

SUCCISA VIRESKIT.

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

IV.

(Continued from page 197.)

HITHERTO we have been concerned with the laborious efforts and chequered success which attended the revival and reconstruction of the monastic congregations of Europe during the first half of this present century; but now the sequence of events opens to us a wider horizon and invites us to consider the spread of the family of St. Benedict into regions yet untrodden by his sons. In recalling the history of the foundation of the Spanish Benedictine colony in Western Australia we are reminded of the old saying, "Exilium monachorum Semen Confessorum." The suppression of the religious houses of Spain in 1835 and the scattering of their inmates was, indirectly, the cause of this new departure in modern Benedictine life. In that disastrous year, 1835, the Benedictine Monks were robbed of four hundred monasteries and more than two thousand religious men were thrown upon the world.¹ The charity of a great Catholic nation would not suffer these victims of Freemasonry and infidelity to remain long in want, and the *exclaustrados* or homeless Monks were gladly admitted by the parochial clergy to share their labours, or honourably received and entertained by the upper classes as permanent guests and tutors in their families. A few of the religious found a home in Italy, and among those who were so fortunate were the two religious of the noble Abbey of St. Martin of Compostella, whose labours among the savage aborigines of Western Australia have borne such

¹ For a graphic account of this cruel suppression see Cardinal Wiseman's Essay on Spain in the "Dublin Review," June, 1845. At the present day the Benedictine survivors of the suppression number about four hundred Monks, who for the most part are engaged in parochial work. During the past year two small monasteries have been commenced, so that there is still some hope of the illustrious body which gave to the Church an Isidore, a Leander, and an Ildephonsus being perpetuated. The houses of Nuns were not entirely suppressed in 1835, and though the reception of novices was interdicted, the Benedictines still reckon two hundred convents and fifteen hundred Nuns in Spain.

wonderful fruit. Truly the Abbey of St. Martin of Compostella has been the nursery of great men! It was within its venerable walls that the founder of the English Monasteries of St. Gregory and St. Laurence, Dom Augustine Bradshaw, made his religious profession. There too the saintly martyr, Dom John Roberts, and another glory of the English Benedictine Congregation, Father Leander of St. Martin, nine years Prior of our house of St. Gregory's and divers times President-General of the Congregation, were clothed with the habit of St. Benedict. And surely the good deeds and bright fame of the last of its sons will reflect honour on the now extinct Abbey of St. Martin in the page of monastic history. The two whom we allude to were Dom Joseph Serra and Dom Rudesind Salvado. These Monks betaking themselves to the Abbey of La Cava near Salerno in Southern Italy were admitted into the Community, and having been formally received into the Cassinese Congregation would probably have remained in their new home for the remainder of their days, had they not felt themselves drawn to labour in the white harvest field of the Foreign Missions. Attachment to their Spanish brethren and the duty they owed to the land of their birth and first profession would have drawn them to Spain had there seemed any hope of their being permitted to resuscitate the Spanish Benedictine Congregation; but, as such a scheme seemed then impracticable, they the more readily gave ear to the secret invitation which they had received from above and, after a stay of ten years at La Cava, offered their services for the Foreign Missions. The Abbot of La Cava long and prudently tested the sincerity of their devout wish, and only after mature deliberation did he permit them to make their request known to Monsignore Brunelli, at that time Prefect of the Propaganda.

About that time, and indeed for some years previously, some members of the English Congregation of the Benedictine Order were engaged in missionary work in Australia among the mixed population of emigrants and convicts which was growing up on the eastern shores of that vast island. The story of the labours of him whom we now revere as Bishop of Birmingham, and of that Venerable Patriarch the late Archbishop Polding, men whose names will ever be held in honour in the English Colonies of Australia, need not be told in this place; nor to our readers will it be necessary to say more than has been said in the earlier numbers of this little review; the work of Dr. Ullathorne and Archbishop Polding is only alluded to here, as it affords an explanation of the motives which led our Spanish Missionaries to choose for the scene

of their labours a portion of that immense district where their English brethren were already employed. But the work of the Spanish Monks was not to be among the struggling settlers or degraded outcasts such as were found in the early settlements of New South Wales, but among the aboriginal inhabitants, all untutored savages as they were, who lived their wretched lives among the virgin forests of the western shores.

The visit of Dom Serra and his companion to Rome happened to coincide with that of Dr. Brady, who had recently been appointed first Bishop of Perth, the chief city of the Colony of Western Australia. Hearing of the resolution which the Spanish Monks had taken of labouring among the Australian aborigines, Dr. Brady gladly invited them to accompany him on his outward voyage to his newly erected See, and they as gladly consented. Nothing was then wanted but the benediction of the successor of St. Peter, and accordingly on June 5th, 1845, the monastic missionaries were presented to the Pope. Calling them to him, his Holiness Pope Gregory XVI., himself a son of St. Benedict, spoke to them of their future work, promised them his unfailing interest, encouraged them to persevere manfully, and closed his address with the following beautiful words: "Forget not that you are children of that great Patriarch our blessed Father Benedict; be mindful of the example set you by those apostolic men, our brethren, who of old not only converted to the faith so many nations and peoples but likewise instructed them in the ways of civilization and the arts of cultured life, and remember that you are entering on a work like to theirs. And now go forth, and may the blessing of the God of Heaven descend on you and on the work which you have undertaken."¹

Dom Serra and Dom Salvado, who were joined on their way by a young French novice of Dom Gueranger's new Monastery, accompanied Bishop Brady to England, and with him set sail for Australia on the 17th of September, 1845. A voyage of less than four months saw them at their journey's end, and on the 8th of January, 1846, they landed at Freemantle, the port of Perth. On the following day they proceeded to the last named town, the modest capital of the Colony of Western Australia. There the three Monks remained for some time, as the Bishop shared in common, and it must be added not unreasonable, prejudices against

¹ See the "Album Benedictinum," Ed., 1869, p. 47; also an Article in the "Dublin Review," January, 1881, for a lengthy account of this missionary enterprise of the Spanish Benedictines.

the Australian natives which had hitherto hindered any attempts at civilising them. At length Dr. Brady's consent was obtained, and after a touching ceremony in the unpretending building which did duty for a cathedral, the missionaries set out amid the good wishes of a large crowd for Baggi-Baggi, a clearing in the woods nearly seventy miles north of Perth.

It would take too long to enter into the details of the early history of the new mission, but if our readers should care to pursue the subject further they will find in the "Memorie Storiche" of Bishop Salvado and in Dom Berengier's "La Nouvelle-Nursie,"¹ a sufficiently complete and interesting account of all that the untiring energy of the Monks had to do before success could crown their efforts. Suffice it to say that, for many long months, toil from morning to night, hunger and thirst, and, above all, complete separation from civilization, were familiar and not unwelcome incidents in the daily life of those earnest men. They were cut off from the outer world, from all contact with Europeans, by miles of trackless forest; they were in hourly danger, though not in dread, of attack from a savage people who had no cause to love the white man; they had to grow accustomed to a life in the open—no slight matter to men bred up in the studious solitudes and learned leisure of Compostella and La Cava—and then there were difficulties caused by the climate, the hot winds and wastes, which enter so largely into the elements of life in that portion of Australia. A painful attack of ophthalmia laid the whole party low, with the exception of Dom Salvado; but he in turn almost fell a victim to an attack from a vast number of vindictive parrots who revenged on him the death of a companion bird which he had killed on a hunting expedition. It was chiefly by means of these hunting parties that the missionaries became acquainted with the aborigines. Agriculture was unknown in those parts and the chase was the sole support of the natives. After a stay of three months in the wilderness the provisions which the Monks had taken with them were exhausted, and to procure a fresh supply of the necessaries of life and to purchase agricultural implements for future labours, Dom Salvado resolved to set out for Perth. When he reached the city he conceived the brilliant idea of giving a grand musical entertainment on behalf of the Mission, and, dressed in the rags and tatters to which his bush life had reduced his wardrobe, he presented himself before a large and enthusiastic audience, of

¹ And we may add, in the Article in the January number of the "Dublin Review" above referred to.

Protestants no less than Catholics, all interested in hearing an account of what had been done so far to solve the problem of the civilization of the natives, and all eager to witness an exhibition of that rare musical talent by which Dom Salvado formerly attracted such numbers to the Abbey Church of La Cava. The performance was a great success, musically and commercially, and with the proceeds Dom Salvado returned once more to his apostolic work.

Henceforth the history of the new colony was, in its chief features at any rate, similar to the history of the early monastic colonies by whose means so large and fair a portion of Europe was reclaimed from barbarism. There is an interest attaching to the early struggles of great men and great works, and now that we are able to witness the successful outcome of this attempt, at imbuing with the elements of christian civilization an abandoned and degraded race, we feel a new and a higher interest in the early trials and perhaps not very exciting adventures of those by whom the attempt was made. How the wild cattle broke into the enclosure and utterly destroyed the first harvest which had ever ripened in those wastes; how the government sold the land which the monks had so painfully reclaimed and made them move still further away from the civilized world; how the unworldly Abbot was horrified to hear that gold had been found in the neighbourhood, and trembled for the effect on his simple converts of an influx of the rude crowds to whom a gold field is an earthly paradise,—fears which vanished with the groundless rumours which originated them—such are some of the grand events in the chronicle of the early days of New Nursia. But we read likewise of wandering savages staring in open-mouthed bewilderment at the field work of their strange black robed visitors; of the making of roads, the felling of trees, the erection of log huts; and then of one family after another wooed from its wild forest life to share the simple plenty of the Spanish brethren and to live at peace within their wide enclosure; and then again of the daily instruction in the arts of life and in the first principles of religion of these sons of darkness, until at length the time came when the first Australian converts were admitted to the Church of Christ. If the history of each several conversion is a record so full of interest and so worthy of our study, surely the history of what, with the blessing of Heaven, may prove a national conversion, and one effected by means so similar to those which brought our pagan ancestors to the truth, may and must contain lessons for all who have at heart the spread of Christianity. The simple apostolate of the Spanish Benedictines owes its success

to the adoption of these principles of labour and stability, and that system of monastic colonization which bore such lasting fruit in Europe.

The foundation stone of the monastery, which the missionaries designed as their home and the centre of their labours, was laid on the 1st of March, 1847; and the modest building, an edifice forty feet long by sixteen feet broad and fourteen feet high, was completed and opened with all the solemnity possible on the 29th of April of the same year. Mindful of La Cava, the Italian convent which had been their first refuge, the monks dedicated their new monastery to the honour of the Most Holy Trinity and the Immaculate Mother of God; the surrounding district received the name of New Nursia, thus placing it under the patronage of St. Benedict, whose birth in Old Nursia brought such honour to that ancient city.

A larger sphere seemed to be opening to the good influences of the monks when Dom Joseph Serra was nominated Bishop of Port Victoria, a newly established English Colony on the North Western shores of Australia (June 11th, 1847). In a very short time, however, Dr. Brady secured the services of D. Serra, as coadjutor to Perth, and his appointment to that office was ratified by the Holy See. Dom Serra was at once sent to Europe to collect funds for the many needs of the Church, and in the course of his travels received Episcopal consecration as Bishop of Daulia, *i. p. i.* (Augt. 15th, 1848). Before leaving Australia he had assisted Dom Salvado in erecting and commencing work in the first school established among the Australian aborigines. (December, 1847.) Leaving the students of this novel academy to the care of the other religious, Dom Salvado followed Dom Serra to Europe taking with him two young Australians whom he had baptised and trained up from their infancy. Presenting these to the Sovereign Pontiff at Gaeta, Pius IX. clothed them with the habit of St. Benedict and sent them to La Cava for their education. And then it was that the Pope provided a successor to D. Serra in the yet unoccupied See of Port Victoria in the person of D. Salvado, who was consecrated at Naples on the Assumption, 1849. This we may be sure was no light trial to the good Bishop whose heart was in his work among the savages of New Nursia; but matters were soon set right by the closing of the unprosperous and unhealthy colony of Port Victoria. It had been the intention of the two Bishops to return to Australia in company, but the delay caused by this complication in Bishop Salvado's affairs determined the coadjutor of Perth to return without his fellow religious. Dr. Serra accompanied by seven priests

and thirty lay-brothers accordingly proceeded to Perth; while Bishop Salvado employed his enforced leisure in Europe in writing his *Memorie Storiche* of the Western Australian Mission, and collecting another band of recruits for future labour in the same work. In both particulars he was successful; the *Memorie Storiche* drew public attention to the mission and were of material assistance in pleading for the cause; and in Spain the Bishop had the happiness of admitting to the habit several earnest postulants who were eager to share his apostolic labours. These, to the number of about twenty-four, were in his company on their way from England to Australia, when a slight delay at Cadiz gave them an opportunity of gratifying the last wish of a dying Bishop of the Benedictine Order. Bishop Domingo de Silos Moreno, Bishop of Cadiz, had long bemoaned the persecution under which the Church in Spain then lay, and the suppression of his beloved Order was not the least of his trials. Though a Bishop, he never forgot that he was a Monk, and had often been heard to say that it would be a special mark of God's love to him, if He would grant him the grace of dying amongst his brethren. This would seem to be hoping against hope, for the revolution had scattered the Benedictines far and wide, and it looked as if the Bishop's wish were to be unfulfilled. But, by what is at least a singular coincidence, it happened that Dr. Salvado and his monks, hearing of the aged prelate's illness, proceeded to his residence, and were in time to administer to him the last sacred rites and to receive his last sigh.¹ After the funeral of the holy Bishop, Dr. Salvado and his companions proceeded on their voyage. When they reached their journey's end, almost their first work was to erect a house of noviciate at New Subiaco, three miles from Perth. Later on a small priory or cell was established at Morah, fifty miles north of New Nursia; the last settlement was at Newcastle, in the Todyay district, fifty miles south-east of the mother house. The monastery of the Holy Trinity itself was, by a Pontifical Decree of March 12th, 1867, erected into an Abbey *Nullius*, that is to say, with Episcopal jurisdiction, the late Bishop

¹ See the "RAMBLER," Vol. XI, 441, and the "DUBLIN REVIEW," June, 1845, p. 389 et seq. Don Domingo de Silos Morena who was appointed to the See of Cadiz in 1824 was a very remarkable man. The new Cathedral of Cadiz, one of the most magnificent of modern churches, was the great work of his episcopate. During the Spanish troubles when so many Bishops were driven into exile, Dr. Moreno was left in peace as the Government feared to excite a Revolution in Cadiz by depriving the people of that city of their saintly and well-beloved Father. The character of the man was shown by the epitaph which he composed for his tomb: "Here lies Brother Domingo de Silos Moreno, unworthy Monk of the Order of St. Benedict, and still more unworthy Bishop of Cadiz."

of Port Victoria, D. Salvado, naturally receiving the appointment of first Abbot. Under his enlightened direction the work of evangelizing and civilizing the wild tribes of the country still prospers, and bids fair to prove a lasting success.

(To be continued.)

REMINISCENCES.

FEW can tell the feelings of an old Gregorian when visiting from time to time, Abna Mater and recalling to mind and memory the changes that have taken place during his life time. His first visit is to the monastic chapel to adore the Giver of all Good Gifts. All about the Sanctuary there are adornments, so strengthening to piety and fostering devotion. He beholds a lofty groined roof, the walls decorated with paintings, and comfortable seats on the floor, and the transept having sedilia from which the divine praises are chanted, with ample room for carrying out the ceremonies of High Mass and also of the Divine Office. But was this always the case? Oh no! For nine long years that room now the visitors' parlour, on the right of entrance to the old house was the chapel. There solemn processions took place and the sacred orders were conferred at various times by Bishops Colingridge, Pointer, and Slayter. There were then only two windows in the room, looking toward the village, the Altar standing between and limiting its length. A Tabernacle with two-plated candlesticks and a small silver one on each side formed the decoration, with a print of the Resurrection above the Tabernacle. The ground was the kneeling stool, and forms without backs, the seats. The sacristy used on Sundays was the parlour connected with the chapel by a passage in the wall. On week days the religious and students were mixed together, but on Sundays the religious and students moved into the hall, giving up the chapel to the wondering natives. The religious kept their sides when reciting the Divine Offices. For High Mass, Vespers, and Complin, on Sundays, an aged pianoforte was placed near the back wall, having in front two performers on violincellos. By this means sweet music was developed. The vestments were clean but very plain, excepting the "Eustace" chasuble which was much admired in those days. There were dalmatics of white damask silk, decorated with acorns. One cope existed, but was only used on