

as well can be. May we soon be in a position to go on with what has been so well commenced!

The arch openings into nave and choir and aisle will be temporarily closed, and, till the choir is erected, the transepts will be fitted up with stalls and benches arranged stall-wise for the accommodation of the community and school. The Altar of the Blessed Sacrament will serve as the temporary High Altar, and the north transept as the Sanctuary, till the choir is ready for use.

The organ gallery will stand in the south transept, which is, at our time of writing, the most advanced portion of the Church. As there are no windows opening into the tower, as was once proposed, the triforium arcade is continued with wonderfully successful effect along the southern wall; above it an arcade of five arches carries the eye to the apex of the groined roof.

Our readers will not need to be told that what has been done has been well done, and more than realizes the expectations that were long ago raised by the taste and talent of our worthy architects,, Messrs. Dunn and Hansom.

THE MONKS OF OLD.

[This article, by a former student of St. Gregory's, Mr. Joseph T. Harting, appeared forty years ago in "The Catholic Magazine" (May, 1841, p. 257.) So many years having elapsed since its publication, it will probably be new to the majority of readers; and as the subject is one of much interest, the Editor has obtained the Author's permission to reprint it. In subsequent numbers it is proposed to re-produce other articles, by the same writer, of a series of which this is the first. Amongst these may be cited:—

"Eadmer, the Monk and Historian."

"A Memoir of William Selling, Prior of Christchurch, Canterbury."

"The Last Abbot and Monks of Faversham," and

"A Glance at Monasteries distinguished in the Earlier Mediæval Period as Places of Education."—Ed.]

"Me quidem non fugit, vulgo credi, optimarum artium studia media ætate fuisse sepulta; nihilo tamen secius res est extra omnem controversiam posita, per plura sæcula literas, alibi fere exterminatas in monasteriis asylum invenisse, atque in illis bonas artes excultas fuisse."—Gerhardus Tychoen, *Testamen de variis codicum Hebraicorum veteris Testamenti MSS. generibus*, p. 28, 8vo, 1772.

"Early and late have I kept vigil here :

And I have seen the moonlight shadows trace

Dim glories on the missals blue and gold,

The work of my monastic sires, that told

Of quiet ages men call dark and drear ;

For faith's soft light is darkness to the world."

FREDERICK W. FABER.

“THE sensible reader,” observes the learned Fleury, “cannot be too much upon his guard against the prejudices of the Protestants and of some libertine Catholics, with relation to the monastic profession. With these people, the very name of monk is thought a sufficient cause to depress the man who bears it, and to account him void of all good qualities. In like manner, among the ancient Pagans, the bare name of Christian stripped the man of all his virtues. Such an one, said they, is an honest man, it is a pity that he is a Christian. We form to ourselves a general notion of a monk, as of a man ignorant, credulous, superstitious, self-interested, and hypocritical; and upon this false idea we pass a rash judgment on the greatest men; we disdain to read their lives and their books, and we give a malicious turn to their most commendable actions. St. Gregory was an illustrious Pope; but he was a monk. They whom he first sent to England to preach the faith to that nation, were Apostolical men; but, alas, they were monks. You have seen in this history their conduct and their doctrine: judge for yourselves what opinion you ought to have of them. Remember what hath been set before you concerning St. Anthony and the monks of Egypt. Remember that St. Basil and St. Chrysostom recommended and practised the monastic life, and think whether they were weak and silly creatures. I know that in all times there have been bad monks as well as other bad Christians. It is the imperfection of humanity, and not of the profession. God also from time to time raised up great men to retrieve and raise the monastic state, as in the ninth century a St. Benedictus, and in the tenth the first abbots of Clugni. It is from this pious congregation that came forth the brightest lights of the Church for the space of two hundred years; it was there that piety and literature flourished. If they were not altogether such as they had been five hundred years before; if these honest monks did not speak Latin as well as St. Cyprian and St. Jerome; if they did not reason as accurately and closely as St. Augustine—it was not because they were monks—it was because they lived in the tenth century. But show me other men of the same age who surpassed them?”

I account monasteries to have been one of the principal means of which Providence made use, to preserve religion alive in those miserable times.”¹ They were, indeed, the Oases of the desert; the single green spots in the midst of general aridity. Within their walls, partially held sacred from invasion, the lamp of learning was preserved from extinction; and, although the fierceness of war

¹ Fleury, apud Jortin, “Remarks on Ecclesiastical History,” vol. v., pp. 155-58.

or the rage of conquest occasionally interposed to check the radiations of its benign light, it did not cease to burn within the hallowed precincts of the cloister; and, on the subsidence of tumult, shone forth anew with redoubled lustre. It is worthy of remark, that during the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, scarce an individual in Italy, France, Britain, or Spain, in a word, within the pale of the Western Church, attained any celebrity as an author, who had not been brought up, or educated in a monastery. Hence it happened, that the countries which possessed the greatest number of these establishments, abounded most in learned men; in which respect Britain was so singularly favoured, that, throughout a long series of years, there did not exist, in the western world, a better or more learned body of men than the British monks. While Italy remained bowed down under the barbarous oppression of Byzantium, the light of knowledge had found its refuge in the cloisters of Ireland and Scotland: and no sooner had the Saxons in England received the first rudiments of knowledge along with their Christianity, than they at once carried all branches of science to a height of perfection, at that time altogether unrivalled among the nations of the west.¹ "We must not forget," says Muratori, "the praise of Britain, Scotland, and Ireland, which, in the study of the liberal arts, surpassed all other nations of the west in those times; nor omit to record the diligence of the monks of those countries, who roused and maintained the glory of letters, which everywhere else was languishing or fallen."

With Theodore of Greece, and Adrian of Africa, classical literature, in the full extent to which it was then cultivated, was introduced into England; and we have the high authority of Dr. Grundtvig for adding, from the beginning of the eighth century to the end of the eleventh, she appears—not even excluding a comparison with the eastern empire—to have been the most truly civilized country on the globe. It was here that a whole nation listened to the songs of Caedmon² and of Alcuin, in their mother-tongue; while in France and Italy, nothing was heard but a jargon of barbarous sounds. It was here that, in the eighth century Bede and Alcuin³ shed a lustre, by their classical attainments,

¹ "Lectures on the History of Literature—Ancient and Modern." From the German of Frederick Schlegel, vol. i., p. 228, 8vo. Edinburgh, 1818.

² Caedmon, a monk of Whitby, devoted his simple music to sacred subjects, and in particular to a paraphrase of the historical books of Scripture, of which an excellent English version has been given by Mr. Thorpe. He died A.D. 680.

³ M. Guizot singles out Alcuin as a fair sample of the literary character of his age, and goes into a somewhat minute dissection of his epistolary correspondence

over the whole of Europe; and it was from hence that Charlemagne, the sovereign of the greater portion of the western world, was compelled to seek for an instructor. But what is far more memorable and important in its consequences, it was Anglo-Saxon missionaries who carried Christianity to Germany and the north of Europe—missionaries from a country which, having a literature of its own, in a language akin to that of Germany and Scandinavia, made that literature the example, and that school the pattern, of all the early literary attempts of those parts of the world. Even in Denmark, notwithstanding the gospel was first preached there as early as the beginning of the ninth century, it is clear, that it was only when a close connection with England took place under Canute, that Christianity began generally and publicly to exert those humanizing powers which it has shed wherever it has been duly planted: and equally clear it is, that the literature of Iceland, which principally flourished during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is a pupil of the Anglo-Saxon School.²

“Les lettres sont toujours maintenues depuis dans l’Angleterre,” says Mabillon, “comme en font foy Ingulfe abbé, Guillaume de Malmesbury, Mathieu Paris, et tant d’autres écrivains de nôtre Ordre, qui y ont fleury depuis l’onzième siècle. Les moines sont presque les seuls auxquels on est redevable de l’histoire de ce royaume, sans parler des autres païs.”³

II. To the monks we are indebted for whatever charms and in order to show how respectable its pretensions were. We may gather the substance of what is spread over several pages from the interesting summary with which M. Guizot takes his leave of our distinguished countryman. “Alcuin est théologien de profession; l’atmosphère où il vit, où vit le public auquel il s’adresse, est essentiellement théologique: et pourtant l’esprit théologique ne règne point seul en lui; c’est aussi vers la philosophie, vers la littérature ancienne que tendent ses travaux et ses pensées; c’est là ce qu’il se plaît aussi à étudier, à enseigner, ce qu’il voudrait faire revivre. Saint Jérôme et Saint Augustin lui sont très familiers; mais Pythagore, Aristote, Aristippe, Diogène, Platon, Homère, Virgile, Sénèque, Pline, reviennent aussi dans sa mémoire. La plupart de ses écrits sont théologiques; mais les mathématiques, l’astronomie, la dialectique, la rhétorique, le préoccupent habituellement. C’est un moine, un diacre, la lumière de l’église contemporaine; mais c’est en même temps un érudit, un lettré classique. En lui commence enfin l’alliance de ces deux élémens dont l’esprit moderne a si long-temps porté l’incohérente empreinte, l’antiquité et l’Eglise, l’admiration, le goût, dirai-je le regret de la littérature païenne, et la sincérité de la foi chrétienne, l’ardeur à sonder ses mystères et défendre son pouvoir.”—“Histoire de la Civilisation en France,” tome ii. pp. 384-5. Paris, 1829-32.

² See a “Prospectus for Publication of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts,” issued by Dr. Grundtvig, of Copenhagen, in 1830, pp. 4, 5.

³ “Traité des Etudes Monastiques,” p. 134, 4to Paris, 1691.

instructs us in the literary labours of Greece and Rome. In the cloisters, to preserve the writings of the ancient authors was not barely considered as a matter of duty, but formed the most favourite exercise of monastic skill.¹ The monastic institutions seemed as if framed for the special purpose of transmitting the remains of ancient literature, sacred and profane, through a period in which, except for so extraordinary a provision, they must inevitably have perished.² Men were wanted, who, secluded from the world, would dedicate themselves to retirement, by choice; to study, by task; to labour, by duty. Antimated by the same genius, and by the same zeal; living in common under the same regulations, and who were willing to employ the leisure of their solitude in the laborious occupation of endless transcription. It is fortunate for letters that this body subsisted: no individuals, whose minds would have been occupied by domestic affairs, and dissipated by public matters, could have given themselves up to such long and painful labours: and this is one of the chief advantages which we derive from these industrious and learned solitaries, who, from the depth of their retreat, enlightened the world which they had quitted.³ And to this employment, congruous as it was to the physical habits induced by an inert mode of life, and compatible with the observance of a round of unvarying formalities, was attached an opinion of meritoriousness which served to animate the diligence of the labourer. "This book, copied by M. N. for the benefit of his soul, was finished in the year, &c., may the Lord think upon him." Such are the subscriptions of many of the manuscripts of the middle ages.⁴

From the third or fourth century downwards, the religious houses were the chief sources of books, and the monks were almost the only copyists. In many monasteries this employment formed the chief occupation of the inmates; and by few, if any, was it altogether neglected.⁵ "Three religious orders," says Mr. Hallam, "all scions from the great Benedictine stock, that of Clugni, which dates from the first part of the tenth century; the Carthusians, founded in 1084; and the Cistercians in 1098, contributed to

¹ "Schlegel's Lectures," i., p. 283.

² "Taylor on the Transmission of Ancient Books," p. 84, 8vo. London, 1827.

³ See the Remark of the Commentator on the Bibliothèques Françaises of De la Croix, de la Maine and du Verdier, quoted in "D'Israeli's Curiosities of Literature," First Series, vol. ii., pp. 334-5. Fourth Edition.

⁴ Taylor, *op. cit.*

⁵ Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

propagate classical learning. The monks of these foundations exercised themselves in copying manuscripts; the arts of calligraphy and, not long afterwards, of illumination, became their pride: a more cursive handwriting, and a more convenient system of abbreviation, were introduced; and thus, from the twelfth century, we find a great increase of manuscripts, though transcribed mechanically, as a monastic duty, and often with much incorrectness. The Abbey of Clugni had a rich library of Greek and Latin authors. But few Monasteries of the Benedictine rule were destitute of one: it was their pride to collect, and their business to transcribe, books. These were, in a vast proportion, such as we do not highly value at the present day; yet almost all we do possess of Latin classical literature, with the exception of a small number of more ancient manuscripts, is owing to the industry of these monks.¹ "Tout le monde," says Mabillon, "demeure d'accord que l'on est redevable aux moines d'avoir conservé les anciens livres par leurs soins et par leur travail, et que sans eux il ne nous seroit resté presque rien, ou très-peu de choses de l'antiquité tant sainte que profane. En un mot, pour le faire court, c'a été l'abbaye de Corbie, en Saxe, qui nous a conservé les cinq premiers livres des Annales de Tacite, comme le temoigne Meibomius dans sa Preface à la troisième édition de Witichind: et nous aurions perdu sans ressource le précieux monument de Lactance touchant la mort des Persécuteurs, donné depuis peu au public par les soins du sçavant M. Baluze, si on ne l'avoit recouvré parmi les restes de la bibliothèque de l'abbaye de Moissac en Quercy."² The celebrated historian Niebuhr, discovered, some years back, in the library of St. Gall, the very curious fragments of Merobaudes, a heathen poet of the

¹ "Introduction to the Literature of Europe," vol. i., p. 97, 8vo. London, 1837. "Sans les monastères, que notre orgueil dédaigne aujourd'hui, nous aurions été forcés de recommencer tout ce qui avait été fait, et de créer une seconde fois les sciences, les lettres et les arts."—"Biographie Universelle," art. S. Benoit. "En effet c'est par le moyen des religieux que les plus précieux monuments de l'antiquité se sont conservés, et sont parvenus jusqu'à nous; c'est à leurs travaux que nous devons, et les livres sacrés, et les écrits des Pères, et les Conciles, et les Historiens sacrés et profanes, et les Auteurs de Belles Lettres. C'est de leurs Bibliothèques que sont sortis et que sortent encore tous les jours une infinité d'excellens ouvrages tirez des débris de l'Antiquité."—Calmet, "Commentaire sur la Règle de S. Benoit," tome ii., p. 150, 4to. Paris, 1734. See further on this subject, ubi sup. Taylor, *passim*.—"Schlegel's Lectures," i., pp. 282-3.—"Turner's England during the Middle Ages," v., pp. 88-9.—"Guizot," ii., pp. 352-56.—"Hearnii Præfat. ad Adam de Domerham," pp. xix-xxi.—"Dissertation," ii., prefixed to "Warton's History of English Poetry."—"Gerhardus Tychsen," "Testamen," 1772.

² "Traité des Etudes Monastiques," p. 38.

beginning of the fifth century. In the same famed repository, the Institutions of Quintilian were found.

III. Monasteries were the main channels of information, both religious and secular, to their respective vicinages. Here were to be found statemen who were capable of directing the affairs of princes, and missionaries to go among the fierce heathens, by whom the Roman empire was subverted, ready to act their part well—as martyrs, if they failed, or as politicians if their efforts were successful. Here, and here only, were the schools of education. Besides these, there were the patient men of letters, to whose solitary labours we are beholden for what we know of the history of the middle ages, and who have earned for themselves a durable remembrance, not dependant upon any change of times and taste, but which will last as long as the records of history endure.¹ It is a very common thing to hear all those Latin histories of the middle ages, which were written by clergymen, classed together under the same contemptuous appellation of “*Monkish Chronicles.*” They who indulged in such ridicule, must, beyond all doubt (observes Schlegel), be either ignorant or forgetful that these monkish writers were very often men of princely descent; that they were intrusted with the most important affairs of government, and, therefore could best explain them; that they were the ambassadors and travellers of the times; that they often penetrated into the remote east, and the still more obscure regions of the north, and were, indeed, the only persons capable of describing foreign countries and manners; that, in general they were the most accomplished and intelligent men whom the world could then produce; and that, in one word, if we were to have any histories at all of those ages, it was absolutely necessary they should be written by the monks. The reproaches which we cast out against the men and the manners of the middle ages, are indeed, not unfrequently altogether absurd and inconsistent. When we wish to depict the corruption of the clergy, we inveigh against them for tyrannising over kingdoms and conducting negociation; but if we talk of their works, then they were all ignorant, slothful monks, who knew nothing of the world, and, therefore, could not possibly write histories. Perhaps, the very best of all situations for a writer of history is one not widely differing from that of a monk—one in which he enjoys abundant opportunities of gaining experimental knowledge of men and their affairs, but is, at the same time, independent of the world and its transactions, and has full liberty

¹ “*Quarterly Review,*” No. 43, p. 76.

to mature in retirement his reflections upon that which he has seen.¹ To monks we are indebted for almost all the accounts of the early parts of English history which we possess ; and we are justified in asserting that, had it not been for their labours, the earlier periods of the history of this country would have been involved in obscurity. "Prisca Ecclesiæ nostræ fabrica et politia absque monasteriologiâ manca est. Monachatus enim olim maxima fuit pars gentis ecclesiasticæ ; et parietes cœnobiales diu sanctitatis et melioris literaturæ fuerunt sepes. Ex illo seminario prodierunt ingentia illa Christiani orbis lumina, Beda, Alcuinus, Willebrordus, Bonifacius, alii, ob doctrinam, et propagatam fidem impense colendi. Absque monachis nos sane in historiâ patriæ semper essemus pueri."²

(To be continued.)

SUCCISA VIRESCIT.

A STUDY OF THE BENEDICTINE HISTORY OF THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS.

III.

(Continued from page 119.)

WE closed our notice of Dom Guéranger, the future restorer of the Benedictine Order in France, by chronicling his profession as a monk in the Patriarchal Basilica of St. Paul at Rome on the 26th of July, 1837. During the time of his stay in the Eternal City, the centre of Catholic tradition and feeling no less than of Catholic Faith, he was fully and profitably employed. For it must be remembered that he was there only for a time ; he had not given himself over to the Cassinese monks who serve the Church of the Great Apostle of the Nations, but was there among them to learn by experience the duties, the trials, and may be the spiritual delights, of the religious life, in order that in the uncertain future he might instruct others in the same sacred ways. The future was, indeed, uncertain. Not that Dom Guéranger's large soul was daunted by the prospect of poverty or chilled by the thought

¹ "Schlegel's Lectures," vol. i., pp. 291, 292.

² "Johannis Marshami πρόπολαιον ad Monast. Anglic."