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## SOME ACCOUNT OF THE MONASTERY AND COLLEGE OF ST. GREGORY THE GREAT.

### CHAPTER V.

#### DANGERS AND CHECKS.

IN the midst of the happy and promising days which have now dawned upon St. Gregory's, when all seems flourishing and auguring success, the thoughts of its present peaceful occupiers may not often revert to the dangers which have sometimes threatened its existence, and to the checks by which its progress has been opposed. One of these dangers occurred in the year 1710, and the source of it was in England. The Duke of Marlborough was at this time engaged in his campaign against France. In the month of April of that year he advanced to the siege of Douai, a well fortified town, as all can see who have visited that venerable place. It was during the priorship of Father CUTHBERT TATHAM, who (animated with the spirit of the great St. Leo I., who so successfully confronted the scourge of God, Attila the Hunn, in his threatened siege of Rome), sent one of the venerable fathers of the community of St. Gregory's to implore the duke to be merciful, and above all things to spare the religious houses then existing in the town. The duke gave a courteous reception to the messenger, and promised to do what he could to protect the English subjects. Indeed, as he afterwards told the same good father when he returned after the siege to thank him, Queen Anne had sent him special instructions to that effect. The chances

of war, however, from which he could not guarantee a security, made this a most anxious time for the inmates of St. Gregory's. The prior, more solicitous for the safety of others than for his own, sent away most of the community and all the students to safer quarters, and remained himself with a few of the brethren faithfully at his post. Some account of the siege of Douai may be seen in Coxe's "Memoirs of the Duke of Marlborough," but the fact which we have here recorded is not mentioned.

A few years later we find the office of the priorship of St. Gregory's again filled by a member of one of our ancient, noble, and faithful Catholic families, in the person of Father JOHN STOURTON. He was the youngest son of William the 11th Lord Stourton, had been professed at St. Gregory's in 1693, and was chosen prior in the general chapter of 1717. He held the office for four years, and in the chapter of 1725 he was elected prior of St. Edmund's. In the year 1729 he was appointed cathedral-prior of Bath. He held the office of definator of the Regimen, and in the year 1745 he was promoted from the cathedral-priorship of Bath to that of Winchester, one of the three priorships (with Canterbury and Durham) which takes precedence of the others. We find him serving on the mission at Whenby in Yorkshire, and afterwards at Gilling Castle. He afterwards served as chaplain to the nuns at Antwerp, where he died a jubilarian full of merits on October 3rd, 1748.

After a short interval we find at the head of St. Gregory's a distinguished man, Father LAWRENCE YORK, afterwards bishop and vicar-apostolic of the western district. He was professed at St. Gregory's in 1705, was prior of St. Edmund's for the quadriennium of 1721 to 1725, and was then chosen prior of St. Gregory's. After holding this office for four years he was fixed on the mission at Bath. His many eminent qualities attracted the notice of Bishop Pritchard, O.S.F., who was at that time presiding over the western vicariate, and he was selected by him as his coadjutor, and appointed by Pope Benedict XIV. bishop of Niba. He went over to Douai for his consecration, and was promoted to the episcopate in his own monastery in the presence of the fathers then assembled in General Chapter on the Feast of St. Lawrence, August 10th, 1741. For the first four years of his episcopate, Dr. York continued to reside in Bath, and acted as incumbent of the mission till that office devolved upon Father Bernard Bradshaw. A circumstance now occurred which necessitated the withdrawal from Bath of the good and zealous bishop.

It was in the noted year of 1745, the year of the Scotch rebellion. An enemy to the bishop and the church forged a letter which was said to have been accidentally picked up in the street. It purported to be from the rebel head-quarters, expressing thanks to the bishop for the valuable aid which he had hitherto afforded, and promising him the see of Carlisle in case of the triumph of the Pretender. The letter was sent to the mayor of Bath, insinuating that it was his duty to investigate this charge of treason. Fortunately the mayor was an honest, fair-minded man, and knowing the estimable and loyal spirit of the bishop, and how incapable he was of the treasonable act implied in the letter, called upon his lordship, and showed him the forged letter, intimating at the same time that there was a plot against him, and that therefore he had better keep out of the way for the time being. The advice was followed, and the good bishop retired from Bath. He continued to assist the venerable bishop, Dr. Pritchard, in directing the government of the western district, until the death of that prelate in 1750, when from being coadjutor he became the ordinary of the district. In 1756, finding his own infirmities increasing, he succeeded in obtaining as his coadjutor the illustrious Bishop Walmesley. Dr. Walmesley was a professed monk of St. Edmund's, was "procurator in Curia Romana" at the time of his appointment to the episcopate, was a distinguished mathematician, and was employed by the English Government in the necessary calculations in changing the calendar from the old to the new style. Dr. York, in the year 1764, obtained permission from Rome to retire altogether from the episcopal charge, and, like a good and faithful labourer who, after much toil, has earned his rest, he betook himself to his monastery of St. Gregory's, where he spent the remaining six years of his life. He was seized with paralysis whilst saying mass, and died the death of the just at a venerable old age, in the 65th year of his religious profession, and the 29th of his episcopate.

The portraits of Dr. York and Dr. Walmesley are amongst those which now hang in the beautiful new refectory at Downside. That, especially of Dr. Walmesley, is always admired as a work of great excellence.

For the space of twenty years, namely, from 1755 to 1775, the priorship of St. Gregory's was filled by an active and most worthy monk, Father AUGUSTINE MOORE, who had been professed in 1740. He was born at Fawley in Berkshire, and took his vows at St. Gregory's. He went out upon the mission in the

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South Province in 1750. On the death of the prior of St. Gregory's, Father Alexius Shepherd, in 1755, Father Moore was chosen as his successor, and remained in office till the general chapter of 1773, when he became vicar to the nuns of Cambrai, and was appointed president-general, second-elect. But as the prior-elect in the chapter of 1773 declined office, Father Moore was re-appointed after some interval to the office. He is traditionally remembered for his great encouragement to the monastic music. During his government a considerable portion of the music, which is so much loved and is constantly used at St. Gregory's was prepared, principally with the help of an ecclesiastical musician, Faboulliez by name, who was cantor or choir master to one of the secular churches, either in Douai or Lille. The music of the Office of the Dead and for Holy week is particularly striking. Father Augustine Moore died during his priorship on the 15th of June, 1775.

He was succeeded in the priorship by another eminent man, Father GREGORY SHARROCK, who also, like Dr. York, became bishop and vicar apostolic of the Western District. This good monk was born in Lancashire on the 30th of March, 1742, and was one of twenty-two children. He was professed at St. Gregory's, in 1758, and took his degree of D.D. in the university of Douay. Upon the death of Father Augustine Moore, in 1775, he was chosen as his successor, and held the office for six years, till the time of his consecration as coadjutor bishop to Dr. Walmesley, in 1781. This ceremony was performed by Bishop Walmesley at Wardour Castle, the seat of Lord Arundell. On the death of Dr. Walmesley, in 1797, he succeeded as vicar apostolic. He was of a most amiable disposition, and was looked upon as the Fénelon of the English episcopate. It is stated of him, that few prelates ever lived amongst their people more generally beloved. To the laity and clergy he is said to have been always condescending and eager to serve them, at the same time that he was firm and uncompromising in matters of law and discipline. He generally resided, especially during his latter years, at the chapel house in Bath, living amongst his brethren as one of themselves without any distinction. He was ever solicitous for the success of the English Benedictine congregation, especially as a missionary body. Most anxious to secure the co-operation of those who had been trained up under the same discipline as himself, he offered and entreated the president-general of the English Benedictine congregation to establish missions in various leading parts of

the Western District. Again and again he pressed him to establish a mission at Cheltenham. He also offered Falmouth and Dartmouth, both which missions were adequately endowed. He sought help from them for Plymouth, and opened the whole of his district to them. But the Benedictine authorities were not able at the time to avail themselves of the generous offers made to them by the bishop. The French Revolution, of which we shall speak anon, had dried up the sources whence their new recruits derived their training for the mission. And, indeed, such were the trials of the congregation at this time, that instead of being able to undertake new missions, it was compelled to give up some which it had served for years.

As Dr. Sharrock was now advancing in years, and felt the burden of his office to be beyond his unaided power, he began to look about for a successor who might be at once appointed as his coadjutor. He repeatedly pressed Dr. Brewer, then president-general, to forward to him the names of those whom he considered best fitted for the episcopate. There was no Benedictine father at this time more respected by the vicars apostolic, the clergy, and the laity, than his own brother, Father JEROME SHARROCK, who had succeeded him as prior of St. Gregory's and was exercising that office. After much consultation he recommended him to the Holy See to be appointed as his coadjutor, and the Propaganda named him as such on the 27th of June, 1806, forwarding the necessary brief to England for his consecration. But the humble and unassuming monk, like Venerable Bede, was unwilling to be torn away from his conventual life. He had already refused the presidentship, and he now so earnestly begged to be allowed to decline the proffered dignity of the Mitre, that Rome listened to his expostulation, and accepted his refusal. Father Collingridge a Franciscan father was named in his stead. To him in due time succeeded the illustrious Bishop Baines.

Bishop Sharrock died the death of the just Oct. 17th, 1809, in the 68th year of his age, the 51st of his religious profession, and the 29th of his episcopate. He was preceded to the grave by his holy brother, Father Jerome, who died at Acton Burnell (where, as we shall see later, the community of St. Gregory's found a temporary hospitable home), on the 1st of April 1808, in the 58th year of his age, and the 17th of his priorship. His, was indeed an eventful term, for it witnessed that awful French Revolution, a check and a danger to which we shall direct attention in our next chapter.