suffer any one else to make him his heir. They were so to arrange their affairs that the child should have no hope of ever again acquiring a right to any earthly possessions. The fourth Council of Toledo in its forty-ninth and fifty-fifth canons, the Council of Worms in its twenty-second canon, and the Council of Triberg in its sixth canon, all recognise the promise made by a father dedicating his child to God as binding upon the child. A case in point, which proves the binding force of this promise, is that of St. Bernard's nephew Robert, who left the Cistercians to join the Monks of Clugny. One of the reasons which he gave to justify himself for taking this step was that he had been offered by his parents to that monastery. His illustrious uncle, however, claimed his obedience on the ground that, although his parents had promised him to Clugny, they had not given him, nor made for him the profession prescribed by the Rule, nor wrapped his hands in the altar-cloth, and thus, in the presence of witnesses, delivered him to the care of the Abbot. From this we may conclude that if these ceremonies

by many theologians. They dispute the meaning which is attributed to it, as well as the correctness of the decisions of such provincial Councils as are quoted in the text. I myself incline to the opinion of those who maintain that, *ex jure naturali*, there could not be any valid obligation binding the conscience of the child, in consequence of the religious profession made for him by his parents.

had been carried out, the monastery of Clugny might have claimed him as one of its children. Hence we see from this example that the promise made by the parents was in those days considered to be binding upon the conscience of the child. This custom of dedicating children to the monastic life flourished until the twelfth century, in which it began to fall into desuetude. The legislation of the Church since that date has declared that any profession made either without a previous year of probation, or before the candidate has completed his sixteenth year, is null and void.

SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.—The children who were thus admitted to the monastery were educated with the utmost care. They were taught to read, to write, and to sing. As they advanced in years they studied the Holy Scripture and the works of the Fathers. They were employed in the choir to assist the Monks in the ecclesiastical chant; they learnt the art of illuminating and of copying manuscripts; and if their ability showed itself apt for the exercise of any manual craft, they learnt that also from some of those who were skilled in it. During their boyhood they did not observe the monastic fasts, but it was nevertheless usual in some congregations to accustom them to abstinence from flesh-meat as soon as they had attained their seventh year. A paternal vigilance was exercised over them, which kept them from mischief and from any occasions which might lead them to the knowledge of evil. In the lapse of ages this spirit of fatherly watchfulness seems to have degenerated into a species of police surveillance, to which in these

days there is nothing similar, except perhaps that which is exercised over criminals under sentence of death. It would, of course, be unfair and illogical to judge the men of those ages by the same standard by which we judge of our contemporaries. It may have been their fate to have had to deal with a youthful generation very different, perhaps, from that with which we are now brought in contact ; they may have had difficulties to contend with of which we can form but a very inadequate idea ; their lot was probably cast among men whose views and aims and circumstances were almost totally different from those with which we are familiar at the present day. Consequently their conduct, and their policy, and their system of education were shaped to meet the exigencies of the times in which they lived, and of the characters with which they were brought in contact. On this ground their system of surveillance may be defended. But any one who will take the trouble to read those parts of Lanfranc's Constitutions which treat of this subject will see that anything more unsuited to our own times, or opposed to our national ideas, could not well be conceived. If any school of boys were watched over in these days with that painful degree of vigilance which that great man deemed necessary for the boys of the day in which he lived, it would become a very pandemonium. A kind, liberal, fatherly watchfulness is not resented by boys. It helps them to conquer themselves. But a narrow-minded, suspicious, intolerable police surveillance drives them into the arms of the devil.

RIGHTS OF PARENTS.—To our modern notions

and ideas, it seems almost incredible that the Church should ever have sanctioned the consecration of children to a life so arduous as is that of religion, before they are capable of understanding the gravity of the obligation which it entails. But in judging of this, as well as of many other matters, we shall fall into lamentable errors unless we divest ourselves of the ideas prevalent in this nineteenth century, and clothe ourselves in those which were current in the age in which this custom excited as little surprise as the baptism of a child does in our own days. What, then, were the rights of parents with respect to their children in those days, during which the Church is said to have regarded the vow made by a father or a mother in the name of his or of her child in the same light in which she looked upon those which were solemnly promised to God by men of mature years? They were far more extensive than they are now; but extensive and far-reaching as they then were, they were limited indeed if compared with the rights which parents enjoyed in primitive times. In the days of Moses the right of the father of the family over his wives, his children, and his servants was absolute. He could dispose of them and sell them, just as a farmer in these days can dispose of and sell his stock. Jephthah held his daughter to the fulfilment of the vow which he had made, and she did not resist; Abraham did not express the least surprise at the order to immolate his only son; the Hebrews, in imitation of the wicked people around them, did not hesitate to sacrifice their children to devils; a creditor could seize and sell his debtor, together with

wife, children, and all that he possessed, in order to indemnify himself. Among the Greeks and the Romans, at a later date, this absolute power over wife and family was in full force. On the advent of Christianity this was gradually limited. The power of life and of death was taken away, and the authority of the father of the family was narrowed in many other important particulars. But, till a comparatively recent date, his power to make vows for his children and to select for them the partner of their lives was still undiminished. In our Holy Father's time this power was acknowledged and freely used by every parent with respect to his children, and therefore it was that the Church is said to have regarded the vow by which a father dedicated his child to religious life as binding upon that child's conscience. If we bear these things in mind, we shall cease to wonder how the Church ever could—if, indeed, she ever did—sanction that which to us seems to be a monstrous tyranny over the individual liberty of man.

CHAPTER LIX

ADMISSION OF PRIESTS.

RECEPTION OF PRIESTS.—It is evident from this, and from several other passages in the Rule, that there were but few priests in our Order in the days of its infancy. Often enough there was probably only one, and in all likelihood that one was the Abbot

himself. Hence our Holy Father says that if any priest wishes to be received into the monastery, for the purpose of leading a monastic life, he is to be put next to the Abbot. This rank was given to him out of respect for his priesthood. Another circumstance which indicates the fewness of priests in St. Benedict's monasteries is the fact that there was probably Mass only on Sundays and on festivals. For we see from the thirty-eighth chapter that those who worked in the kitchen were ordered to abstain on these days from the extra pittance which was allowed them, until after Mass and Holy Communion. Moreover, we can see that in the distribution of time there is no provision made for a daily Mass. The present chapter, however, proves that men of the sacerdotal order began to turn their eyes and their hearts towards these new foundations even in the first years of their existence. Attracted by the edifying lives and the holy simplicity of those who had gathered round St. Benedict, they began to sigh for the peace, the repose, and the many advantages presented by the monastic state for winning perfection, and gradually turned their backs upon the world and sought refuge in the cloister.

THEIR TREATMENT.—It is worthy of remark that our Holy Father, when speaking of the reception of priests, uses a form of expression different from that which he employs when speaking of laymen who wish to enter the religious state. Of these latter he says, "when they come to *conversion* (*noviter veniens ad conversionem*);" but of the former he says, "if they wish to be *received*." The reason is that he

looks upon the priest as already converted or turned from a worldly life to a life devoted to the service of God, whereas the layman, ordinarily speaking, is occupied chiefly with the pursuit and the service of worldly things. Yet, notwithstanding his respect for the priest, he does not in any way soften for him the treatment which he prescribes for the reception of those who wish to make profession of the monastic life. The priest, on his arrival, was detained four or five days at the gate of the monastery, and was admitted only after patiently enduring the rebuffs which were offered to him and the difficulty which was made in acceding to his request. He was informed that, out of regard for his priestly order, no relaxation whatever would be made in his favour in any point of discipline. With respect to that he was on the same footing as the ordinary layman. He was told to keep that question of our Divine Lord's ever ringing in his ears: "Friend, for what art thou come? Is it to lead an easy life? Is it to escape the worry of the world? Is it to study, and thereby to advance thyself? Then thou art come as a traitor, to give the deceitful kiss which betrays thy Master into the hands of His enemies. But if thou be come to do the work of God, to be obedient, to suffer reproach for His name's sake, thou wilt welcome with joy all the hard and rough usage by which men go unto God."

THEIR PRIVILEGES.—Although no relaxation whatever was made in favour of priests, yet out of respect for their sacred Orders a certain consideration was shown to them. If there were no other priests

in the monastery, they were allowed to stand next in order after the Abbot. In the church they were permitted to give the blessing before the lessons, and in the refectory to bless the table. Also they were allowed to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But unless they received the Abbot's order to exercise these various functions, they were not to presume to do them. Among the Cassinese, priests who entered the novitiate were for some months forbidden to say Mass, both to test their patience and their humility, and to allow them time thoroughly to study and to learn all the minute ceremonies of that most sacred action. In our congregation, if a priest enters the novitiate, he is first only among the novices. When he makes his profession, he stands before all those who are not priests ; but among the priests he ranks last. However, as those who are older in the holy habit than he is are advanced to the priesthood, they take their rank before him, till at last he obtains that place which belongs to him by right, as being that which is his due, in consequence of the date of his entrance into the Order.

RECEPTION OF CLERICS.—Besides priests and bishops—for many bishops also threw in their lot with the Monks—a goodly number of clerics knocked for admittance at the gates of the monastery. By “clerics” we must understand all those who are deacons, or subdeacons, or in minor Orders. All these were subjected to the same discipline as was that unto which lay candidates had to submit. An easy entrance was not accorded to them. They had to persevere knocking, to be for a few days in the

guest-house, thence to be transferred to the novitiate, and there to be tried in all patience, that those unto whom they came might have time and opportunity for testing by what spirit they were led to seek for admission. Out of respect, however, for the Orders which they had received, they were accorded a rank somewhat higher than was that to which they were entitled by the date of their coming. No doubt due regard was had to their age, to their learning, and to the post which they had held in the world. Thus it is likely that a subdeacon would not be raised to a position above some venerable Monk, who, though not in Orders, had yet grown gray in religious life. One of St. Benedict's principles was to give to each his meed of honour and of respect.

CHAPTER LX.

HOW MONKS WHO ARE STRANGERS ARE TO BE RECEIVED.

MONKS WHO ARE STRANGERS.—It must be borne in mind that in the days of St. Benedict, although men dedicated themselves till death to the monastic life, they did not irrevocably bind themselves to live in any particular monastery. Hence it was not at all either an unusual or a singular thing to meet with Monks who had left the monastery of their profession, and who travelled about in search of a more thorough insight into the asceticism by which they endeavoured

to tend unto perfection. It is easy to see the grave and almost innumerable abuses unto which this would open wide the door. Men unstable of mind, weak of will, desirous of novelty, and weary of restraint, invariably used it as a pretext to loose the bonds which tied them to any Superior who strove to keep them to the observance of Rule. These were to be met with on the public highways, and in the guest-houses of the monasteries, wearing the monastic dress, but disgracing it often enough by their dissolute lives. In the excessive charity of his heart our Holy Father gave hospitality both to the good and to the bad ; but his treatment of the two classes differed very much, and showed his esteem for true Religious, and his anxiety to be rid of those who were Religious only in name.

HOW THEY ARE TO BE TREATED.—The wandering Monk, whose aim in life seems to have been to escape from all the rigours of the state which he had vowed to God, to enjoy its privileges, and at the same time to taste the pleasures of the world, very soon betrayed his true character when once he was within the enclosure of the monastery. He did not join the brethren in their Matin Office, he was not seen at their daily toil ; he found fault with his food, with his bed, with the attendants. A very short time sufficed to show that he was intent on good cheer, upon bodily ease, upon change of scene, and upon excitement. St. Benedict bids us politely and charitably intimate to such as these that they must depart, and that too without any delay, in order that scandal be not given to the brethren.

But whenever a true Monk came to his monasteries, and by his behaviour showed that he really was in search of God, he was not only never told to depart, but if he asked to be received, was welcomed with joy; and even if he did not present any such petition, was earnestly pressed to remain. Men of this stamp are easily discernible. They are quiet, unobtrusive, contented. The food is good enough for them; the air of the country is not a subject of solicitude; the customs please them; they are eager for the "work of God," for labour, and for obedience. To put an end to all wandering, St. Benedict invited these to make that vow, which he had just introduced, of remaining in the same monastery, bearing the yoke of Christ, even until death. If they acceded to his request, they were received among the brethren and persevered in obedience. Thus by degrees, as the Order spread, the wandering Monk began to be a rarity, till at last the species became quite extinct.

ADMONITIONS GIVEN BY STRANGERS.—The eyes of strangers are sharp and keen in detecting anything which is amiss, particularly in point of discipline, in any of the monasteries which they chance to visit. The brethren themselves, through daily use, may be quite blind to some defect which a stranger perceives at a glance. St. Benedict, knowing this, is careful to warn all Superiors to pay attention to that which is said by their guests or their visitors. For it may be that God makes use of them as His messengers to point out that which calls loudly for reform, and yet is not attended to. There are some persons, however, who cavil, and criticise, and even find fault,

not through any zeal for the amendment of that which to them seems to be amiss, but purely and simply through a certain characteristic perversity, which finds pleasure in inflicting either pain or humiliation. Those things at which these persons carp are often good and useful practices, worthy of commendation rather than of blame. Therefore it is that St. Benedict bids Superiors use their *prudence* in noticing the faults which are pointed out to them, and see whether the person who makes any suggestion to them does this with reason and with humility. By these two qualities he will be able to detect whether the person has been sent to him by God for this very purpose, or is simply by nature a fault-finder, and therefore unworthy of notice.

RECEPTION OF MONKS WHO ARE STRANGERS.—
As the Monks who came to the monasteries in the days of which we are speaking had already been tried in the novitiate, and had made their three monastic vows, they were not a second time subjected to the probation to which novices are obliged to submit. All that was required of them was that they should make the vow of stability, and then they were at once admitted to be members of the brotherhood. The reason of this was that, in consequence of the time which they had spent in the monastery as guests, their character and their manner of life were known to those who accepted them. It is very probable that some kind of ceremony was observed in their reception, but of what nature that ceremony was cannot with accuracy be determined. In all likelihood the Monk who wished to be received presented himself in

the chapter-house before the Abbot and the assembled community, and made a formal request to be admitted as a member of the brotherhood. When the Abbot had signified his assent, the community very probably went in procession from the chapter-house to the church, and there, in the presence of all the brethren and of two witnesses specially selected for the purpose, the stranger read from a schedule, written either by himself or by some of the Monks, the formula of the vow by which he bound himself, in the presence of God and of His Saints, to live and die in the monastery. The words of this vow are thus given by Hildemar :

“ I (Brother Bernard), coming to this monastery from a far-distant province, by this document, written with my own hand, confirm my stability for ever in this monastery, because the manner of life pursued by its inmates has pleased me, and my manner of life has found favour with them.” Having read this, he ascended the steps of the altar, and laid it upon the corporal, whence it was taken by the Abbot and laid up in the archives of the monastery. No other ceremony was needed : from that hour the Monk was counted as one of the brethren, and was never suffered to leave the precincts of his new home except with the Abbot's permission, and for the execution of some necessary business.

DISMISSAL OF MONKS WHO ARE STRANGERS.— Although St. Benedict allowed those Monks whose lives were edifying to abide in his monasteries for as long a time as it might please them to remain, yet he was not so indulgent with those who murmured

against discipline, and, by the extravagance of their demands, brought trouble into the house of God. These, with all civility, he told to depart. In the "Regula Magistri" it was prescribed that, at the end of two days, the Abbot and the cellarer after Prime should conduct these Monks into the oratory, and should say to them: "Help our brothers in the work which is imposed upon them. If you do not wish to do so, depart, for the term of our hospitality does not extend beyond the space of two days." If they were willing to work, some task was given to them to accomplish, in company with the brethren; but if they refused to undergo this labour test, they were told to depart, in order to make room for some other stranger who needed hospitality. This was an excellent contrivance, which speedily rid the monastery of all the hulking tramps who, under the guise of the religious habit, and the pretext of seeking greater perfection in monastic life, were accustomed to live at the expense of the frugal and charitable cenobites. This and the vow of stability were great means for putting an end to the wanderings of Monks beyond their enclosure, and for building them up in those virtues which enable men to persevere through all difficulties, even unto the end, in patiently bearing the yoke of obedience.

CHAPTER LXI.

OF THE PRIESTS OF THE MONASTERY.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE PRIESTHOOD.—Our Holy Father, in the fifty-ninth chapter, legislates for those persons who may wish to join his Order when they are already sealed with the priestly character. In the present chapter he lays down rules of conduct for those who are taken from the ranks of the brotherhood, and raised to this lofty dignity. In one comprehensive word he gives the qualifications which are requisite for one who is destined to exercise the functions of a priest: “he must be *worthy* to fill the office of the priesthood.” The first of these qualifications which mark the Monk as *worthy* of the priesthood is his own complete indifference as to whether he shall be raised to this dignity or not. He must not ambition the priesthood; he must not intrigue to procure his promotion; he must not importune nor push his Superiors to advance him to it. He must leave himself in their hands, and acquiesce in their determination. This is evident from the fact that St. Benedict says, “if the *Abbot* shall ask the Bishop.” The next qualification is holiness of life; for the priestly office is one which brings poor sinful man in contact with the infinite sanctity of God. “Therefore if he had the purity of an angel and the sanctity of John the Baptist, he would not be worthy to receive or to handle the Sacrament”¹ in which God lies con-

¹ *The Imitation*, Book iv. chap. v.

cealed. The third qualification is maturity of age. In former times this was supposed to be thirty, or at least twenty-five, years ; but in these modern times, the Council of Trent fixed at twenty-five the age at which clerics may receive the Order of priesthood. For the reception of it at an earlier age a dispensation is required. The last qualification is a sufficient amount of learning to enable the priest to discharge his sacred functions to the edification of the faithful. As the advancement of any Monk to an office and a dignity of so great importance was a very serious matter, it was doubtless one of those grave questions about which the Abbot took counsel with his whole community. Each person in it gave his candid opinion about the person whom the Abbot proposed, and from their concurrent testimony he was enabled to fix upon that one among his subjects who was most suitable for the office.

VIRTUES REQUISITE IN A PRIEST.—The functions of the priestly office are so sacred, and the majesty which it was instituted to serve is so sublime, that he who is invested with it ought also to be clothed with every virtue. St. Benedict, however, mentions only three, which imply the sum-total of all that perfection which it is possible to attain here below. The priest must be *humble*. His office, indeed, is one of great dignity, and much honour and influence are generally given to those who exercise it. Consequently a gate is opened in the heart of its possessor for the entrance of pride. Therefore our Holy Father says : “ Let him who is ordained beware of *haughtiness and of pride*.” Besides being humble, the priest

must be *obedient*. "Let him not do anything," says St. Benedict, "except that which is ordered by the Abbot." He is lifted up on high, and raised above his brethren ; but he must not suffer himself to think that he is thereby exempted from the duty of submission and of obedience, any more than the least of those over whose heads his priestly dignity has set him. "Lo, thou hast been made a priest : . . . see that thou show thyself to be blameless. Thou hast not lightened thy burden, but art now tied fast with a stricter bond of discipline."² In addition to obedience and humility, a priest must ever tend to rise higher and higher in the scale of perfection. His life must be a continual endeavour to advance. These are the words in which St. Benedict puts this duty before him : "Let him not by reason of his priesthood forget the obedience and the discipline of the Rule, but rather strive to advance more and more in the service of God."

THE PRIEST'S RANK IN THE COMMUNITY.—In the fifty-ninth chapter, when treating of priests who wish to leave the secular life in order to embrace the monastic life, St. Benedict ordains that they should be put next in rank to the Abbot, and should be allowed to give a blessing and to say Mass, if the Abbot should order them to exercise their sacerdotal functions. Those of the Monks, however, who were raised to the priesthood from the bosom of the community were seemingly not favoured in this way. Though far above their brethren by reason of the priestly office, they did not with their Orders receive a higher rank than was that which they had pre-

² *The Imitation*, Book iv. chap. v.

viously held. The only conditions upon which this rule could be set aside were the petition of the brotherhood that this mark of dignity should be granted to them, and the consent of the Abbot to the brotherhood's request. Special holiness of life seems to have been the motive cause which usually induced them to advance the newly ordained priest to a higher rank in the community than was his due by reason of his age in holy religion. But even so, he was not released from humble obedience to the orders of the Deans and the provosts of the monastery. By these means, our Holy Father, who was so hostile to the spirit of pride, endeavoured to defend his children from the snares of that insidious vice, by constantly exercising them in the fundamental virtue of humility.

PUNISHMENT OF PRIESTS.—Whenever any Monk who was also a priest was so puffed up with this malignant spirit of pride as to refuse obedience to his lawful Superiors, some commentators think that no regard was paid to his dignity, but that the usual course of punishment was applied for his correction. Others think that, out of respect for his priesthood, neither the penalty of scourging nor of excommunication was inflicted. Others, taking a middle course, are of opinion that the Bishop of the diocese was called in, and informed of his delinquencies, and of the means already used for their correction. After having heard the case against the priest, and found that the accusations of his Superiors are true, he deposed the priest from his dignity, and then the Superiors proceeded against him as they would against a simple Monk. In St. Benedict's day, and

for some years after it, all monasteries were subject to the Bishop. The first instance of exemption is mentioned in the time of Gregory the Great. As the Monk, by his ordination, became in a certain sense the Bishop's subject, the Bishop naturally enough was called in to act as judge of the offences which were said to have been committed by that subject. If after being deposed by the Bishop, and passing through the various grades of penance, the culprit did not amend, he was thrust out of the monastery, just in the same way in which any other incorrigible person would be expelled.

CHAPTER LXII

THE ORDER OF THE COMMUNITY.

RULE FOR DETERMINING RANK.—To enable every one clearly to see his position in the Order, and to prevent any unseemly contention for precedence, St. Benedict gives one broad general rule by which his children are easily able to determine the rank which they are to hold. That rank is given to them by the date at which they enter the Order. But there are three dates from which this fact is counted by various people : first, the time when the postulant asks to be admitted ; secondly, the day on which he is clothed in the monastic habit or enters the novitiate ; thirdly, the day when he makes his profession. Which of these occasions is considered by our Holy Father to be that eventful one which fixes for the Monk the

rank which he is to hold in the monastery? From the words of this present chapter, it is evident that he means this to be the moment when the future Monk first comes to the monastery-gates and asks to be admitted to the Order. "He who cometh at the second hour of the day must know that he is lower in the monastery than the man who came at the first hour, no matter what his age or his dignity may be." This, however, did not come in force in the case of those children who, at an early age, were offered to the monastery, until they had attained their fifteenth year. When they had arrived at that age, they were put into that rank which was due to them from the date at which they entered upon religious life. In some congregations, as in our own, a person's rank is, as a general rule, determined by the date at which he receives the habit. Thus, if there are several postulants, one of whom has preceded the others in the date at which he entered the monastery, but is prevented by some unforeseen accident from being "clothed" upon the same day on which the rest are admitted, he loses the rank which he would otherwise have held.

The rank thus acquired by age in the habit is that in which the Monks proceed to perform the various actions of monastic life. Thus, among those who are not priests, it is the person who has been longest in the congregation who approaches first to receive the Most Holy Sacrament; who precedes the others in intoning a Psalm or an antiphon; who receives the kiss of peace at the altar; and who, in all the other rites in which some sort of order has to be observed,

is entitled to hold a rank higher than is given to those who have come after him to religion.

MERIT OF LIFE.—The first reason for which an exception may be made to this general rule is merit of life. By this we must understand superior virtue, or great learning, or dignity of station. Thus when there comes to join us any one who in the world, or in another religious body to which he formerly belonged, was held in high esteem, and who is noted for the sanctity of his life and the wide range of his acquirements, Superiors are empowered to accord to him a rank above those who have, perhaps, been many years in religion. In all probability, this will be that rank which would have been his had he joined the Order in his early youth.

THE ABBOT'S APPOINTMENT.—This is the second reason on account of which there may be given to any one in our Order a rank higher than is that to which he has a right by the date of his entrance. If the Abbot chooses to promote any of the brethren, he has the power to do so. But this power must not be used in an arbitrary manner. He must not make this change out of mere whim, or to manifest his personal affection. There must be some good solid reason for it, some just cause which moves him to do it; and therefore St. Benedict warns all Superiors that they shall answer for their judgments and their works before the dread tribunal of God. The memory of this stirring thought he deems to be amply sufficient to deter any Superior from disturbing the peace of the flock committed to his care by any act of injustice, or by any tyrannical use of

the almost absolute power which he holds in his hands.

ORDER OF OUR CONGREGATION.—The general law which determines our rank in the congregation, is our age in the religious habit. The exceptional law which raises any of us to a position above that which is due to him by reason of his age in religion is office or dignity, or the appointment of some particular Superior, or the decree of general chapter. (1) The President-General everywhere takes the first place. After him the rank is as follows : (2) Abbots ; (3) ex-Presidents ; (4) the Definitors of the Regimen ; (5) Provincials, who in their own provinces give place to no one, except to the President-General ; (6) conventual Priors ; (7) the President second-elect — that is to say, the father who is chosen to succeed the President, should this latter die during his term of office ; (8) the Definitors of England ; (9) Masters in Theology and Preachers-General ; (10) the Procurator in the Roman Court ; (11) the President's secretary ; (12) the Procurators of the provinces ; (13) the chaplains of the Benedictine Nuns. All these, in their respective orders, hold that rank which is due to them by their age in religion.

The order of the cathedral Priors is as follows : Canterbury, Winchester, Durham. The conventual Priors take precedence of one another according to the date of the foundation of the particular monastery over which each of them presides. In his own monastery no one takes precedence of him except the President-General. The Definitors of the Regimen and the Definitors of England take precedence of one

another, not by their age in religion, but by the order in which they are elected. After the chaplains of the Benedictine Nuns come: (1) Sub-priors, but only in their own monasteries; (2) priests who are professed; (3) professed Religious who are not yet priests; (4) choir novices; (5) lay brothers.

A Prior can raise one of his subjects to a rank higher than that which is due to him, provided that his councillors, in their secret votes, are unanimous in approving of the person whom he proposes to them for this honour. The rank which is thus given cannot be taken away from the person upon whom it is conferred, unless the councillors are unanimous in voting that he shall be deposed from it. The rank thus conferred upon any one by a conventual Prior holds good only in the monastery over which that Prior happens to rule. But if any rank in the Order is conferred upon any of us by the general chapter, that rank holds good everywhere and in everything, except in those elections in which rank must be computed from the date at which we received the holy habit of religion.

MUTUAL REVERENCE.—In order to promote that love and that reverence which religious men ought to entertain for one another, our Holy Father bids the juniors honour their seniors, and the seniors manifest their paternal love towards those in the community who are their juniors. For this end, he lays down two or three simple rules, which each of us ought to be most careful to observe, because they are the express commands of our great lawgiver. Besides this, they will serve to keep alive within us the fact

that we are brothers, and, therefore, that we should gladly bear one another's burdens, and thus endeavour to fulfil the law of Christ. The first of these rules is that one Monk must never address another by his simple name (*puro nomine*). Hence it is against the spirit of the Rule to call any member of the Order purely and simply by his religious name, as, for instance, when addressing him, to say "Placid," or "Gregory," or "Oswald." It is worse still to omit his religious name, and to address him as "Smith," "Jones," "Thomas." It is worst of all to address him by any term which designates nothing else than his nationality.

The second rule is that the seniors should always prefix to the religious name of their juniors the word "brother." Thus when a senior or a priest addresses a junior, he should say "Brother Placid," or "Brother Basil," or "Brother Cuthbert," and not simply, "Placid," "Basil," "Cuthbert," In like manner, when a junior addresses a senior or a priest, or again, whenever he speaks of him, he should always be careful to prefix to his religious name the word "Father," as, for instance, "Father John," "Father William," "Father Alphonsus."

The word in the Rule which represents this appellation is *Nonnus*, interpreted by St. Benedict to mean "Reverend Father." There are various derivations of this word suggested by different commentators; but that which seems to be most likely is that it is a Latinised form of an Egyptian word signifying *elder*. As the Abbot in every monastery holds the place of Christ, he is to be addressed as "Domnus

Abbas," the Lord Abbot. The word is designedly written *Domnus*, and not *Dominus*, in order to distinguish it from the title of Him Who is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

In many congregations of the Benedictine family this title, which was at one time reserved exclusively for the Abbot, is prefixed to the name of each Monk, and he is called *Domnus Wilfridus*, or Dom Wilfrid. As a general rule, however, only priests or elders are addressed in this way.

The third rule appoints the meed of reverence which the brethren are expected to accord to one another whenever they meet. If a junior meets a senior, he asks a blessing by saying, "Benedicite;" to which the senior replies by saying, "Benedicat te Deus," or some similar form of words. In times of silence this blessing is asked and given by simply bowing the head. Whenever a senior passes by the place in which any juniors are seated, they must rise and uncover their heads to do him reverence; and if he should wish to sit among them, they must with all alacrity give him place, and not presume to sit with him, unless he kindly invites them to do so. In this way, and by these few simple rules, we are taught to respect and to honour one another.

THE CHILDREN OF THE MONASTERY.—From this passage, many have thought that the children who were offered held a rank among themselves according to the order in which they came to the monastery; and that when they reached the age of fifteen, they were given among the brethren that rank which was due to them, thus obtaining precedence of

the grown-up men who during their childhood had come to religion, and had made their profession. One or two discreet fathers were placed over them to keep them under discipline ; but besides these, any of the brethren who chanced to see them in any way misconducting themselves, was empowered to reprehend and to correct them. When they attained their fifteenth year they were released from this tutelage, and incorporated among the brethren.

CHAPTER LXIII.

OF THE ELECTION OF THE ABBOT.

MODE OF ELECTION.—Knowing the importance of a good Superior for every community, and that its welfare, both temporal and spiritual, depends upon a judicious choice, St. Benedict, while appointing the method of procedure which is to be observed in the election, is careful to fix for his children the principles which are to guide them in selecting from among themselves the man who is to hold sway over them. That which they are to look to is not age, nor nobility of birth, nor services rendered to the monastery, nor learning apart from piety, nor piety apart from learning ; but a virtuous life, combined with that wisdom which is not of this world, which cometh down from the Father of light, from Whom every good and perfect gift descends. This wisdom is the science of the Saints, and consists in a practical

knowledge of the truths of our Catholic faith, and of all the exercises of the religious life. Mere holiness of life in any Monk is not sufficient to entitle him to hold the Abbot's chair in a monastery; nor, again, is mere intellectual ability without holiness of life. If possible, both should be combined in him who is to rule over others. But if there is no other choice than between one who is merely virtuous, but void of knowledge and indiscreet, and one who is filled with all knowledge, but far inferior in point of virtue, yet, provided that the latter is not vicious, but only frail, he ought to be preferred to the other; because his science will enable him to guide his subjects aright, and keep them from evil; whereas his frailty will not hurt anybody but himself.

Having laid down these principles to guide them in fixing their choice upon a suitable person, our Holy Father next ordains that the power of election shall be in the hands of those over whom the Abbot is to rule; for it is but just that the governed should have a voice in the election of those who are to govern them. But though the power of election is in the hands of the community, it is evident that their choice is not an absolute one. For, while ordaining that he who shall have been elected by the unanimous vote of the Monks shall be their Abbot, he yet inserts a clause by which, when the votes are not unanimous, the wiser portion of the community are enabled to secure the election of the more suitable man, "whom a part, though few in number, shall choose with greater wisdom and discretion." Therefore it is lawful to infer that, in these circumstances, the Bishop

and the neighbouring Abbots were called in to determine the matter, and to instal him who, in their judgment, was best fitted to assume the reins of power. Also if it should unfortunately happen that a whole community should unite in electing one who assented to their loose and wicked method of life, even so this election, though unanimous, was not absolute ; for on learning the character of the man who had been chosen, it was in the power of the Bishop, in concert with the adjoining Abbots, and, if need be, of the devout people, to eject the hireling shepherd, and to set a truly God-fearing man over the Lord's sheep-fold.

There are, however, two opinions concerning the meaning of the clause, "whom a part, though few in number, shall choose." The first is that of Hildemar, who maintains that if out of fifty Monks two or three should vote for the better man, their will must prevail, and the object of their choice be seated in the abbatial chair. The second is that of John Caramuel, who, in his commentary on this passage, says : "Our Holy Father does not compare the lesser part to the greater, but only a part to the whole. He says that he is to be proclaimed Abbot whom either the whole community shall elect, or at least a part of it who are wiser and more discreet, though they are few in number. An example will make our meaning clearer. Suppose that there are twenty voters in any given community. If all these vote for Peter, there is no difficulty whatever, because they are unanimous. But if four vote for Peter, seven for John, six for Paul, and three for Ambrose, our Holy Founder's

will is that John should be Abbot. For although the party who vote for him are few in comparison with the whole community, yet they are more numerous than the others are, and consequently must be considered to be wiser and more discreet." Of these two interpretations, Hildemar's is generally thought to be the more exact rendering of St. Benedict's mind. The person upon whom the community's choice falls is to be made Abbot, even though he is the "last in the community;" that is to say, either last by the lowliness of his birth, or last in the order of profession; for, though last in both these ways, he may be ripe in manners, prudent, virtuous, and enriched with all those qualifications which will make him a good ruler and an excellent religious man.

INSTITUTION OF THE ABBOT.—Although our Holy Father does not make any mention of the confirmation in office, or of the blessing given to the Abbot by the Bishop, yet these ceremonies were, no doubt, in use in his days. The "Regula Magistri," written shortly after St. Benedict's death, gives a detailed description of the election, the institution, the confirmation, and the blessing of the newly-chosen Abbot. It appears that his predecessor, when on his death-bed, usually summoned the whole community to his cell, and in their presence designated the Monk whom he wished to succeed him. This was at once made known to the Bishop, who came to the monastery, and after celebrating Holy Mass inserted the name of the new Abbot in the diptychs, and that of his predecessor, if he was already dead, among the names of the departed. When the Holy Sacrifice

was ended, and the Bishop had given to the new Abbot the kiss of peace, the brethren left the oratory, and went to the chapter-house, followed by the Bishop and the Abbot. The Bishop, seated in the place of honour, then delivered to the Abbot a copy of the Holy Rule, the keys of the cellarer, and an inventory of all the property belonging to the monastery, whether in movable or in immovable goods. At the conclusion of a few words of exhortation addressed to the Abbot, a procession was formed, and all repaired to the church. On arriving there, the Bishop conducted the Abbot to his stall, seated him in it, and presented to him the abbatial robe. After an appropriate prayer, offered up by the Bishop, the Abbot rose from his seat, approached the altar, and laid on it the copy of the Rule which had been presented to him in the chapter-house. After a moment's pause he took it from the altar, and the community sang the verse, "Confirma hoc Deus quod operatus es in nobis," with a "Gloria Patri" at the end. Descending the altar-steps, the Abbot prostrated before the Bishop, and humbly asked him to pray for him. Thereupon the Bishop recited the prescribed prayers, at the end of which he took his seat, and the Abbot, coming and kneeling before him, kissed his knees. After this he gave the kiss of peace to all the officials of the monastery, to the Provosts, and to each of the brethren. Then taking the keys which had been put into his possession, he gave them to the cellarer. A prayer was then offered up, on the conclusion of which the Abbot sat in his chair, and each of the community came before him and kissed his knees in

token of submission. During this ceremony the Prior of the monastery lay prostrate on the pavement of the oratory. When all had paid their debt of homage, the Abbot rose from his seat, and approaching the spot where the Prior lay, raised him from the ground ; then kneeling, he embraced his knees, and rising gave him the kiss of peace. Thus concluded the ceremony observed in instituting an Abbot.

PRESENT LEGISLATION.—Since the days of St. Benedict the canon law of the Church has legislated for all these matters, and that law has to be observed in all elections, otherwise they become null and void. In our congregation, before any one is eligible for the office of President-General, Abbot, Definitor of the Regimen, Provincial, Prior, whether cathedral or conventual, Definitor in England, Master in Theology, Preacher-General, he must have been at least nine years in religion, and have held some one of the following offices: Procurator in the Roman Court, secretary to the President, missionary, chaplain to Nuns, Sub-prior, cellarer, accountant,¹ councillor, either novice-master or junior master in some capitular monastery, Professor of Theology or of Philosophy in some college. It is furthermore required for the office of President-General that a person either should have been or should actually be a member of the chapter.

All the members of the chapter have a vote in his election. To examine these votes, five members of the chapter are chosen. The mode of election is as follows: the secretary of the chapter gives to each

¹ Depositarius.

member a catalogue of the names of all those who are eligible for the office of President-General. But before handing the catalogue to the elector, he cuts from it, in the presence of the Scrutators, the name of the person to whom it is given. When each has received his catalogue of names, all withdraw into the hall of the chapter except the five Definitors or Scrutators, who remain in an adjoining room called the Definitory. Each elector, going apart, cuts off from the catalogue the name of him whom he deems fittest for the presidential office. One of the Monks who acts as doorkeeper then calls the electors by name, who come two and two into the Definitory, and, in the presence of the Definitors, cast the folded paper containing the name of the candidate for whom they vote into an urn prepared for the purpose, and the carefully folded residue of the paper, from which that name has been cut, into another urn which is kept hard by. The Definitors who are to examine these votes are themselves ordered to give theirs in the way described above, previously to the admission of any of the electors into the Definitory. When all except the Definitors or Scrutators have returned from the Definitory, the first Definitor shakes the urn that the voting-papers may be mingled together. In concert with his colleagues he then draws them forth and counts them, to see whether their number corresponds with the number of voters. If the voting-papers are either fewer or more numerous than is the number of electors, the votes must be taken a second time. But if they are found to correspond with the number of electors, the election is valid, and the

Definitors proceed to examine the voting-papers. Opening each of them, the first Definitor shows it to his colleagues, and if more than half are for any given person, that person is canonically elected. This holds good if the number of voters is equal; but if the number is an unequal one, then he who obtains the majority carries the election. The first Definitor then writes out the document which testifies to the election; this is signed by him and by his colleagues, and is carried by them into the hall of the chapter, and read out before the assembled fathers.

ELECTION OF CONVENTUAL PRIORS.—In the election of conventual Priors all those who actually belong to their respective communities, and who are in holy Orders, have a right to vote. In their voting-papers they write the name of him whom they deem most worthy to hold the office, and send this signed and sealed to the general chapter.

As in the election of the President, so also in the election of the Priors it is the person who has received more than half the votes, or the majority of them, who is chosen to hold the office of Prior.²

As the ceremony of installation is the same for a President as for a Prior, a description of the ceremony in the case of the one will suffice for a description of the ceremony in the case of the other. On the day appointed for this function, the Religious

² It must, however, be borne in mind that the vote of communities for their respective Priors is not a *decisive*, but only a *consultive*, vote. The Definitors in reality are the persons who *elect*.

who, during the vacancy of the priorship, has presided over the monastery summons all the brethren to the chapter-house. When they are assembled, the newly-elected Prior is introduced, and delivers into the hands of this person the document which testifies to his canonical election. This is given to the secretary of the council, who reads it out in a clear distinct tone of voice, so that all may hear. At the conclusion of this, the Prior prostrates upon the earth. After a short pause, the chief person present gives him a sign to rise. He does so, but remains kneeling, while the brethren stand in their places. In this humble posture he briefly thanks the fathers of the congregation for entertaining about him, who is so unworthy, sentiments of so great esteem and confidence as to raise him to this important office. He expresses his willingness to take upon himself the weight of its burden, and concludes by asking all present earnestly to pray for him, that God may give him strength to bear it, and in a becoming manner to fulfil its many arduous duties.

When he has ceased speaking, the chief person present raises him from the ground, and in a few simple words tells him of the great hopes which the whole congregation entertain concerning his ability to fill, with profit to the Order and with credit to himself, the post to which the suffrages of his brethren have raised him. He concludes by promising, both on his own part and on the part of the community, most earnestly to pray to God to bless his rule, and to make it prosperous for the temporal as well as the spiritual interests of the monastery.

A crucifix is then brought, and put into the hands of the person who is performing the ceremony of the installation. Laying his hand upon this, the Prior, in the presence of God, makes a solemn promise that he will take no steps whatever to prolong the term of his office beyond the four years for which he has been elected; that he will observe the constitutions; and if he should offend against that which they ordain, that he will submit to the penalties which they impose.

After this he makes another solemn promise never to alienate or to transfer to others any monastery, residence, or house, or any notable portion of the immovable goods belonging to any monastery, or residence, or house. After making this promise he lays his hand on the Cross, thereby calling God to witness the sincerity of his promise.

In accordance with the decree of Pope Pius IV., he next makes his profession of faith by reading the Creed drawn up by that Pontiff. At the conclusion of this the hymn *Te Deum laudamus* is intoned, and all go in procession from the chapter-house to the church, the Prior walking last, between the two highest dignitaries present on the occasion. These three ascend the altar-steps and kneel until the end of the *Te Deum*. The prayers prescribed in the Ritual are then sung, and when they are ended, the two who are kneeling next to the Prior raise him up and conduct him to the chief stall of the choir, and, kneeling before him, kiss his hand. This is done by each member of the community, and when all have thus testified their obedience and submission, a short prayer is secretly said by all present, the sign is given to

rise, and the ceremony of installation, or of "institution," as it is called, is thus brought to an end.

THE QUALITIES TO BE LOOKED FOR IN AN ABBOT.—He who is thus, as it were, "set upon a candlestick," and vested with authority over others, has an office put into his hands which is weighty in itself, and brimful of the gravest responsibility. Therefore the man who is deemed worthy to exercise its manifold duties ought to be no ordinary man. A glance at the requirements which St. Benedict looks for in one who, as he expresses it, "holds the place of Christ," will suffice to convince any one of the exceptional qualities which the Abbot ought to possess, if he would quit himself well of the important trust committed to his charge. Holding the place of Christ, his chief duty is to be to his community a good shepherd. He has to impart to them that spiritual food, that science of the Saints, which leads men to the kingdom of God. Therefore he must be a man "learned in the Divine Law." By this is meant that he should be thoroughly well versed in the knowledge of Holy Scripture, which is a treasure whence learning of every description may be drawn, to meet and to supply the manifold necessities of those who look to him for instruction. It means also an acquaintance with ecclesiastical and with monastic laws, by means of which he will be able to keep his flock in close communion of spirit with, and in exact obedience to, the Church. It means, in fine, familiarity with the writings of the great Fathers of the Church, who are looked upon as the most trustworthy exponents of her doctrine, and as the

best interpreters of the word of God. Any one armed with this divine science may with confidence sit in the abbatial chair of doctrine, for he will put before the sheep committed to his care wholesome food, with which they will be able to sustain their spiritual life. It is not necessary that he should be learned in human science ; he may be ignorant of that which passes for literature ; he may not possess what, in the parlance of the day, is called "culture." This kind of knowledge puffs up and intoxicates the soul ; it fills without nourishing, it inflates without edifying ; but the science of the Saints is for him an indispensable necessity ; like godliness, "it is profitable for all things ;" it enables him to fashion the lives of his subjects upon the pattern shown to him by Jesus Christ, and to prepare them for the enjoyment of the life of glory which is to come.

Besides having learning, which will enable him to set before them the Divine Law, the Abbot must be to them an example upon which they may look and strive to imitate. Hence the necessity for him to be spotless, upright, and pure. His life must be so holy in this respect as to be heroic, angelic, beyond the reach of suspicion ; so that, like our Divine Lord, he may stand forth before those who are even hostile to him, and say, "Which of you shall convict me of sin ?" The sobriety which our Holy Father deems necessary for him, in addition to spotless purity of life, is not merely that abstemiousness in point of drink which we should say is inseparable from the life of one who is pure and learned in the Divine Law, but that general self-command by which a man has himself

completely in hand, and never suffers passion to hurry him into any excess ; but is so calm and so self-possessed as to be able to give his mind up to prayer and to holy reading, without being disturbed and carried away during the course of them by the trifles which are capable of raising a very tempest in the heart of him who has not won for himself this sobriety of spirit. Another quality which is closely allied to this—inasmuch as one who is calm, sober, and self-possessed is able to take correct views of the various subjects upon which he is called to decide—is mercy, which a Superior must possess in his heart, or he will never be a good ruler. If he be calm, if he be not easily blinded and hurried away by passion, he will examine and weigh all the circumstances of persons, times, places ; consequently, he will be able to discriminate between one who has been carried away by the impetuosity of his nature and induced to commit some fault, and one who has yielded through malice to the seduction of evil. He will therefore know how to weigh out the degree of punishment, or of correction, or of chiding, which each case deserves ; moreover, considering his own frailty and many shortcomings, he will always endeavour to err on the side of mercy. He will be just, but not cruel ; he will be merciful, but not soft ; where punishment is called for, he will inflict it ; but he will never make it heavier than the fault deserves.

In all these corrections he will try to manifest another quality which St. Benedict requires in an Abbot : he will be prudent. A prudent man is one who looks before him to the end which he wishes to

gain, employs the fittest means for securing it, and removes the obstacles which are likely to hinder him from effecting his purpose. What does he aim at in all these corrections? It is at the amelioration of the souls of those who are committed to his charge. Therefore he will have the wisdom sometimes not to see faults which are committed. Those which are committed he will sometimes not be in a hurry to correct. When he does set about this difficult but necessary task, he will do it without passion, without the spirit of revenge. He will correct with a soul which is untroubled. He will point out the fault, he will show the way to correct it, he will take care that it is mended. He will rebuke, but he will not *always* do so; and when he does rebuke, it will not be in a proud and haughty manner, but humbly and meekly. As our Holy Father furthermore requires, he will be *discreet*; he will not be *excessive* in anything; he will carefully avoid too great severity and too great remissness. Besides this, he will endeavour to have for every one under his jurisdiction that considerate kindness which will take into account the strength, whether corporal or spiritual, of each, and endeavour so to fit the yoke to the shoulders of all that the strong may have somewhat to strive after, and the weak naught from which they will flee away.

FAULTS TO BE AVOIDED.—There are certain faults into which those who are vested with authority are likely to fall; against these St. Benedict warns the Abbot, and earnestly exhorts him to avoid them, or if unhappily he should already have contracted them, to do his utmost to eliminate them from his

conduct. The first of these is one into which men almost unconsciously drift who suffer themselves to be oppressed by the weight of the burden and of the responsibility which their office imposes upon them. They are *full of care*, which looks out through every feature, and makes itself painfully felt in every movement of their body. Their brow is wrinkled with thought, their eyes are restless, they are abstracted in mind, they are short and abrupt in speech, they have an anxious uneasy air, and their presence among their subjects is as the passing of a dark cloud across the sky, blotting out the sunshine, and flinging a gloomy shadow into hearts which, but a moment before, were full of light and of joy.

A second fault is the absence of that evenly-balanced temper of mind which keeps them from falling into any excess. St. Benedict says, "The Abbot must not be excessive (*nimius*) in anything." He must be neither prodigal nor parsimonious; neither rigorous nor lax; neither distant nor familiar; neither careless of temporalities nor too deeply engrossed in them. His aim must be to hold that middle course in which, as we are told, virtue is thought to consist. By endeavouring to hold that, he will succeed in steering clear of any excess, and so avoid that shipwreck which is the inevitable fate of him who abandons the middle stream, and ventures to hug the shore. One of the excesses into which he must earnestly strive not to fall is *obstinacy* of judgment. Though set up in the place of authority, and holding the reins of power, he is told by our great legislator frequently to ask and to listen to the counsel

of his subjects. This is a piece of sage advice as old as the time of Solomon, and they who follow it are saved from a multitude of errors. Every man has a different standpoint from which he views the various questions which are submitted to his judgment, and consequently the Superior who will patiently examine into these will have thrown on the matter concerning which he has asked for counsel a brilliant 'light, which will enable him to look round the whole subject, and see it in its various bearings. But if he first form a judgment and then ask for counsel, having previously come to the conclusion that there is no second opinion on the matter, he will persist in it in spite of all the reasons which can be brought against it. He will see it from only one point—and that point, in all likelihood, a wrong one from which to view it—from which only a very partial corner sort of view can be obtained; and the consequence will be that he will be guilty of countless blunders, over which one might make merry, if the outcome of them affected only the blunderer himself. But unfortunately a Superior obstinate in his views and in his judgment frequently involves his whole community in the evils which result from his persistent opposition to their ideas. Therefore let him avoid this great fault, and give an attentive ear to that which is suggested by his subjects; for God will oftentimes make known to him, through the most inexperienced of his flock, that which is not grasped by the intelligences of the worldly-wise and self-sufficient.

St. Benedict mentions two other faults which every Superior must shun, and carefully keep out of

his heart. These are jealousy and suspicion. He may have under his rule men who in some, and perhaps in many, respects are his superiors. They have influence, they have authority; men consult them, acquiesce in their judgments, bow to their decisions. It is hard for one's poor unaided human nature to see this, and yet not to revolt against it, to feel lowered by it, and, as it were, so eclipsed that one's light has quite gone out. But nature that is helped by grace will set its heel upon this writhing snake, and crush its head. The demon of jealousy is quickly exorcised by the power of divine grace, and man rises superior to all these small, narrow, degrading views. The Superior will be glad, he will rejoice that he is not the only prophet in Israel, that there are others also who can prophesy and advance the kingdom of God; he will use them, and thus these very occasions which might have been ruinous to his soul's salvation, will become so many helps to raise him in the scale of virtue, and to make him share in all the good works and the glorious deeds of those who are under his charge.

Suspicion is a meanness which must be ejected, which must not be suffered to get even a footing in his heart, so as to need ejection. A Superior must do his duty, and then suffer those who are under him to do theirs, without troubling them more than is necessary. A *judicious* vigilance is a powerful incitement to all persons to act up to rule. But a vigilance which is such as to betray a want of *trust* is so provocative of the demon of resistance, who sleeps in even the best natures, that it evokes him, and causes him to rebel with such emphasis and fury as to

destroy all spirit of obedience. This is an evil which suspicion generates in the hearts of subjects. That which it causes to spring up in the heart of the Superior who is haunted by it is a cause of so great torture that it will completely destroy his peace. Unless his eyes are upon his subjects, he fancies that they are not doing their duty. If he sees them talking together, he imagines that they are plotting against him. If they are sad, he thinks that it is because he is present. If they laugh, it is to ridicule him. When they ask for any exemption, he is on the alert to discover some trickery. If they are ill, he deems that it is a mere pretence. Thus painfully alive to all that passes under his notice, and conjuring up a thousand imaginary ills which exist only in his own brain, he becomes an endless source of worry and of unrest to himself, and a thorn in the side of each member of his community. Hence the necessity for crushing out of the mind every incitement to suspicion.

Therefore let Superiors frequently reflect upon these wise counsels of our great lawgiver. Though carrying the burden of the abbatial care, let them not seem to stagger beneath it, but to bear it lightly. Let them wear a gladsome look which will be a source of joy to their children. Let them not be guilty of any excess in any of their commands. In council let them not obstinately adhere to their own opinion, but listen with humility to the opinion of others, remembering that God will sometimes reveal His will through the mouths of even babes and sucklings. Let them not be jealous of others, but rejoice when many are found who can, with an ability even superior

to their own, push forward the interests of the Church and of their own community. Above all things, let them never admit the demon of suspicion into their minds, otherwise they may bid a long farewell to that peace and repose of heart which they came into the cloister to enjoy.

MODE OF GOVERNMENT.—In this admirable chapter St. Benedict lays down for the instruction of Superiors in their manner of government a few simple principles, which are so full of heavenly wisdom that, if they be made the guiding stars of any one who holds sway over others, they will enable him to steer his course through the multitudinous difficulties which lie in his way, and to enter the port of safety without either himself incurring loss or inflicting any damage upon others. In the first place, he must make it his aim “*to do good,*” and not simply “*to rule.*” Power is put into his hands not as an end, in the enjoyment of which he is to rest, but as a means to procure an end, which is the advantage of those over whom he is set to rule. Therefore he is not to seek the honour which is usually accorded to power, nor the influence which it is always able to command, nor the glory with which it is invested. All these are merely selfish gratifications, which must be discarded. The honour and the glory must be given to God; the influence used as a lever to raise and to turn men’s hearts to Him. All that he must look for is the labour of ruling; whatever else arises from it must go to God. This labour is to do good unto those over whom he rules; to reform in them that which is evil; to correct that which is faulty; to perfect that which is good.

What patience, what self-restraint and self-effacement, what courage, what perseverance, are required in him who will set before himself this one only aim in his rule! Merely to *rule* is an easy matter. Men are not difficult to drill and to discipline into a perfect mechanical outward decorum. A police inspector or a sergeant will do this for you with tolerable efficiency. But to drill or to discipline the heart into willing obedience both to God and to man for God's sake, this is the task which only a man whose aim is to do good, and not merely to rule, is able effectually to accomplish.

Another principle which is given to him to aid him in doing this is to "prefer mercy to justice." Kindness, gentleness, forbearance—in one word, mercy—finds its way into a heart which will remain hard and impervious as flint or as steel against the rudest strokes of justice. Men are sure to offend against the wisest laws, the most stringent rules. They fail not through malice, but through weakness. It is not the heart which is at fault, but the will. To draw forth the sword of justice against these offenders, and to wield it with a swift, unsparing hand, is an easy task, and may cause the fault to disappear from the light of day, but not from the will. Mercy, however, is more patient; it shrinks not from trouble nor from labour. It is mild and gentle. It calls the offender to its tribunal. It speaks gently to him. It points out the evil which has been done. It displays before him the means to undo it. It speaks words of encouragement. All this drops on him as the gentle rain from heaven. The heart is softened. The hurtful evil is

carefully removed, but no rankling wound is inflicted ; the will is fortified, and by degrees ceases to offend ; a soul is saved which might, by the application of justice only, have been driven into the camp of the devil.

Men who are accustomed to exalt mercy above justice, and to be at the pains of endeavouring to heal sick souls instead of lording it over them, are sure to make use of the third principle given by St. Benedict to guide his children in the manner of their government. They will show their zeal, their love of justice, their hatred of evil, by directing all these against the vices and the faults which they perceive in their subjects, and not against the subjects themselves. Again, in their corrections they will not be guilty of any excess, by punishing a slight fault as if it were something grave, or a grave fault as if it were something of no consequence. Lastly, their aim will be to make themselves loved, and not feared. We think that any Superior who makes little account of this principle, and by his action aims at striking terror into the hearts of his subjects, has utterly failed to grasp the spirit of the Benedictine Rule. He is not the Abbot whose portrait is drawn for us by our Holy Father in the pages of that Rule. He has not even a faint resemblance of that good Father, whose place we are taught to believe that he holds. He is not a shepherd, but a hireling, whose own the sheep are not, and who consequently cares not for them. He will drive, but will not lead. He will strike, but will not heal. He will scatter, but will not seek after those who flee from his severity. Therefore let him who would be a Superior after God's own heart always remember Whose place

it is that he holds. He stands in the place of Jesus Christ. He is called by His title. Let him study to clothe himself in the spirit of that loving Father. Then he will make it his aim to do good rather than to rule ; he will exercise mercy rather than justice ; he will hate vices, but will love the brethren committed to his care ; he will be guilty of no excess ; and, above all things, he will make it his aim to be loved by his subjects, rather than to be feared by them.

CHAPTER LXIV.

OF THE PREPOSITUS OR PROVOST.

IT is evident from this chapter that, previously to St. Benedict's time, it was the custom for the Bishop and the Abbots who presided at the monastic elections to institute the Provost just in the same way in which they instituted the Abbot. The Provost was the official in the monastery next after the Abbot, and held a position similar to that of a Sub-prior in a monastery presided over by a Prior. The inconveniences arising from this method of institution were pointed out by St. Benedict. The first of these was that the Provost, seeing his election to be precisely similar to that of the Abbot, began to fancy that there was committed to him an authority equal to that of the Abbot. He regarded himself as an equal of the Abbot. He questioned his authority. When orders were issued which did not meet with his appro-

val, he plainly intimated this, if not to the Abbot himself, then to the circle of adherents whom it is so easy for any one in his position to collect around him. The consequences were natural. It was not unusual in monasteries to find two factions, the one paying allegiance to the Abbot, the other to the Provost. Hence arose all the ills of party strife. Each faction watched the other with that virulent dislike and distrust which are engendered by rival interests and by rival claims. Reports were circulated by the one side detrimental to the character of the other. These gave rise to angry discussions, to quarrels, to heartburnings, to unseemly language. There was much uncharitableness, much envy, great disunion, and great disorder. The little kingdom was divided against itself, and unless some superior power interposed and settled the points in dispute, it came to naught. Those who were desirous of quiet sought an asylum elsewhere; those who gloried in the excitement of strife remained, and imperilled the salvation of their souls. To put an end to this crying evil, St. Benedict went straight to its very source. He ordained that the Abbot should be sole and absolute monarch in his little realm. All authority was to emanate from him. All officials were to receive their power from his hands, in that measure and in that degree which it might please him to determine. There could not then be two factions, since there was but one head, to which all were subject. But as a further guarantee of peace and of union, it is our Holy Father's will that the duties which, before his time, ordinarily fell to the lot of the Provost should be given to the Deans. Thus the

office, being divided among many, lessened the danger of pride in those to whom it was intrusted.

THE PROVOST'S DUTIES.—When, however, there seemed to be some necessity for the appointment of a Provost, it was requisite that there should be incontestable evidence to that effect. The community had humbly to petition for his election ; they had to show that there was some reasonable cause for instituting this official ; and the Abbot had to give his consent. After this the brethren were consulted by the Abbot, in order that, from their various opinions, he might be able to ascertain whom they wished to have raised to this important post. Then he chose that member of his community whom he thought best fitted for this trust. As to his duties, our Holy Father speaks in only very general terms, saying, “ Let him reverently do that which he shall be ordered by the Abbot.” From other sources, however, we can gather that it was his business to acquaint the Abbot with any misdemeanour or with any abuse which he himself could not well correct and amend ; to care for the general discipline of the monastery ; to take the Abbot's place and to fulfil his duties during the Abbot's absence ; to exercise a sort of general supervision of the monastic property ; in one word, to be the Abbot's right-hand man, his trusty friend, and prudent councillor. It is evident that the qualifications necessary in one who would fill this post with any degree of efficiency should be very similar to those which are requisite in the Abbot. He should be a large-hearted, clear-headed, kindly-disposed, God-fearing man, with a zeal for monastic observ-

ance ; discreet, prudent, considerate ; not morose in countenance, not anxious in mind, not precipitate in judgment, not obstinate in council. To a man of this stamp an Abbot might with all confidence intrust the government of his flock ; and the flock, under his wise government, would not miss the guiding hand of the chief pastor.

HIS PUNISHMENT.—A man of this description is hard to find ; therefore men of an inferior mould must be selected to occupy this post. Some of these, not having that virtue which is requisite to keep them steady when raised to so great an eminence above their brethren, are puffed up with pride, because of the honour which is conferred upon them. Whenever these begin to manifest the malignant spirit which is in them, and to gainsay the enactments of the Holy Rule, St. Benedict requires in the first place “that their delinquencies should be *proved* against them.” Mere denunciation will not suffice. To this there succeeds a fourfold warning. Should the warning prove unavailing, the usual course of correction is resorted to, ending at last in ignominious expulsion, when every other means has failed.

It is worthy of remark that in this passage our Holy Father speaks of the Rule as the “*Holy Rule.*” In consequence of this, some have thought that this chapter could not have been written by him, as it is not likely that one so deeply imbued with the spirit of humility would have styled any production of his *holy* ; but if we remember that he might so style his Rule, not because it was written by himself, but because there are in it holy and salutary principles,

and devout practices of asceticism which lead men to perfection, we can see at a glance that he might with all humility and propriety call his Rule the "*Holy Rule.*"

THE PROVOST IN THESE OUR DAYS. — As the Provost was the second man in the monastery, it follows that any one who holds that position, by whatever name he may be called, is the legitimate representative of St. Benedict's *Provost*. As a matter of fact, this title, in the ages which succeeded to our Holy Father's day, gave place to that of Prior in monasteries in which there was an Abbot, and to that of Sub-prior in those presided over by a Prior. At the present day, and particularly in our congregation, the Sub-prior is that which the Provost was in our Holy Father's time. To be eligible for this office, a Monk must have been at least seven years in the habit. He is not voted to it either by the community or by the council; but is nominated to it by the Prior, after the latter has heard the opinion of his council. In this particular matter, however, he is not bound to follow their advice; but may choose as his Sub-prior any Monk whom it may please him to select, even though his council may be opposed to the man of his choice. If there should happen to be any member of the general chapter residing in the monastery, the Sub-prior's place is immediately after him. He yields to him in precedence only, but not in jurisdiction; for whenever the Prior is absent it is the Sub-prior's duty to preside in his place. The extent of that jurisdiction depends upon the will of the Prior; it is far-reaching or it is limited, just as it shall please him to determine. Whenever any

faults are committed by any of the community, he has power to take notice of them and to correct them. But if they are committed in the presence of the Prior, he must not presume either to notice or to correct them ; for that would be to usurp the authority of his Superior. Though it is forbidden in our constitutions for one Monk to enter another's cell, yet the Sub-prior may enter the cells of all the community ; but without express leave from the Prior he is not allowed to examine their desks, nor anything else which is given to them for their use. If the Prior should ever be compelled by any business to be absent for a long time from his community, it is the Sub-prior who takes his place, but only if the Prior and the council shall think that it is expedient for him to do so. Nevertheless, during this time of his presidency it is not in his power either to appoint any of the community to any office, or to dismiss any of them from the office which he happens to hold. In virtue of his office the Sub-prior is a member of the council, and whenever, during the Prior's absence, any important business calls for immediate settlement, he is empowered to convene the members of it, and to take their advice on the matter which claims their attention. The precedency which, in virtue of his office, is granted to him before all except chapter men is not accorded to him outside the monastery. Among his other brethren he holds only that rank which is his from the date of his entrance into the Order. If it should ever happen that the Prior is for some fault suspended for a time from his office, the Sub-prior assumes the reins of government, pro-

vided that he has the qualifications necessary for the exercise of the functions which will then fall to his lot. Whenever an appeal is made against the Prior, it is to the Sub-prior that the sentence against him is sent. Lastly, one of the chief duties of the Sub-prior, and, perhaps, his most important one, is to go before the rest as an example of regular observance, upon which they may look as upon a model. He ought to be present at all the conventual acts, and to show in his behaviour that decorum and that religious modesty which will inspire respect into the hearts of all, and move them to imitate. He should be observant of silence ; he should be punctual ; he should be prompt in obedience. Above all things, he should carefully guard himself against that spirit of pride of which our Holy Father has so great a dread. Then he will in very truth be a Provost after the heart of our great founder, and will merit the reward which is given to the good and faithful servant in the house of God.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE PORTER OF THE MONASTERY.

THE PORTER OF THE MONASTERY.—In early times the Porter's office was one of great dignity and responsibility. Our Holy Father evidently regarded it as such, for, after treating of the appointment of the Abbot and of the Provost, he next gives us some instruction about the Porter. From this circumstance

some have thought that he who kept the gate of the monastery was third in rank among the brotherhood. We cannot, however, pretend to determine this ; but, judging from the qualities required in any one who held this office, we should say that, whatever his position may have been, he was a trustworthy man, upon whose discretion the Abbot could depend. In the first place, St. Benedict requires that he should be an elderly man, either in years or in character, "for a good understanding supplies for length of years." Consequently the Porter would generally be one of the older Monks, whose blameless life and many virtues had endeared him to his Superior, and caused him to be regarded as one from whom men of every condition and of every degree would derive naught but edification. In addition to age, or ripeness of years, it was furthermore required that he should be a wise man—that is to say, intelligent, discreet, wary, and not easily deceived. St. Benedict seems to limit the range of this wisdom to the ability to understand the wishes of the various persons who presented themselves at the monastery gate, and to give a suitable answer to their demands, either by himself replying to their questions, or by conveying to them the reply of the Abbot. This seems to require a very limited amount of brain-power, but any one who will take the trouble to question his servants concerning the answers which they are told to carry to the door will find that, easy as it may appear to be, scarcely one out of every ten can correctly transmit the message which is intrusted to him. The Porter did not live in the monastery, but

in a cell near the gate of the external enclosure, so that he might be at hand to answer every one who called. One of the reasons for which St. Benedict ordains that this official should be elderly is because if he be aged, he will not be able to go far from his post. There was usually given to him a young Religious as an assistant. Hence, whenever the great door was struck, the Porter first opened a small wicket, received the message of the stranger, and caused this at once to be conveyed to the Abbot by the youthful assistant. It was only after receiving the Abbot's reply that the gate was opened, and the stranger was admitted. If a poor man standing without cried for alms or for shelter, the Porter answered, "Thanks be to God," to signify gratitude to our Lord for thus manifesting Himself and coming to the monastery in the person of the poor. Among Benedictines this is the reply which is given whenever any one knocks at the door of a cell or of the monastery. When either those who were rich, or those who did not come to crave for assistance, but simply to visit, boldly struck upon the gate for admittance, the Porter within, as usual, first looked through his wicket to see who the new-comer might be, and "then invoked a blessing." It is the opinion of some commentators that he gave his blessing to the stranger; of others, that he asked the stranger to give him a blessing; and of others, that he gave to the stranger words of hearty welcome and of blessing.

THE PORTER'S DUTIES.—According to St. Benedict, the duties of the Porter are: humbly and reverently to receive all strangers and visitors who come

to the gate of the monastery ; to give an answer to the questions which they ask ; to announce their arrival to the Abbot, or to the persons appointed to entertain guests. From other sources, however, we find that no small part of the duty of guest-master devolved upon him. He was sometimes the cook, or the assistant cook, who laboured in the Abbot's kitchen, and looked after the external enclosure. The loaves which were prepared for distribution among the poor were given into his care, and the doling out of them by way of alms was one of his daily duties. In his keeping also were the watch-dogs of the monastery. He looked to their well-being, and gave them their food. Lastly, in those places in which it was customary to carry the keys of the monastery to the Abbot's room, when the signal for Compline had been given, it was the Porter's duty to do this ; also to take them thence on the following morning, in good time to have all the gates open when the brethren were about to go forth to their daily toil.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE MONASTERY.—The fact of having to treat of the Porter, who is stationed at the gate, doubtless inspired St. Benedict to write the concluding words of this chapter. In these he shows us the solicitude of his heart to prevent any of his children from having any occasion for passing out through that gate, for the purpose of mingling once again with the people of the world which they had forsaken. Hence no doubt it was that, in order to comply with what they knew to be his desire, they ordinarily chose a site for their monasteries in some place far removed from the habitations of men, but

yet so favourably located that all the necessaries of life might easily be procured within reach of their abode. Their first care was that there should be no dearth of water. This, if possible, was usually within the enclosure, and near the kitchen, for the convenience of those who had to cook the food of the brethren. On the land which surrounded their Monastery they grew a sufficiency of corn to supply themselves with bread. In order to grind this corn into flour, they must needs have a mill, which, like the well of water, was to be within the enclosure. But because our Holy Father has spoken of water within the precincts of the monastery, we must not therefore imagine that this mill was similar to those which in these days are built by the sides of the running streams. It is most probable that at first the monastic mill was a handmill, such as we read of in the Sacred Scripture, or a mill worked by an ass. But as time went on, and men began to flock into the monasteries, the water-mill was doubtless employed; for they were in use in the days of the Emperor Hadrian, and Vitruvius, who lived under Augustus, mentions the construction of the wheels for these machines. Under the Emperor Honorius (A.D. 399) a law was made imposing a fine on any one who should turn aside the water of the streams which were used for working these mills. Hence it is likely enough that wherever this was possible, and the number of the community was so large as to require it, the Monks constructed these water-mills within their enclosure, or at least upon their own lands.

Another requisite which was always built hard by

the monastery was the bakehouse, in which the loaves of bread were made for the use of the Monks. Also there was a garden, which supplied the vegetables, which, together with bread, formed the staple of their food. Moreover, there were exercised within the monasteries all the various crafts, which furnished the Monks with everything of which they stood in need. Their flocks of sheep provided them with wool, which weavers turned into cloth. From this cloth their tailors made their various garments. There were among the brethren shoemakers who provided them with shoes. There were masons who built for them. There were smiths who forged iron tools for them. There were carpenters who made their household furniture; so that very rarely was there any occasion for them to go beyond their own estate to procure any article of which they might stand in need. This was St. Benedict's wish, and so deeply impressed was he with the necessity for having it carried into effect, that he orders this portion of his Rule frequently to be read in the community. By this ordinance, commentators tell us that he meant not only this particular passage, but the whole Rule to be frequently read, so that no one, when corrected for transgressing any part of it, might be able to excuse his fault on the score of ignorance. Superiors have taken so great care to comply with this mandate that a portion of the Rule is read every day, either at Prime or at Compline. Thus the whole Rule is read through three times every year.

CHAPTER LXVI.

OF THE BRETHREN WHO ARE SENT ON A JOURNEY.

BEFORE THEY SET FORTH.—Although St. Benedict earnestly desired that his children should never leave their monastery, yet he could not but foresee that there would arise many circumstances which would compel them from time to time to quit their retreat, and once again to go forth into the world to mingle with their fellow-men. Therefore, after speaking of the porter who guards the monastery gate, he next instructs those who are by necessity forced to pass through it into the outer world, concerning what they are to do before they set forth upon their journey; what they are to do when they return; and, by implication, what they are to do while they are actually on their way. Some of the commentators are careful to point out to us that our Holy Father in this chapter speaks in the plural number, “of *brethren* who are sent on a journey,” to let us see that he wishes us, if possible, never to go forth alone. We find this practice in full force among all the Religious of early times; and special mention is made of it in the Rules of St. Antony, St. Macarius, St. Pachomius, St. Basil, and St. Augustine. St. Gregory the Great so strongly insisted upon it that he would not assent to the wishes of some Monks who desired to have a certain Constantine for their Abbot, because this latter had gone on a journey alone. No doubt the desire to imitate the Apostolic mode of travelling two

and two had some influence in determining, in this particular, the legislation of monastic founders ; but besides this there were others of a more utilitarian nature, which prompted them to insist upon their subjects, if possible, never journeying alone. In the first place, the presence of a fellow-Religious always helps to suppress any desire to abuse that liberty which a man enjoys when he is withdrawn from the control of Superiors ; in times of temptation it is a source of strength ; it forces upon us the observance of the laws of monastic decorum ; laughter is repressed ; levity of manner is avoided ; little presents are refused ; and a certain amount of healthy restraint is enforced. Therefore when any one was sent on a journey, in order to transact any business, there was always given to him one of his brethren, to be a companion on the way.

Before setting forth, these brothers were ordered to ask the prayers of the brethren and of the Abbot. If they were to return on that same day, they simply asked the Abbot's blessing, probably at the end of one of the canonical hours, and then requested the community to pray for them. But if they were going on a journey which would occupy some weeks or some months, they went from their places in the choir to the steps of the sanctuary, and, either kneeling or prostrate on the earth, besought the prayers of all. The Abbot then said the versicle : " O Lord, save Thy servants," &c., and the prayer : " Graciously hear our supplications, O Lord, we beseech Thee, and order the goings of Thy servants in the safe path that leadeth unto salvation in Thee, that, amidst all the

manifold changes of this life's pilgrimage, Thy shield may never cease from us : through Christ our Lord." After this or some similar prayer, of which there are many examples to be found in the pages of the various commentaries, it was usual for the Abbot to give to the travellers the kiss of peace. The brethren also embraced them, and, with the blessing of their Father Abbot and the prayers of their brethren, the wayfarers set forth upon their journey.

WHILE THEY ARE ABSENT.—While these brothers were speeding on their way to accomplish the mission upon which they had been sent, their brethren in the monastery did not forget them. At the last prayer of the Divine Office a solemn commemoration of them was made, and the protection of God invoked upon them. It is the opinion of some that this prayer was made for them only at the end of Compline, but by far the greater number of commentators think that they were prayed for at the end of each of the hours. At the present day it is the custom, on the termination of any hour after which we leave the choir, to say the short prayer, "May the divine assistance remain always with us, and with our absent brethren. Amen." It was thus that those who remained in safety at home thought of and sought help for those who were sent abroad. These latter would be exposed to see many things which might either disedify them or be perilous to their souls' purity ; they would be forced, perchance, to hear much which it would be better for them never to have heard ; nay, they might be drawn into idle converse

with men of the world, from whose words they would not derive any benefit.

Therefore in the oratory fervent prayers went up to God that their eyes might not behold vanity, that their ears might not be filled with idle words, that their lips might not speak guile. They themselves were instructed, as we saw in a preceding chapter, not to omit their accustomed exercises of piety. They were to recite the Divine Office at the appointed times, to apply to devout meditation, and to guard themselves against the dangers which might threaten their souls from that which they might either see or hear on the way.

WHEN THEY RETURN.—From the wording of the Rule we may conclude that the travellers would so time their return as to arrive at the monastery during the day (“*ipso die quo redeunt*”), or at least before the hour for Compline, in order that the prayers for those who had come back from a journey might be said over them. If they could not do this, Hilde-
mar informs us that it was the custom of the Monks in his country to retire to some dependency of the monastery, or to the cell at the monastery gate, and there await the next day, so as to enter “during the day.”

During each of the hours recited in choir on that day, or most likely at the end of each of them, they went into the middle of the choir, and, prostrating themselves upon the earth, begged the prayers of their brethren, that through these Almighty God might pardon them the faults which during their travels they might have committed by seeing, or by

hearing, or by speaking. In answer to their humble petition, Smaragdus tells us that in his day the following prayer was said: "O Almighty God, we beseech Thee mercifully to pardon these Thy servants whom Thou hast brought back to us safe from the perils of their journey, and through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord to blot out the faults of which through human frailty they may have been guilty."

After this they returned to the company of their brethren. Naturally enough, these latter would be eager to hear all their adventures; but there was upon them a most stringent prohibition, in virtue of which they were not suffered to tell them anything which might scandalise them, or disturb their peace of mind, or call back memories which it were best to keep at a distance. There was nothing, however, to prevent them from speaking of the religious and edifying incidents which had befallen them on their journey. In our congregation, those who are sent on journeys present themselves before the Prior, and, kneeling if juniors, or bowing profoundly if seniors, ask his blessing. On returning, the same ceremony is observed, and an exact account is rendered of all the expenses incurred during their absence.

CHAPTER LXVII.

IF A BROTHER IS ORDERED TO DO IMPOSSIBILITIES.

IMPOSSIBLE COMMANDS.—St. Benedict here makes a distinction between commands which are simply

hard or *grave*, and commands which are *impossible*. In order to understand in what sense he uses the term "impossible," we must see in how many ways anything may be said to be impossible. "There are four ways," says St. Ambrose, "in which anything may be said to be impossible: first, it may be *naturally* impossible; thus it is naturally impossible for a man to walk upon water: secondly, a thing may be impossible to one man, owing to some infirmity under which he is labouring, and yet not be impossible to another; thus it is impossible for a blind man to read the printed pages of a book: thirdly, ignorance or want of skill may in like manner make something impossible for one which is not impossible for another; thus it is impossible for an uneducated man to interpret the classics, or to explain philosophical questions, or to deliver a speech upon some abstruse point of theology: fourthly, in consequence of some immutably fixed resolve, it may be impossible for one man to perform an action which another will do without the slightest scruple; thus, for one who is bound by vow not to eat meat, or to be obedient to Superiors, or to keep chastity, it is impossible to do any action or to assent to any thought or to any desire which would cause him to break his vow; whereas one who is not under the bond of a vow might do that which, in the sense just explained, it would be impossible for the other to do.

It is evident that this last kind of impossibility is the only one which a Monk can never even attempt to perform. No Superior has any right to order that which is sinful, and consequently must never be

obeyed, if, to suppose an impossible case, he were ever to order any of his subjects to do an action which is forbidden by the law of God.

In all the other *impossibilities*, that which our Holy Father requires from his children is a readiness *to attempt* their accomplishment, and not their actual accomplishment itself; or, as it is sometimes put, he desires his children to fulfil these impossible commands, not in *effect*, but in *affection*. Cassian gives many instances of these impossible commands, such, for example, as that imposed upon the Abbot John in the beginning of his religious life. A huge rock was lying in the way; the Superior ordered him to roll it aside: without a moment's hesitation, he applied his shoulder to it with all his strength, and endeavoured to move it. On another occasion, his Abbot thrust a withered branch into the ground, and ordered him to water it. This he continued to do every day for the space of two years, carrying for a distance of two miles the water which he was told to pour upon it.

HARD COMMANDS.—Those are considered to be *hard* commands which are so difficult as to be capable of accomplishment only after the greatest labour in the case of manual work, or the greatest self-denial in the case of orders which affect the powers of the soul.

With regard both to commands which are hard, and to those which are impossible, our Holy Father's injunctions are, in the first place, that we should receive them without forming any judgment whether they are of the one or of the other kind. If we reflect that we are obeying God, and that by so doing we are

preparing for ourselves a heavenly reward, we shall not stay to consider the nature of the mandate which is imposed upon us. Our chief anxiety will be to have something, no matter how difficult it may be, to perform through motives of this excellent virtue. We shall not think of the impossibility of effecting that which is ordered, nor of the folly of him who has issued this mandate ; but, out of reverence for Him Whom we behold in our Superior, we shall without hesitation undertake whatever it shall please him to ordain.

In the next place, he wishes us not only to receive these commands, but also to receive them with mildness and obedience. By these words he gives us to understand that we are to show no sign of unwillingness or of displeasure in the expression of our countenance, and to restrain our lips from uttering any words of refusal.

REPRESENTATIONS TO SUPERIORS. — But although St. Benedict orders us to receive with mildness, and with an obedient spirit, the orders of our Superiors, he does not prevent us from representing to them our inability to carry these orders into effect, provided that our representation is accompanied by the following conditions.

First, we must show no signs of impatience at that which has been ordered ; but all humility, both in words and in demeanour. Secondly, we must choose a suitable time and place in which to make our representation ; that is to say, it must be made secretly, and not openly before the community. Thirdly, it must not be made in a proud and haughty manner,

as if rejecting or spurning the command. Fourthly, it must not be made in the spirit of resistance to authority. Fifthly, it must not be made in a contradictory manner, proclaiming, for instance, that we will not do that which has been ordered. Should the Prior—by whom is meant the Superior—persist in his order even after our representation, then our only course is to do our best, and try to carry out his desire. Such obedience as this is expedient for us, because it brings our will to submit in difficult matters, and this self-denial is always conducive to our eternal welfare.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THAT NO ONE SHOULD DEFEND ANOTHER IN THE MONASTERY.

WHAT IS ALLOWED.—It may happen from time to time that there is in the monastery some Monk whose character is quite misunderstood, both by his immediate Superior and by the Abbot. Whatever he does is seen by them through a false medium, and is therefore distorted. His motives are suspected; his actions are misconstrued. He is regarded as a discontented, rebellious subject, and, in consequence of this, very frequently falls under their censure. Others, who are not brought into such intimate contact with him as his Superiors are, may see where the mistake lies; those also who have his confidence are perfectly well aware that he is not that which he is suspected to be. Are

they, then, prohibited, in consequence of this chapter, from endeavouring to set matters right between him and his Superiors? If they interfere in his case, or in the case of some other, whom, in consequence of severe correction, they perceive to be utterly dejected and discouraged, would they be considered to be *upholding* or to be *defending* another, and, therefore, to be violating this particular law of St. Benedict's? Most certainly not. Far from breaking this enactment of the Rule, they would be conforming their conduct with that spirit of charity which pervades its legislation, and performing a praiseworthy action which merits an eternal reward. They must be careful, however, to make their suggestions to the Superior in a becoming manner. They must choose an opportune occasion for performing their mission of charity; they must select a private place; they must humbly ask leave to speak to the Superior upon a delicate subject; then they must reverently and humbly endeavour to point out in what the mistake consists, and to suggest a way in which it may be corrected. If upon all such occasions subjects will act in this way with their Superiors, instead of meriting reproof, they will deserve their praise and their sincerest thanks.

WHAT IS FORBIDDEN. — Again, it may happen that there is in the monastery some particular Monk who has deservedly fallen under the displeasure of his Superior, and who has been corrected for his faults. The present chapter forbids any one in the monastery either to uphold him in public, or to give him countenance by private sympathy. No one must

presume to remark upon the punishment ; to say that it is undeserved ; that it is excessive ; that it is dictated by passion, by jealousy, by spite ; nor must any one dare to maintain that what the culprit has done is not a fault, or that if it is, it is justified by the circumstances of the case. By acting thus, a Religious falls under the censure of our Holy Father ; for he does that which is forbidden by this chapter.

WHY IT IS FORBIDDEN.—The reason which St. Benedict assigns for prohibiting all these manifestations of partisanship is “because exceeding great occasion of scandals may thence arise.” One of the greatest of these scandals is the private, particular friendship which usually springs up between the Monk who defends and the culprit who is defended. Out of this there arise familiarities, secret meetings, conversations, detractions of Superiors, criticisms of their conduct, murmurings, discontent, rebellion. Besides these, the Monk who has sinned is confirmed in his sin ; the other who defends him sins both against his own soul, and against that of him whom he causes to persevere in his sin ; the authority of the Superior is shaken ; the respect due to him is diminished ; and the constancy of his soul in attacking and in fighting against abuses is somewhat relaxed. To all these we may add obstinacy in error, and sometimes the ruin of the immortal soul. It is for these reasons that our Holy Father forbids one Monk to uphold or to defend another in the monastery, and orders a more severe punishment than is usually assigned for a fault to be inflicted upon him who dares to transgress his mandate.

CHAPTER LXIX.

THAT NO ONE PRESUME TO STRIKE OR
EXCOMMUNICATE ANOTHER.

USURPATION OF AUTHORITY.—It is not at all unlikely that the legislation of the seventieth chapter, in which the juniors are ordered to obey their seniors, necessitated the provisions which are made in this. For in consequence of that chapter, a senior might thus reason with himself: “If I have a right to command and to reprehend those who are my juniors in the habit, I ought also to have the right to chastise and to excommunicate them, if they refuse me that obedience which the Rule orders them to pay.” Our Holy Father, however, is careful to point out to all who feel inclined to arrogate to themselves this plenitude of power, which is vested in the Abbot only, and which may by him be delegated unto others, that authority to command and to reprehend does not necessarily imply authority also to correct by stripes and by excommunication.

PREVENTION OF THIS USURPATION.—Therefore in order to prevent any usurpation of this authority on the part of those who, by reason of their seniority in religion, might consider that this also was due unto them, he ordains that only the Abbot, and those unto whom the Abbot may think fit to grant this power, shall have authority to correct with the rod and with the sword of excommunication. This excommunication was not ecclesiastical, but only that which

separated offenders against monastic discipline from the company of their brethren, and from the common table. With respect to the use of the rod, it is likely that the Abbot, in person, rarely inflicted this punishment, but ordinarily left it to be administered by the hands of one of his officials. Those to whom he committed this power are generally supposed to have been the Prior, the Sub-prior, and the Deans.

REPREHENSION FOR FAULTS.—After making this limitation of authority, our Holy Father ordains that “those who are guilty of any faults”—by which we may understand any faults of the kind just mentioned, or any faults of any other kind—“must be reprehended in the presence of all.” Are we, then, from this passage to conclude that the private reprehensions, of which we have read in preceding chapters, are to be dispensed with? No; all that is meant by this clause is that if the faults are committed publicly, they must be publicly reprehended; if privately, then they must be privately reprehended. Hence it is that some commentators thus read the passage in question: *Peccantes autem coram omnibus arguantur*—“Let those who (thus) offend before all be reprehended.”

CORRECTION OF CHILDREN.—The limitation of authority for the indiscriminate use of the rod did not include the children who had been consecrated to the service of God in the monastery. Until their fifteenth year these might be corrected and whipped by any of the Monks who detected them in the commission of any fault. But yet the merciful heart of St. Benedict protects these little ones from being

whipped with too heavy a hand, by ordaining that any one who shall do this in a cruel and merciless way shall himself be subjected to punishment. It is probable enough that though all the Monks had authority to reprehend these children, yet only the Monk under whose care they were placed had power to inflict the penalty of the rod. Let us hope that the fear which his birch inspired made the actual use of it a matter of comparatively rare occurrence.

CHAPTER LXX.

MUTUAL OBEDIENCE.

OBEDIENCE TO ONE ANOTHER.—The sum-total of all the virtues which are exercised in religious life may be said to be comprised in the virtue of obedience. It is the holocaust by which a man through love of God sacrifices his will; and, in giving up that, he offers up his whole being. With good reason, therefore, does St. Benedict say that it is the path by which we are to go unto God. Hence the practice of this virtue ought to be most dear to us. In order to enable us never to lose any opportunity of practising it, our Holy Father desires us to be obedient not only to the Abbot and to our immediate Superiors, but also to one another. This latter obedience is only of counsel, and not of precept, like the former. Therefore any one who does not practise it is not

guilty of sin. This mutual obedience is, of course, chiefly from the junior to his senior, but does not exclude the obedience of the senior to the junior. But how, it may be asked, can a Monk find an occasion on which to exercise this obedience? The duties of obedience to Rule so fill up the day, that chances for obedience to one another must be rare indeed. Hildemar answers this difficulty by saying that he who prepares food in the kitchen, to ministers guests, or tends the sick, is obedient to all : for he serves all. He who, though unable actually to obey others, yet is willing to do so, is obedient to them. He who is engaged in the same obedience in which others are engaged may be obedient to them by carrying out their wishes instead of his own. Thus those who are all day occupied in yielding obedience to the Rule may yet be obedient in the way indicated by St. Benedict in this chapter.

MOTIVES FOR THIS OBEDIENCE.—There are three motives which ought to urge us to be eager in the practice of mutual obedience. First, that we may thereby imitate our Divine Lord, Who obeyed not only His Holy Mother and St. Joseph, but also those who apprehended Him, reviled Him, and put Him to death. Secondly, to hold in check our own self-will, from which all our ills proceed. Thirdly, not to miss any occasion of advancing in perfection, and of acquiring the virtues in which perfection consists. Although this obedience to one another is a matter only of counsel, yet our Holy Father wishes that those who will not follow it, or who, out of a spirit of contradiction and of contention, refuse to obey their brethren,

should be rebuked for their churlishness and lack of humility.

CONDUCT WHEN REBUKED.—It may happen that the brother who has asked one of his juniors to do some act for him, and who has been refused by him, will feel somewhat nettled at his want of charity, and will show the irritation, or even the righteous anger, which that refusal naturally calls forth. Our Holy Father, in these circumstances, orders the offender at once to prostrate at the feet of him whom he has thus angered, and to remain in that posture till the humility and the repentance which it indicates have appeased the wrath of him whom he has refused to obey. Also whenever any one is reprehended by the Abbot, or by any of the seniors, he must at once either prostrate, or, as is the custom in some monasteries, fall upon his knees, and thus receive the reproof which he has merited by his misconduct. By making the sign of the Cross over the culprit, the offended person signifies both the cessation of his displeasure and the pardon which he accords.

CHAPTER LXXI.

RELIGIOUS ZEAL.

EVIL ZEAL.—By zeal we mean a passionate ardour for anything, which ardour may be for that which is good, and then the zeal with which we are carried towards it is itself good ; or for evil, and then the

zeal itself is evil. Of this latter kind of zeal St. James says : " If you have a bitter zeal, glory not ; for this is not wisdom descending from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envy and contention are, there are inconstancy and every evil work."¹ It is not at all impossible that such a zeal as this should take possession of the heart of a man who has dedicated himself to the service of God. If it *does* lay hold of him, it does not usually cause him to manifest an ardour for that which is unmistakably evil, but for that which is apparently good, or which would be good under certain conditions and in other circumstances. Suffering himself to be deluded by this mask of goodness, the poor dupe discovers, perhaps, only when it is too late, that his zeal has separated him from God, and led him to the brink of hell. Look, for instance, at the Religious who allows himself to scan with an unfavourable eye the actions of Superiors, and the policy by which they are apparently guided. He criticises them, he condemns them, he attributes to them low unspiritual motives, he ridicules them, he says smart things about them. He sighs for abler men to take the lead in his monastery, or his congregation, or his Order. He paints before his imagination bright pictures of what might be. He sighs and laments over that which is. He is discontented, he gives expression to it, he becomes cynical. All this he imagines to be quite right, because he aims, as he thinks, at better things. He has zeal, but not according to knowledge. He separates from God not only himself, but others, whose

¹ Chap. ii. 14, 15.

respect for authority he diminishes, whose obedience he weakens, whose hearts he fills with discontent, and their wills with revolt against "the powers that be." Unhappy the Religious who thus allows the very life of his state to be so grievously wounded. Wretched the monastery, or the congregation, or the Order, of which the very foundations are undermined by the evil zeal of men in whose hearts the devil has taken up his abode.

GOOD ZEAL.—There is, however, a zeal which is good, consisting in an intense ardour to root out from the heart all faults, defects, vices, and, as far as it lies in the power of each, to help others to perform the like work of perfection in their own souls. To the exercise of this zeal our Holy Father exhorts us, and in pointing out the various ways in which it may be put in practice, he gives us a short summary of the lessons which he has taught us in the Rule.

In the first place, then, our good zeal must manifest itself in a readiness and in a desire to be beforehand with one another in showing that reverence, that respect, and that considerate kindness which always mark the conduct of a man whose heart is at peace with God, in harmony with his fellow-men, and in submission to the will of his Superiors.

In the next place, it must appear in an earnest endeavour to fulfil that Apostolic precept, by which we are ordered "to bear one another's burdens." Now, we are all imperfect both in body and in mind, and the imperfections of the one and of the other cannot fail to obtrude themselves upon the notice of even our most indulgent friends. Some are slow of

intelligence, limited in capacity, with a very slender stock of ideas and of views, with little power of conversation, with low aims and an exceedingly prosaic temper of mind. Others are quick-witted, they are brimful of talent, they have a rich flow of ideas, they have broad views and a facility of expression to set them out clearly before the minds of other men, their temperament is highly strung, fervid, imaginative, poetic. They see everything in its brightest colours, they are sanguine, full of hope and of enthusiasm. It is easy to conceive what a source of annoyance each of these classes of men will be to the other. Then there are others who are uncultured in manner, who are rough, rude, uncouth, abrupt in speech, and utterly regardless of all those delicate refinements of behaviour which mark every movement of the thoroughly well-bred man. Think what a source of nervous irritation such as these will be to the polished gentleman who has moved in good society, and who would feel as great a shock at the transgressions of any of its canons of good taste as a religiously-minded man would experience on hearing an unseemly word. Yet men of all these various characteristics, and who, in addition to these, may be afflicted with many bodily infirmities, are to be met with in religious life. They must all live together, they must meet with one another, they must sit together, they must converse. Nothing else will keep alive among them the spirit of fraternal charity than the fixed determination to practise that maxim of our Holy Father, "Patiently to bear with one another's infirmities, whether these are infirmities of mind or infirmities of body."

One of the most efficacious means for infusing into all hearts this admirable spirit of Christian forbearance is the continual practice of that mutual obedience which, in the preceding chapter, our Holy Father so earnestly recommends. This is the third way in which good zeal manifests its presence in the soul. That which causes annoyance and irritation, which is the fruitful source of uncharitableness and of all the misery which men have to endure from one another, is the unwillingness of one man to submit his will and his judgment to the will and the judgment of another. Take away this unwillingness, and all friction ceases, and consequently all irritation and annoyance. Therefore, if Religious be eager to vie with one another in obedience ; if the contest among them be not for supremacy, but for the lowest place ; if it be the aim of each to satisfy and to please his neighbour, then all will live together in harmony, and each monastery will be in very truth " a house of God."

The fourth way in which good zeal employs its energy is in crushing selfish views and selfish motives out of the heart. The implement by which any one will be most effectually aided in the accomplishment of this difficult task is the principle of always setting the common weal before his own private advantage. " Let no one," says St. Benedict, " follow that which he thinketh profitable to himself, but rather that which is profitable to another." In the first place, let him not seek his own convenience in his dealing with his brethren, but rather their convenience. This will furnish him with innumerable occasions of mortifying his will, his judgments, his tastes ; of obeying the

wishes of others rather than his own; of humbling himself; of daily and hourly feeling the smart of the thorns and the torture of the nails by which he is fastened to the Cross of Christ. Thus it will enable him to acquire that divine charity "which seeketh not her own." In the next place, let him not seek his own advantage with respect to the Order of which he is a member, but the well-being and the advancement of that body to which he has the honour to belong. With regard to his place of residence, let him be content to abide wheresoever he may most materially further its interests; with regard to his occupations, let him apply himself with all the energy of which he is master to quit himself well of those which Superiors shall select for him; with regard to studies, let him pursue those which will be of most use to his Order. In all things let him put self in the background, and his duty to the Order in the foremost place, both in his esteem and in his affections.

The exercise of fraternal charity constitutes the fourth way in which good zeal manifests itself. This charity is not that merely natural love of friendship which so often springs up among persons who are thrown into close and intimate companionship with one another. Nor is it that disorderly, indiscreet, passionate love which is based upon similarity of tastes, or community of sentiments, or beauty of form. It is rather that pure, chaste love of one another which is inspired by true merit, by mutual esteem, by the love of God, and by the remembrance that we are all the adopted children of God, and brothers in Christ Jesus.

The fifth and the sixth way in which this good zeal manifests itself are, first, by a filial fear of God, Whom the Religious dreads to offend, not because He is almighty in power and infinite in justice, and therefore can punish with an arm of direful weight, but because He is a good Father and merciful benefactor, Whose innumerable kindnesses have bound his heart to Him as with the links of a golden chain. Secondly, a childlike love of the Abbot, who in the monastery holds the place of Christ, and must therefore be treated with all that honour, respect, and love which are due to one who holds so exalted an office, so surpassing a dignity.

Lastly, good zeal is shown by making Jesus Christ first, last, and above everything else, King, Lord, and Master of the heart. He who shall endeavour to exercise the ardour of his affection for God in all these various ways will without doubt be brought by the faithful Master Whom he serves to that life everlasting which is to crown all those who live and work only for God.

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE HIGHEST PERFECTION NOT CONTAINED IN THE RULE.

THE BEGINNING OF RELIGIOUS LIFE.—The Rule of our Holy Father ends with the preceding chapter. This present chapter, therefore, may be considered to be but the epilogue to all that has gone before. In

the prologue, our great legislator told us that his purpose in drawing up this code of laws was to establish a school of the service of God. He hoped that in so doing he would ordain nothing that was either too rigorous or too burdensome. Having come to the end of his Rule, and once again casting a rapid glance at his various enactments, he calls them "a mere beginning of religious life." For if we compare that which he has ordained with the stern, austere legislation of others, who in point of penitential rigour went far beyond that which he has imposed upon his children, we may with truth admit that, when set beside the laws which they enforced, his Rule is mildness itself. In this respect only can his legislation be said to fall beneath theirs. It is the deep humility of this illustrious Saint which causes him thus to speak of his Rule. He looked at the perfection which it teaches with the eyes of one illuminated by the light of the Holy Ghost, and saw towering over the height which he proposes to us other heights stretching far away into the realms of sanctity, attainable only by those who are favoured with exceptional graces, and destined to execute exceptional deeds. To those who embrace his institute he can promise at least that *beginning* of religious perfection which he calls but a certain measure of uprightness of manners, consisting in the careful shunning of all vice, the fear, the love, the worship of God, and in a certain orderly disciplined method of life.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURE, — Should any of his children, however, desire to have a code of laws which will lead him to the perfection of holy living, he will

find this, first of all, in the pages of the Sacred Scripture. These writings, inspired by the Spirit of Truth, teach us that, after the knowledge of God, the groundwork of all spirituality is the reverential fear of that Being of infinite sanctity. Out of this fear, there springs deep sorrow for having offended so excellent a Father. Sorrow causes us to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh. This stripping of ourselves of all that is most pleasing to the natural man generates in our hearts deep humility. In consequence of this we apply the curb of mortification to our will, and by so doing we expel from our hearts all vices, and thus acquire that purity in which, when combined with the love of God and with humility, perfection consists.

THE PRECEPTS OF THE FATHERS.—In the next place, St. Benedict refers his children to the teaching of the great Fathers, who are the chief exponents of the Holy Scriptures. In his day those among them whose explanations of the [sacred text were held in the highest repute were St. Cyprian, St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. John Chrysostom, St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Ambrose, St. Theophilus of Alexandria, St. Jerome, St. Prosper, and St. Leo the Great.

THE CONFERENCES.—These Conferences, twenty-four in number, were written by Cassian at the request of many Bishops and of many holy Religious. They are the result of the familiar conversations concerning spiritual matters, and especially concerning matters pertaining to the religious life, which that illustrious man and his colleague Genadius had held with the more celebrated Religious and Hermits who dwelt in

different parts of the Egyptian deserts. The first ten took place in the desert of Scetis, and were dedicated by the author to the Bishops Leontius and Helladius. The next seven were held in the Thebaid, and were dedicated to Honoratus and to Eucherius, who were either Bishops or Abbots. The remaining seven are the result of conferences with the Monks in different parts of Egypt, and were dedicated to Jovinianus, Minervius, Leontius, and Theodorus, who were themselves either Monks or Abbots ruling over monasteries. In these precious treatises are contained all the teachings of the greatest Saints of the early Church, their advice concerning well-nigh every point of the spiritual life, and the various rules which they give for leading the soul to the closest possible union with God.

THE INSTITUTES OF THE FATHERS.—This work also was written by Cassian about the year of our Lord 417 or 418, and was regarded by its author as a continuous treatise consisting of twelve books, which teach by precept and by example the perfection of the monastic life. Genadius, however, divides it into three parts, of which only the fourth book treats expressly of that which gives the title to the whole work, *De Institutis Cœnobitarum*. The first three books discuss the habit of the Monk, the canonical mode of prayer used in monasteries, and the Psalms which are employed in it. The remaining eight are engaged in dealing with the nature of the principal vices, with the remedies which must be employed for their expulsion from the soul, and for the healing of the wounds which they have inflicted upon it.

THE LIVES OF THE FATHERS.—This is a work

which contains the lives of the early Saints, the Hermits, and the Martyrs, written partly in Greek and partly in Latin by a variety of authors. It consists of ten books, which are full of most interesting matter, well adapted to instruct, to edify, and to inflame the soul with the divine ardour which filled the hearts of these spiritual giants, who so valiantly and so unceasingly made war upon the enemies of our salvation.

OUR HOLY FATHER BASIL.—St. Basil, Bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, among many other works, wrote what we might call three books of Rules: (1) *Regulæ Breviores*; (2) those same Rules more amply developed; (3) a work embracing both the former. From the fact that St. Benedict calls him “our Holy Father Basil,” some have thought that he must have followed these Rules, and have regarded the Saint as his Father in the same sense in which we call St. Benedict our Father. Such, however, is not the case. St. Basil is called by St. Benedict “our Holy Father” simply as a title of honour, which it was customary for men in those times to give to those who either in age or in merit had preceded them. Also it was a title which used to be prefixed to books written by Saints, and especially by Saints who had followed the monastic profession. This may be seen in the works of St. Basil, St. John Climacus, St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, and of many others. In the Greek Martyrology our own Holy Father is so styled. Therefore, by writing of St. Basil as “our Holy Father,” St. Benedict was simply giving him a title of honour, which did not imply that he acknowledged him as his Father in the monastic life, except indeed

in a very general sort of way, inasmuch as he was a predecessor in religion, and a writer of great authority upon matters pertaining to the spiritual life.

CONCLUDING WORDS OF THE RULE.—In some editions of the Rule the present chapter ends with these words: “Facientibus hæc regna patebunt superna. Amen” (“The kingdom of heaven shall be thrown open to those who accomplish these precepts”). They are not, however, to be found in the older Cassinese manuscripts, nor in that of St. Faro. They are wanting, also, in the editions of the Rule by Smaragdus, by St. Dunstan, and in some ancient Codices published at Cologne and at Paris. It is evident, also, that they were not to be found in the edition used by Hildemar, for his commentary ends thus: “*Explicit traditio quam Hildemarus Monachus exposuit super Regulam S. Benedicti, et tradidit discipulis. Facientibus hæc regna patebunt superna. Amen.*” This proves that these last words were not in the text which he used for his commentary. He may have read them in other manuscripts, and as they were found in his commentary, which was held in great repute, they may thus have made their way into the text of the Rule. It is thus that Dom Calmet explains their presence in some of its various editions.

Laus Deo semper.

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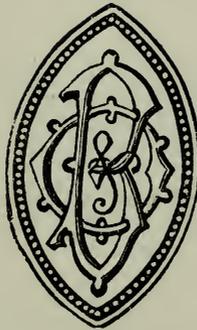
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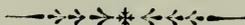
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