ENGLISH
MONASTERIES

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Allen & Sons] [*Nottingham*

CHAPTER-HOUSE CHAPEL, NEWSTEAD PRIORY (Austin Canons)

[In continuous use since the Dissolution] [*Frontispiece.*

ENGLISH MONASTERIES

From Saxon Days to their Dissolution

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Introduction

IN accordance with many requests, the following sketch of some of the features of monastic life in England is reprinted from *The Church Times*, in a somewhat extended and slightly amended form.

It has been suggested that it would be helpful to students to give a list of authorities on which these pages are based. A large number of authorities, such as monastic chartularies and customaries, and episcopal registers, only exist in manuscript; but the following are some of the principal printed books, in addition to the extended edition in eight vols. of Dugdale's *Monasticon*:

English Monastic Life (1904). Abbot Gasquet.

Customary of the Benedictine Monasteries of St. Augustine, Canterbury, and St. Peter, Westminster (1902). Henry Bradshaw Society.

Observances of the Austin Priory of Barnwell (1897). J. Willis Clark.

Mediæval England (1903), Chaps. 3, 9, 15. Mary Bateson.

Rites and Customs of Durham (1842). Surtees Society.

Halmota Prioratus Dunelmensis (1886). Surtees Society.

Durham Account Rolls, 3 vols. (1898—1900). Surtees Society.

St. Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertines (1902). Rose Graham.

Gesta Abbatum S. Albani, and other monastic volumes of the Rolls Series, including Nos. 8. 28, 29, 33, 36, 43, 45, 72, 78, 79, 85, and 96.

The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakeland, of Bury St. Edmunds (1903). Sir Ernest Clarke.

The Obedientiaries of Abingdon Abbey (1902). Camden Society.

Records of Wroxall (1904). J. P. Rylands.

Saint Anselm (1888), Chap. 3. Dean Church.

A Consuetudinary of St. Swithun's (1886). Dean Kitchin.

Obedientiary Rolls of St. Swithun's (1892). Dean Kitchin.

Charters and Records of Cluni (1888). Sir G. Duckett.

Rentalia et Custumaria of Glastonbury. Somerset Record Society.

Visitations of the Diocese of Norwich (1888). Dr. Jessopp.

Collectanea Anglo-Premonstratensia (1904). Abbot Gasquet.

Inventories of Christ Church, Canterbury (1902). Messrs. Legg and Hope.

Chartularies of Finchale Priory (1837); *of Jarrow and Monkwearmouth* (1854); *of Fountain's Abbey* (1863—78); *of Whitby Abbey* (1879); *of Newhouse Abbey* (1878); *of Rievaulx Abbey* (1889); *of Giseburne Priory* (1889); *and of Brinkburn Priory* (1893). Surtees Society.

Chartularies of St. Peter's, Bath (1893); *of Bruton and Montacute Priories* (1894); *and of Michelney and Athelney Abbeys* (1899). Somerset Record Society.

Episcopal Registers of Exeter, 7 vols. (1886, etc.). F. C. Hingeston-Randolph.

Episcopal Registers of Winchester, 3 vols. (1896, in progress). Hampshire Record Society.

Episcopal Registers of Worcester (1898, in progress). Worcester Historical Society.

Sede Vacante Register of Worcester Priory, five parts (1893—7). Worcester Historical Society.

Episcopal Registers of Bath and Wells, 4 vols. (1887—1889, in progress). Somerset Record Society.

Register of Walter Gray, Archbishop of York (1872). Surtees Society.

Register of Bishop Kellaw of Durham, 4 vols. (1873—8). Rolls Series.

Register of Archbishop Peckham, 3 vols. (1882—5). Rolls Series.

For the suppression of the monasteries the following should be consulted:

Letters and Papers of the reign of Henry VIII. (Domestic State Papers). Dr. Gairdner.

History of the Church of England, 6 vols. Canon Dixon.

Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries, 2 vols. (1888). Abbot Gasquet.

Henry VIII. (1901). F. Darwin Swift.

Reformation of the Church of England, 2 vols. (1882.) J. H. Blunt.

The *Victoria County Histories*, now in progress, propose to deal thoroughly with all the religious houses; up to the present, those of Hampshire (2nd vol.) have been treated by Rev. Dr. Cox, and those of Bedfordshire (1st vol.) by Sister Elspeth. The *Times*, in reviewing the first of these volumes, said

that if the scheme was followed up in other counties after a like fashion with Hampshire, the result would be the issue of a new 'Monasticon.'

Possibly it is presumptuous to quote St. Augustine in connection with a booklet of this description, but the words with which the great Doctor concludes his treatise *De Civitate Dei* seem applicable:

"If in these pages there is either too much or too little, the fault is mine, and may I be forgiven; but if there is just sufficient join with me in giving thanks to God."

F. S. A.

October, 1904.

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ENGLISH MONASTERIES

CHAPTER I

VOCATION

IT is proposed, in the course of a few chapters, to put on record certain facts and statements on the "religious" (using the word in its technical signification) life of England from the seventh century to the sixteenth. Such statements, though based on the original study of a large number of episcopal registers and monastic chartularies, as well as on a variety of old documents at the Public Record Office or in private keeping, will, in many cases, only yield evidence familiar to those well acquainted with a too little studied subject; but some of the points brought forward may be novel to all.

It may be well, in the first instance, to disabuse the mind of the low motives that are often supposed to have actuated men and women in seeking admission to the cloistered life.

A recent American writer of repute, on *Monks and Monasteries* (Mr. Wishart, 1900) has said:—

"The jilted lover and the commercial bankrupt, the devoted or bereaved wife, the pauper and the

invalid, the social outcast and the shirker of civic duties, the lazy and the fickle, were all to be found in the ranks of the monastic orders."

Now and again, in a very small minority of cases, such instances as these found their way into the mediæval monasteries, with the result that those whose intentions were so poor became the very ones about whom scandal afterwards arose. But, broadly speaking, such a statement, as applicable to the monastic life generally, is simply an impossible libel, that could not be put forth by any genuine student of monastic life. The notion of a "lazy" man or woman desiring to take vows is an absurdity; that laziness, and other sins, might of course attack cloistered as well as uncloistered lives, no one would deny. The difficulties surrounding the first steps to enter a monastery were by no means inconsiderable, the harshest side of the cloistered life was always set sternly before the applicant, and the novices were severely tested ere they were permitted to take the habit. As we read the extraordinary and heart-rending methods adopted by the English Carthusians to keep all save the most devoted out of their ranks—precautions that were maintained, as can be proved, by the Carthusians of Sheen up to the very moment of their terrible treatment by Henry VIII.—who a short time before had praised them as the very salt of the earth—the marvel is that they could ever find applicants with sufficient courage to enter their ranks.

Vocation

Among the Lansdowne MSS. of the British Museum is a small fifteenth-century manuscript of the rule of the Carthusians of Sheen. It opens with the form of receiving postulants and novices in English. After a variety of preliminary questions had been put to the postulant in chapter, he retired. Thereupon the prior asked each of the chapter in turn whether they thought the applicant worthy to be admitted. If the replies were in the affirmative, the candidate was recalled, and was thus addressed by the prior :—

" The convent hath deliberated of your humble petition. And now our Statutes doe appoint me breefly to set before your eyes the strictness and austoritie of our order, and the length and prolixitie of the divine office as well of the day office as the night office, which in the wynter is farr longer, beside the office of our Blessed Lady which you are to say daylie in your cell ; morover you are to say yearly a hundred dead offices in private, likewise many Psalters (or as we tearme them monachales) which you are yearly to say unless you performe them in masses. For your cloathing and lodging, after you have received the habitt, you can make no further use of lynen except handkerchers towels and the like, but for your body you are to weare a shirte of heare and a cord aboute your loynes and a wolen shirte. You are to lie upon strawe or a bed of chaffe with a blanket betweene. For your diet it is a perpetuall abstinence from flesh, insomuch that in the greatest or most dangerous sick-

ness you can expect no dispensation theirin. Also a good parte of the yeare we abstaine from all Whitmeates, as in Advent, Lent and all the Fridayes of the yeare, besides many other fasts both of the church and of our order in which wee abstain from Whitmeat.

"Likewise from the exaltation of the holie Crosse until Easter wee fast with one meall a day, except some few days of recreation before Advent and Lent. For silence and solitude it ought to be perpetuall, except when our Statutes giveth license or that you aske leave. These be the generall observances of our order common to all as well as seniours as juniours. But besides these generall there are some particular ordained and appointed for novices or newly professed to exercise them in the purgative way, and for theire soner attaining of humility and solid vertue, as is the dressing up of Alters, sweeping of churches and chappels, making cleane of candelstickes, serving of others and suchlike. Which workes by how much they are more vile and contemptible in the eyes of the world, by so much they are more precious and meritorious in the sight of Almighty God, and by how much that men, wether more noble, better learned, or of greater talents doth willingly and affectionately perform the same for the love of God by so much soner they will obtain remission of theire sinnes, be purged from their reliques, be freed from theire former evil habitts and obtaine puritie of hart, humility, and other solid vertues, which are not

gotten without humiliation, and therefore those who doe flye or withdraw themselves from ye works of humility, doe deprive themselves of the best meanes to gaine the vertue itselfe. These according to our Statutes and the Custome of our house I have layed unto you. *Putasne ista posse performare?*"

In the great majority of cases, it is arguing against fact and reason to try and believe that aught save a generous Christian enthusiasm for the higher life led England's sons and daughters to embrace the vowed life, from the dawn of monasticism down to its suppression. No one intending to be true to the rule would be moved to embrace it through a worldly motive, or to gain any temporal end, or leisured spiritual ease. Some of the causes that have led men of education, without perhaps any particular prejudice, and only badly informed, to adopt such views, or to write such passages as those just cited from Mr. Wishart's book are not far to seek. The chief factor in bringing about such a belief was the desire shown and often carried out by the high-born founders or benefactors of religious houses to end their days within the cloister and wearing the monk's habit. Sometimes such as these passed the last few years of their life in religious retirement, and in other cases only months or even days. In the rough days from which England suffered for some little time after the Conquest, certain of the monastic founders led lives or committed acts unworthy of a Christian layman, and their retirement to a

monastery when their powers were failing seems to us, from a modern standpoint, a rather cowardly proceeding. Thus Hugh d'Avranches, made by the Conqueror Count Palatine of Chester, whose active military life was disgraced by many excesses, entered the monastery of St. Werburgh of Chester, of his own foundation, there to end his days; but his religious life was of brief duration, for he died on the fourth day of his retirement from the world. Others beyond doubt entered the monastery, without any expectation of early death, after particular excesses or special crimes, with the idea of doing a something by way of satisfaction for the expiation of their sins, and perchance to put hindrances in the way of their re-occurrence. Those, however, who are ready to draw large conclusions from such cases are quite forgetful of the terms under which those who sought some share in the religious life far on in their earthly career were admitted. No doubt, in several cases, such as that of Count Hugh and other founders who entered their monasteries with the hand of death already on them, the chapter would permit the dying knight to be clad in a professed monk's habit—and who can blame their charity? But such a line of action was an acknowledged irregularity, and quite at variance with the ordinary custom. Those who study English monastic terms, and know that in the Cistercian abbeys, and not infrequently in other religious houses, such as those of the White Canons, the lay-brothers were termed *conversi* or converts, some-

times wonder how it came to pass that those who were not quire-monks, who wore a different habit, whose hours for manual labour were far more and for offices and meditation far less, came to be distinguished by such a title as 'converts.' It was indeed a special triumph of the established religious life that knights and other unruly men of violent passions should be moved to lead a docile and humble life within the abbey's precincts, or working in the fields around; and such men when they joined a community and proved themselves amenable to discipline, occasionally joined the *conversi*, or converts, who were thus originally styled to distinguish them from those who from their youth had been dedicated to the cloister. It was but very rarely that such as these were admitted to the priesthood or became chapter or quire monks; they only found entrance to the more menial position, and hence by degrees the term *conversi* or converts became equivalent to lay-brothers. Just the same story is true of the quire-nuns and the working sisters of the other sex. It therefore follows that those jaundiced minds of Mr. Wishart's cataloguing would after all, if they succeeded in gaining admission, find the way open to nought save the inferior position, and would not become, in any real sense of the term, either monks or nuns.

Saving for the very few that were directly founded by kings or queens, every monastic house in England, from the eighth to the thirteenth century,

was founded by men of large landed property, and, after the Conquest, by those of feudal power. It was in this way, from the very necessity of the case, that the religious houses obtained the endowments of land or tithe that were essential for their support. Not only did such as these found the monasteries, but they largely helped to fill them. There is not a single old feudal family known in English history but several of its members can be proved to have entered the ranks of the religious. Nor were such as these only drawn from the cadets of families of position or substance. Those who have tried to study the earlier history of the county families of any of our English shires will be quite familiar with cases in which the ordinary succession of primogeniture in manorial or landed descent is interrupted, because the eldest son had taken monastic vows.

The idea current among certain superficial writers, that there was a perpetual warfare between the monastic and feudal system, cannot be maintained by true historical students either in Christendom at large or in England in particular. It is too often forgotten that the monasteries were very largely recruited from those who were themselves members of the feudal aristocracy. Particularly was this the case in the eleventh century, when the influence of Hugh the Abbot of Cluny, who was himself of high feudal birth, was so great. Lists or isolated names of the members of the priories or cells of Cluniac foundation in our own

country of this period prove that these monks who settled on our shores were, many of them, members of the French aristocracy.

Though it was the glory of the English Church in the most stringent times of feudal tyranny to call to Holy Orders those who were specially freed from among her own villeins for the purpose, and though many of the lowliest birth attained to, then as now, high and responsible position in the hierarchy, the other side of the shield must not be forgotten. Columns might readily be filled with the names of those in England who were members of good families, and did distinguished service for the Church, though trained in cloistered seclusion. It may suffice here to mention two or three of considerable mark in early days. Winfrid of Crediton, who, after years of careful seclusion in the Hampshire monastery of Nursling, became the renowned apostle of Germany, under the title of Boniface, was the eldest child of wealthy and noble parents. Biscop, who at the age of twenty-five gave himself up to the monastic life, and became the celebrated abbot of the North of England, so well known as St. Benedict Biscop, was of good birth and position, and the owner of a considerable estate. "He despised," says Bede, "a temporal wealth that he might obtain that which is eternal; he refused to be the father of mortal children, being fore-ordained of Christ to educate for Him in spiritual doctrine immortal children in Heaven." St. Alphege, the saintly Archbishop martyred by the Danes in 1011,

was born to high position and wealth, the only son of a family of distinction; but he forsook all in favour of a Benedictine monastery.

When the time of the Conquest is passed, the evidence of those of high birth seeking the cloister is fully maintained. The first two Archbishops of Canterbury who ruled in the earlier Norman days, Lanfranc and Anselm, men of great wealth and culture, the one of senatorial rank and the other of noble origin, made considerable temporal sacrifices to follow the Benedictine rule. Or once again, the founder of the remarkable Order of the Gilbertines —who did so good and pure a work right up to their dissolution, the only Order founded by an Englishman—was Gilbert of Sempringham, the eldest son of a wealthy Norman knight, who sacrificed his considerable estates to further his conception of the monastic ideal. Now all these men, and many others almost equally distinguished, entered the religious life without any idea of afterwards emerging from the cloister and attaining to high spiritual rule or administration; they were but examples of hundreds of others of equal birth and self-sacrifice, who served God as faithfully in their limited circles, though their acts remain unwritten on the annals of mere human records.

Equally is all this true of the other sex. Re-Christianised England of the pre-Norman days stands out in bold relief from the rest of Christendom for the readiness, nay, the eagerness, with which gentle ladies of royal blood and the proudest

estate adopted the monastic life, discarding all outward pomp and circumstance. Rapin, the French historian, sneered at the number of royal saints produced by Saxon England, who knew, as he thought, no suffering; but a much greater Frenchman, the academician Montalembert, has amply justified their memory in a chapter of singular beauty of language blended with careful historical research. Nothing but the fact that the grace of God led these Saxon ladies of high degree to see the beauty of the sacred life can account for the way in which, throughout the seventh and early part of the eighth century, they gave up worldly ease for cloistered stillness. It was the same in nearly all the petty principalities—in Kent there were the saints, Eadburg of Lyminge, Eanswith, Sexberga, and Mildred; in East Anglia, Etheldreda, Wendreda, and Wimburga; in Mercia, Kyneburga, Kyneswith, Pega, Werburga, and Millburga; among the East Saxons, Ethelburga of Barking and Osyth; in Wessex, Frideswide, Everilda, Sidwell and Cuthburga; and in Northumbria, Ebba and Hilda. In the tenth century, also, there were the Saints Eadburga of Pershore, Edith of Polesworth, Edith of Wilton, and Wilfrida.

Judged from the mere human standpoint, or even from the common-place platform of average modern Christianity, conduct of this kind seems mere foolishness; and worldlings have, forsooth, to imagine that all such had been crossed in love,

and soured with disappointment, or were merely filled with a narrow-minded and tearful anxiety to save their own souls. But, after all, the example set by these Christian Saxon ladies has never died out, and never will, so long as the love of the heavenly Bridegroom endures. England from the seventh century downwards has never lacked delicately nurtured ladies, ready to forego worldly distinction, domestic ease, or intellectual ambition, in favour of a heart-whole sacrifice to the religious life. When Henry VIII. crushed out the nunneries in England, a large number of the Sisters belonged to the best of the nation's blood; and ladies of the noble and high-born families who clung to the unreformed faith at once established and maintained English nunneries across the seas in Belgium or in France. With the blessed revival of Catholic life within the English Church, in the middle of the last century, there came about a re-establishment of vowed Sisterhood life, which has of late made a wondrous growth. Those best qualified to judge know well how these English sisterhoods and nunneries have been guided and endowed by those of the gentlest blood, whose names in religion hide those by which the world might have recognised them. And what was true of their origin is true of their present-day life; wealth, position, comfort, and intellect are still placed by many of these Sisters at the feet of Christ.

There was naturally great anxiety on the part

of monasteries to do their best with the lands bestowed on them, and the monks and religious canons became almost proverbially the best farmers. Nor was the land cleared, the cattle tended, the sheep pastured, and the wood thinned simply with the idea of producing a good revenue to support themselves, to maintain their church and buildings, and, above all, to minister to the poor and needy; for it was keenly felt that there must be work for the hands as well as the head, and that in doing their very best in manual toil, as well as in worship in quire, they were giving glory to the Creator. "Idleness," says St. Benedict in his rule, "is the enemy of the soul; therefore let the brothers devote certain hours to work with their hands, and at other times occupy themselves in sacred reading." Then the great founder of the religious rule proceeded to lay down the hours, according to the seasons, during which such work was to be performed. Nor were his brethren, as he plainly told them, whatever had been their position, to be disconcerted if the necessity arose for getting in the harvest or doing agricultural labours with their own hands. The way in which the monks of England triumphed over nature, drained the swamps, and brought barren tracts of land into cultivation, was beyond all praise; thus they found abundant employment for their tenants and neighbours as well as for themselves, and materially increased the food supplies for the country at large. Visitors to the sites of ruined abbeys, such as the Yorkshire

houses of Fountains, Riveaulx, or Byland, are apt hastily to praise the cunning of the monks in obtaining settlements in such pleasant and well-cultivated sites, forgetful that it was these very monks who turned comparatively barren and desolate lands into pasture, plantation, and tillage. The marvellous drainage works accomplished in the Holderness by the Cistercian monks of Meaux Abbey, or by the Gilbertine Canons of Watton Priory, whereby hundreds of acres were rendered capable of tillage, bear their fruits to the present day. It is difficult now to estimate the drudgery, toil, and skill required in days comparatively destitute of mechanical appliances to produce such results.

Perhaps the one spot in all England more than another that would cure the man who talks flippantly of the lazy, indulgent life of our mediæval monks in their comfortable quarters is the rarely-visited site of the once great mitred Benedictine Abbey of St. Benet of Holme, amid the Norfolk Broads. To visit such a place, particularly in wet or lowering weather, with the waters swirling round the still well-defined precincts, the wide dykes filled to the brim, the land oozing with moisture over hundreds of acres all round—and then to picture the courage necessary to enable scores of men to give their lives and pass their days in a continuous round of worship and of battling with the elements in such a desolate spot as this—cannot fail to shatter any honest man's belief in the ease-

seeking nature of an English Benedictine of mediæval days. Such a man, after visiting St. Benet's, Holme, might say, "What a fool," but he could no longer sneer at the monk as a poor, lazy beggar.

More particularly, too, would this be the case did he know some of the stories, as yet unknown to print, of the monks of this swamp. How, for instance, on one occasion (in the winter of 1287–8) the waters overflowed the lands and outbuildings to such an extent that only the church, on the highest ground, was unflooded; and how, within the nave, after much anxious thought, it was considered true charity to stable the horses to save them from drowning. Or if perchance the thought should arise that these monks were sustained by good fare against the damp and chills of their surroundings, the truth as to their usual meagre dietary, with exact details, can be learnt from various obedientiary rolls that are still preserved among the stores of the Bodleian. But more anon as to monastic fare.

We are accustomed to acknowledge that literature was sustained in the cloister, and to recognise the beauty of the illuminated missals therein written and painted with such consummate skill; but that the monastery, particularly the Cistercian House, was the centre of so many crafts is often unknown or forgotten. Within the large precincts of such a house would be not only the various storehouses, but the workshops of the smith, the

carpenter, the mason, the shoemaker, the weaver, the candlemaker, and the winepress. Everything that could be required for the church and house and its inmates was, if possible, made on the premises. If anyone is desirous of understanding, by ocular proof, to what use many of the outbuildings still standing around the grand ruins of Fountains, Kirkstall, or Furness were put, he cannot do better than visit the old Cistercian abbey of Maulbraun, in Würtemberg, within easy reach by train of Heidelberg; for he will there find nearly the whole of the necessary mediæval buildings of the community still standing, and in fairly good condition. It was, doubtless, the frequent communication of the English Cistercian monks with their fellows on the Continent that moved them successfully to attempt and carry on such forms of culture as vine-growing, that seem ill-adapted to our climate and have long since been abandoned. But that vines were grown and wine made at Beaulieu, and various other monastic centres in England is beyond a doubt.

It was this very desire after agricultural completeness, and the thorough farming of all entrusted to their care, that brought about in England that curious admixture of the two sexes that prevailed in most of the houses of the Gilbertine order. Houses for Sisters was the first idea of St. Gilbert, and always remained paramount in his mind; but in order to secure effective administration of their lands, certain religious Canons were attached to

THE CHOIR OF RIEVAULX ABBEY (Cistercian)

[*To face page* 16.

them, in absolutely separate buildings, to serve as chaplains, and to superintend or personally carry out all the agricultural details, on the due sustaining of which the whole convent depended. This, too, was doubtless the main reason why we also find two or three canons attached to those great houses of Hampshire Benedictine nuns of pre-Norman foundation, Nunnaminster, Wherwell, and Romsey. A like cause was probably the reason why priors, masters, or wardens, were in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries associated to some extent with the prioresses of such nunneries as Nuneaton, Warwickshire; Kingsmead, Derbyshire; or Catesby, Wyrthorp, and Stamford, Northamptonshire—a fact not hitherto, so far as we are aware, noted or commented upon by any writers on English monasticism.

CHAPTER II

THE MONASTIC TENANTS

WHEN the religious houses were possessed of manors—and all save the smallest houses held at least one or two and frequently many—it was incumbent upon them to discharge the obligations that rested on manorial lords; nor was there any difficulty about this, for the technical obligations of presiding at courts and fulfilling other like duties were almost invariably discharged, even on secular manors, by the lord's steward. Still the lord was responsible, and held responsible, in the same fashion as a modern landowner and his agent, and the difference between a good and a bad or careless landlord had even more striking results in the feudal and sub-feudal days than in our own. The tenants of the monastic estates were of every kind, from those who held under the obligation of military service to the Crown and so many knight's fees, to the humblest customary tenants or villeins, who were tied to the soil. The abbot or prior had to carry out the obligations resting on landholders

of the days in which he lived ; he could not, if he would, have upset the land system, but by just and conscientious administration each manor might become a centre of comparative content.

If the student of manorial records and customaries compares any considerable number of manors that were in monastic, or Church, hands, with those that were in lay control, it will be found, broadly speaking, that the lot of the tenants generally, and more especially that of the villeins, was decidedly superior when under monastic administration. True, tenants of ecclesiastical manors had their difficulties with the lord from time to time, and were, perhaps, all the more ready now and again to show dissatisfaction in a more marked way than they would have dared to do against the more severe secular lords ; but the easy terms on which the assarts or clearings made by the monks and their lay brothers were conferred on their tenants, the commuting of labour customs for quite small sums of money, the generally light character of the labour for the lord, the better harvest fare provided, and, more particularly, the far greater opportunity for manumission or freedom that pertained to the clerical estates, all these were noticeable in so many instances, that there can be no doubt it was as a rule far better for each class of tenants to be on a monastic rather than on a secular estate.

In the valuable chartulary of the abbey of Burton-on-Trent, preserved at Beaudesert, there are full accounts of the tenantry on their Stafford-

shire and Derbyshire manors drawn up about the year 1100, as well as some like entries of the year 1114. It would be very difficult to find such easy tenures on any secular manors of approximate date. In a variety of cases a house was held for which a single day's harvest work per week for the lord was the only charge. The proportion of *ad opus* tenants on these estates was unusually small; thus at Mickleover, out of a total of seventy-eight only twenty-two had to make any return in labour, and in each of these cases the villein held two bovates or oxgangs of land in return for two days' labour a week at harvest-time, the occasional carrying of a load to the lord's garden, and ploughing once in the winter and twice in the spring. Their position, too, is also shown by the fact that they were cowkeepers; for time was allowed them, when working for the lord, to drive home and milk their cows, and generally to attend to their stock. In two other Mickleover cases *ad opus* tenures of two bovates of land had recently (1100) been commuted by the abbot for 2*s*. a year, a sum which gives a good idea of the comparatively small amount of exacted labour.

In the adjoining township of Littleover there were twenty-two villeins, including Goderic the reeve, the majority of whom held two bovates of land; but in only four cases did they make recompense to the lord by labour. On the same manor there were, in 1114, five men in charge of the plough oxen (*bovarii*); each of them held one bovate of

land and two acres of marsh in return for making or providing the irons of three ploughs, the amount of demesne land being sufficient for three ploughs. On another of the abbot's Derbyshire manors, Willington, there was no "inland" or demesne land, but there were thirty-two bovates, seven of which, sufficient for two ploughs, were held by the lord. The remaining twenty-five bovates were thus held:—One, with part of the church meadow, by Goderic the priest; Unifred, six bovates for *6s.*; Soen, four bovates for *6s.*; Serlo, two bovates for *2s.*; Lewin, the reeve, one bovate for *1s.*; Hotin, one bovate for *2s.*; Godwin, half bovate for *11d.*; Lewric and Lewin, each two bovates for *32d.* and two days' work a week from July to Martinmas; Edwin and three others, each one bovate for *16d.* and two days' work for the like period; Godric, half bovate for *8d.* and half day's work for the like period; and Lewin, the smith, one bovate by the service of two ploughs, or for *16d.* and work as above.

It was easy, too, on most monastic manors, for the native tenant or villein to obtain leave to live elsewhere on payment of a small acknowledgment, which was a privilege very rarely granted by a secular lord. Thus, on the manor of Inkpen, Berkshire, in the time of Richard I., the Abbot of Titchfield, as lord, licensed three of his native tenants to dwell outside the manor in return for *6d.* a year apiece at Michaelmas; in another case the annual acknowledgment for a like permission

took the shape of a ploughshoe (or iron tip for a wooden share), then worth about *2d.*; and in a third case, the more costly service of a pair of cart-wheels, probably worth about 1*s.*

The same abbot, according to the customary of the Hampshire manor where the abbey stood, had an extraordinarily generous scale of dietary for those tenants who worked at the lord's autumn harvesting. Those who worked one day a week for the whole day received at three o'clock a supply of food (*unum pastum*) consisting of bread, with beer or cider, broth (*potagium*), and two sorts of flesh or fish, as well as drink once after dinner. For supper the fortunate labourer also received a wheat loaf weighing forty ounces, and two herrings, or four pilchards, or one mackerel. As such a *pastum* by itself seems to have been considered as worth 4*d.*, this food allowance was certainly remarkably generous. If three days' labour was the service to be rendered, the last of the three was recompensed in a like generous fashion, whilst on the two first days the *pastum* was a loaf of barley bread, water to drink, and two kinds of fish, whilst the change in the supper consisted merely of the substitution of a forty-ounce barley loaf for one of wheat. When the customary tenants had to wash sheep or do a day's work on the meadows at the lord's will, they received nothing, save that they had wheat bread and beer when they had finished; but the shearers of sheep had cheese in addition to the bread and beer. Those who dressed the meadows

had no food allowance, but when haymaking they received bread and beer, with flesh or fish. In short, it is admitted that on several monastic estates the harvest payment in food for villein labour cost more than the labour was worth.

We have looked in vain through many a customary of secular manors to find a parallel to this; the only approach to it is in other manors in monastic hands. As a broad rule there was no food or drink given to the secular lord's villeins for labour on the demesne, save at corn harvest, and then only on a somewhat meagre scale.

One other point of the generous treatment of the tenants on the lands of Titchfield Abbey may be named. Those who have studied riverside manorial customs on manors that bordered on the Thames, Trent, Severn, Ouse (Yorks.), and elsewhere, know that not only the free ferrying of the lord's household and his goods by the tenants was usually expected, but also the water-transit of himself or his property to quays or places at a considerable distance. But the waterside tenants of Titchfield, who were boat owners—although they had to take the abbot, canons, or members of the household and their horses free across the estuary of the Hamble when necessary—if they had to convey them up the water to Southampton were always to be recompensed by a *pastum*, or by 4*d.* in money, whichever they preferred.

It may also be mentioned as still further showing the condition of the *natives* on these monastic

lands that they were forbidden to sell their horses or oxen that had been bred on the manor without the lord's leave. The very statement of this small restriction shows that they were at liberty to trade in cattle or horses outside those of manorial breed. Nor were they to fell any oak or ash growing on their holding without the lord's leave, save in the case of wood required for the repair of their houses or the strengthening of their hedges. As a rule timber, for even these purposes, could not be taken without a permit. The licence fee for marriage with any one within the manor was two shillings, with anyone outside, according to the lord's discretion. The reeve elected by the homage was to be free of all service of every kind, and from payment of churchset, pannage-fee, etc., during his term of office.

The Surtees Society in 1889 printed a most interesting volume of extracts from the Halmote Court or Manor rolls of the prior and convent of Durham from 1296 to 1384. They supply a vivid picture of the life of the various classes of tenants on the thirty-five vills under the control of that monastery, of their comparative independence, and of the merciful dealing of the conventual lord. Mr. Booth, as editor, writes in warm praise:

"We see them (the tenants) in their tofts, surrounded by their crofts, with their gardens of pot-herbs. We see how they ordered the affairs of the village when summoned by the bailiff of the vill to consider matters which affected the common-

weal of the community. We hear of their trespasses and wrong-doings, and how they were remedied or punished; of their strifes and contentions, and how they were repressed; of their attempts, not always ineffective, to grasp the principle of co-operation as shown by their bylaws; of their relations with the prior, who represented the convent and alone stood in relation of lord. He appears always to have dealt with his tenants, either in person or through his officers, with much consideration; and in the imposition of fines we find them invariably tempering justice with mercy."

Another book that is very helpful in showing the relationships that existed between a great abbey and its various tenants is the *Rentalia et Custumaria* of Glastonbury, printed a few years ago by the Somerset Record Society. Some of these West-country tenants had to find part of their rent in labour, and part in kind or in payment. There are payments in kind of salmon, eels, and honey, whilst not a few who worked direct for the abbey had stated wages. Even in cases where the villein had to do as much as three days' work a week from Michaelmas to Midsummer, and five days' work a week during harvest-time, he held in recompense several acres of arable land that he cultivated for himself during the free days, and had a small share of every acre of corn that he reaped or grass that he cut for the lord. The smaller cottagers had a variety of curious

customary services in lieu of rent, mostly of a trifling character. Thus a woman named Alice held her cottage and half-an-acre of land by the service of sharpening the reapers' sickles and bringing them water at harvest-time. Whilst at work for the abbot the labourers were, as a rule, entertained at common meals, and they met at Christmas in the great hall for a special feast.

It may, in short, be taken as a fact, that the best farming and the greatest degree of fair dealing and generous treatment were to be found on the monastic lands. The more this subject is studied, the more thoroughly are such facts established. Nor are the reasons why this should be the case far to seek. However unworthy the superior or the leading officials of an abbey or priory may occasionally have been, the system at all events secured a succession of resident lords for the most part of high moral and religious character, or of diligently supervised granges where the estates were at some distance from the central house. There were no protracted wardships or minorities; the lords were not frequently absent at wars, or with the court; and the actual character of the administration could not possibly have fluctuated in a like way as on secular estates. The heads of religious houses, and the chief obedientiaries or officials, had almost invariably some experience of manual labour as well as of agricultural farming, and could sympathise with the toil of the one and the anxiety of the other. Not infrequently in the

larger houses special lands were appropriated to the support of the burdens of a particular part of the monastic life, and where this was the case, the almoner, the sacrist, or the cellarer, as the case might be, gave his immediate attention to the cultivation and the produce of such small estates. Hence came about a continuous contact between the religious and the tenants of various classes.

Into all this work and superintendence the true monk brought the spirit, and often the actual direction, of his rule. Not only did the monk learn to do field and garden labour as part of his training, but to enter upon it as a conventual or common work under the direction of the prior or one deputed by him. The Cluniacs and the Cistercians gave a dignity to their work by certain defined usages. When the brethren were gathered for work, the abbot himself, in a Cluniac house, was expected to meet them at the cloister door, saying, *Eamus ad opus manuum*, "Let us go forth to the work of our hands." Thence they went in procession, saying a psalm, to the assigned place, and when there, certain suitable collects with the "Our Father" and versicles were said ere the work was begun, the superior taking his share.

Wide and general as was the dispersion of England's religious houses, it was as nothing compared with the number of their granges, and to every grange a chapel was attached. These chapels were divided by a screen; the choir was for the brethren, professed and lay, and the western part

for the tenants and labourers. That so vast an amount of land came by benefaction into the hands of the monasteries throughout England in mediæval days may have had certain economic objections; but one result, at all events, was achieved through that fact, namely, the removal to a great extent of any idea of the degradation of manual toil, and the linking together of labour and worship. It was impossible in old days to go many miles in any direction without alighting upon a humble chapel specially built for those who tilled the soil. In a single midland county where there were only seven religious houses (apart from hospitals), traces, either in stone or records, have been found of upwards of twenty grange chapels. The mere worldling will doubtless view with some contempt this association of Divine service and the weary round of agricultural toil; but for such we are not writing. Those who have any faith in the reality of religious joy will realise the blessing of such opportunities, which were so largely multiplied by the monks of England, not only for their own spiritual advantage, but for those who worked under and with them.

The great opportunities that the native tenants or villeins had of securing their freedom, for Holy Orders or otherwise, on the monastic estates, and the general advantages of all such tenants in the matter of education, must be left for another chapter, as they both demand more extended treatment than can be given in a single paragraph or

two. The only other point to be now briefly dealt with is the question of the tenants of nunneries. Though their numbers were not large, and many of the houses quite small, still the houses of religious women suppressed by Henry VIII. were nearly one hundred and fifty.

As to their lands and estates, in their later history they were sometimes farmed out at mere annual rents with but small control from the religious, so that they would differ but little from any ordinary landed property. But this was the exception, and unknown in the earlier centuries of their existence.

The Gilbertine houses had canons attached to them with the avowed object of looking after the temporal affairs of the nuns, and in their elaborate statutes there are the fullest details as to the management of the granges by the lay brothers, as lately set forth in English in Miss Graham's interesting book on this Order. To most of the older Benedictine nunneries, as well as to the two large houses of Nuneaton and Amesbury, dependencies of Fontevrault, special officials were attached to superintend the tenants.

Nevertheless, the abbess or prioress, if manors pertained to the house, had all the privileges and responsibilities attached to the position, notwithstanding her sex, and was the lady of the manor. The abbesses of Barking, Nunnaminster, Shaftesbury, and Wilton, held of the king an entire barony, and were actually summoned for a time to

parliament as barons. Now and again the convents had for their superiors ladies who were as remarkable for their zeal in temporal as in spiritual matters. In the chartulary of the Hampshire abbey of Wherwell, at the British Museum, is an interesting and beautiful account of "the blessed mother, the abbess Euphemia," who ruled the house from 1226 until her death in 1257. The following extracts of part of the story of her rule, written by an inmate of the house shortly after her death, show the thoroughness of her administration in temporal matters, leaving out the account of her rebuilding most of the conventual buildings on improved sanitary lines, and planting and draining the precincts, and doubling the number of the sisters:

"Euphemia, notwithstanding all her attention to spiritual affairs, and the good of the actual monastery, so conducted herself with regard to exterior affairs, that she seemed to have the spirit of a man rather than a woman. The court of the abbey manor, owing to the useless mass of squalid buildings, and the nearness of the kitchen to the granary and old hall, was in much danger of fire; whilst the confined area and the amount of animal refuse was a cause of offence both to the feet and nostrils of those who had occasion to pass through. The Mother Euphemia, realising that the Lord had called her to the rule, not that she might live at ease, but that she might, with due care and dispatch, uproot, and destroy, and dissipate all

that was noxious, and establish and erect that which would be useful, demolished the whole of these buildings, levelled the court, and erected a new hall of suitable size and height. She also built a new mill some distance from the hall, and constructed it with great care, in order that more work than formerly might be done therein for the service of the house. She surrounded the court with a wall and the necessary buildings, and round it she made gardens and vineyards and shrubberies in places that were formerly useless and barren, and which now became both serviceable and pleasant. The manor house of Middleton, which was close to a public thoroughfare, and was further disfigured by old and crumbling buildings, she moved to another site, where she erected permanent strong buildings and a farmhouse on the bank of the river. She also set to work in the same way at Tufton, in order that the buildings of both the manor houses in that neighbourhood might be of greater service and more secure against the danger of fire."

A recently published volume on Wroxall Priory, Warwickshire, shows how admirably that convent managed the affairs of the manor. The tenants dined with the prioress at Christmas.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION IN MONASTERIES

A CONSIDERABLE educational work was accomplished by the monks and regular canons, quite outside the careful claustral teaching of the novices who were being trained to enter their own ranks. An able work, published a few years ago, on the early schools of England, the writer of which, however, never lost an opportunity of decrying the 'religious,' attempted to show that English monasteries had but little, if any, connexion with education outside the actual cloister. But his own pages of documentary school evidence might be cited against him. We have, for instance, definite information of the close connexion of monasteries and schools in documents pertaining to Bruton Abbey, Somersetshire, Winchcombe Abbey, Gloucestershire, and the celebrated abbeys of Evesham and Sherborne, as well as the priories of Lewes and Launceston. At some of the more important hospitals, the heads of which were often termed priors, and whose brethren were certainly regulars and followed the

FOUNTAINS ABBEY (Cistercian)

(By kind permission of the Editor of the *Photographic News.*)

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Austin rule, education was one of their definite functions. Thus the hospital, or priory, of Bridgwater educated thirteen poor boys up to the time of its dissolution, whilst actual thirteenth-century lists of the names of the boys being taught at the great York hospital of St. Leonard's, adjoining the abbey of St. Mary, are still extant. Wherever the records or rolls of one of the greater monasteries are extant in any abundance, references to schools and schooling are almost certain to be found. The accounts, for instance, of the great priory of Durham show that the monastic funds were used to further schooling, altogether apart from the instruction or training of their novices. The boys who attended it were called the Children of the Almery; they were taught by one of the priory chaplains, who received a stipend, and they were also fed at the priory's charge, but seem to have returned home to sleep. The accounts for 1369—70 show that Nicholas, the chaplain, received a stipend of 56*s*. 8*d*. *pro erudicione puerorum*. In 1372—3 the master of the Almery school received 39*s*. 3*d*., in addition to a gown, and 2*s*. for coal. John Garner, master of the grammar school, received 53*s*. 4*d*. about 1430, payable at Pentecost and Martinmas. George Trewhytt, in 1500, received a stipend, as grammar schoolmaster, of 60*s*., together with a furred gown worth 10*s*. 11*d*. In 1536—7 the sacrist's roll shows that the boys' schoolroom was repaired; and in the same year the bursar received from the almoner 40*s*. to pay for a table for the schoolmaster.

It is as well to set out a few details like this, and they could be matched, as we know, from rolls of other large foundations; for those whose business it is to belittle English monasteries continuously assert that they educated no one but their own novices. Now at Durham we know that the training of the novices was a matter entirely apart from that of these boys, as narrated in the well-known *Rites of Durham.* There were always at least six novices under tuition, who went daily to their books in the cloister, and were under instruction for seven years. Their master was one of the older monks, whose duty it was not only to instruct them but to exercise a general supervision. If any of them showed marked capacity they were sent to Durham College, Oxford, which was one of the two exclusively Benedictine colleges. The rolls have various entries relative to their expenses in going to the University. Occasionally outside paid help was sought for their further instruction at Durham; thus one of the very rolls that names the stipend of the schoolmaster of the Almery boys, also mentions a smaller sum paid to one *pro erudicione juvenum monochorum.* At Norwich Priory fourteen boys were educated, and at Winchester eight. At St. Albans there was a school under secular masters, who were selected and paid by the abbot of the monastery; early in the fourteenth century there was a bequest made to this school to release sixteen of the poorest of the scholars from all payment.

Even so remote a house as that of St. Benet, Holme, in the swamps of the Norfolk Broads, had boys under education, apart from the novices, who were probably the more promising children of the humbler tenants. Here, too, as at Durham, such boys formed part of the almoner's charge. It would indeed be passing strange if no such records of schoolwork existed, for Benedictine and other custumals were not compiled for amusement or to satisfy hypothetical conditions. Such documents were practical directions for the times when they were drawn up. If they are consulted, it will be found that it was the ordinary part of an almoner's duty to have control over any monastic school, apart from the claustral one for the novices. He was enjoined to keep the boys strictly, and had to provide the rods for their discipline. If they did not learn sufficiently they were to be discharged, and their places filled by those who were better disposed.

It is also worth while to mention under this head, that in the highly interesting volume of fifteenth-century monastic visitations made by the Bishops of Norwich, edited a few years ago by Dr. Jessopp, there are various references to the schoolmasters and schoolrooms of small priories which could not possibly have referred to the cloister-taught novices. At Westacre Priory, Norfolk, there was a boarding school for the sons of the county gentlemen.

The question of manumission, or the freeing

from serfdom, is almost too important to take up, save in a separate chapter; but a brief comment may here be made upon this subject, as it has a distinct bearing upon monastic education. The freeing of a villein from his tied condition to a particular manor was very rarely done by a secular lord, but it was a matter of common occurrence on monastic manors. Mr. J. Willis Bund, who has recently edited the highly interesting *Sede Vacante* register of Worcester, which covers the various intervals when that see was vacant and administered by the Priors of Worcester, draws attention to the fact that fourteen cases of manumission occurred on the priory estates during a very brief period about the beginning of the fourteenth century, and points out how very large must have been the instances of freedom-granting by the monasteries if this case can be taken as a sample. Much evidence can be gained from episcopal act-books in various dioceses in corroboration of manumission for the purpose of taking Orders. The register of Bishop Drokinsford, of Bath and Wells (1309—1329), shows that formal manumission was often granted at the self-same time as the newly-created freeman was admitted to the first tonsure. Bishop Hobhouse, in editing this register for the Somerset Record Society, seems to think that there was something rather shocking in thus taking a rough country lad fresh from the plough-tail and admitting him to minor Orders in an uneducated condition. But there is every probability that the young aspirant for the first

step in clerkship, freed for the purpose, was one of the humbler monastic tenants who had already received at least the rudiments of a clerkly education at the hands of his patrons. This, too, is the probable explanation for the great number of monastic "titles," or pledges for the temporal support of those ordained to the sub-diaconate, or the diaconate, that are to be found in many episcopal registers throughout the fourteenth century. Those of course who were being ordained to serve in monasteries required no title; but those who were ordained as seculars, with monastic titles—and they often formed a large majority of the whole candidates—had almost certainly received their primary education (whether from the ranks of the villeins or free tenants) at the hands of the particular monastery that vouched, if necessary, for their maintenance. No other explanation of these very frequent monastic titles for seculars—mostly before the Black Death of 1349—has as yet been offered.

As to nunneries and education, all the larger houses, and probably all the smaller ones, in proportion to their capacity, opened their gates freely for the instruction of young girls, who were not infrequently accompanied by their brothers when of tender years. The children of well-to-do parents often arranged for them to be boarders at the nunneries in mediæval days, as is still the custom. In pre-Reformation days the nunnery was the popularly accepted place for the education of girls

of different ranks. Thus Chaucer, in describing the miller of Trumpington, says:—

> "A wyf he hadde, com of noble kyne;
> Sche was i-fostryd in a nonnery. . . .
> What for hir kindred and hir nortelry
> That sche had lerned in the nonnerye."

In later days, not long after their suppression, John Aubrey wrote with great appreciation of the educational work of the Wiltshire convents.

"The young maids were brought up at nunneries, where they had examples of piety and humility, and modesty, and obedience to imitate and to practice. Here they learned needlework, the art of confectionery, surgery . . . . physic, writing, drawing, etc. . . . . It was a fine way of building up young women, who are led more by example than precept; and a good retirement for widows and grave single women to a civil, virtuous, and holy life."

Much more evidence, if it was required, could be produced as to the education so generally given by English nuns. Quite recently, in turning over some little-explored forest accounts at the Public Record Office, an entry was found (not hitherto referred to in print) of John of Gaunt sending two bucks from his park at Kenilworth to certain Spanish damsels at Nuneaton. This led to further investigation, when it came out that several Spanish young ladies, who had accompanied the Duke's second wife to England, were sent to the Priory of Nuneaton for purposes of education.

When the Commissioners visited Nunnaminster, Winchester, in May, 1536, they forwarded a most highly favourable report of that ancient house, pronouncing the inmates to be "very clene, vertuous, honest, and charitable conversation, order, and rule," as testified by the mayor and corporation and all the country side. They found there twenty-six "chyldren of lordys, knyghttes, and gentylmen brought up yn the sayd monastery." The list of these girls begins with "Bryget Plantagenet, dowghter unto the Lord Vycounte Lysley," and includes members of the families of Copley, Philpot, Tyrell, Dingley, and Titchborne. There was also one boy, Peter Titchborne, "chylde of the high aulter." The casual references to "the schools" at English nunneries for girls of all conditions of life might be multiplied almost indefinitely.

No attempt of any kind was made to replace these homes for English girls' instruction when the nunneries were blotted out of existence.

CHAPTER IV

MONASTIC CHARITIES

THE accounts of every monastery show certain definite sums set apart for charitable distribution, either in money, clothing, or food. These sums being charged on real property, came within the cognizance of the Commissioners who drew up the *Valor* of 1534. The amounts in some cases were considerable, especially when they are compared with the total revenue of the house. Bishop Hobhouse has thus tabulated them for Somersetshire:—

	£	s.	d.
Glastonbury	140	16	8
Wells, St. John's	3	6	8
Bruton	26	6	8
Taunton	41	9	0
Keynsham	10	15	0
Worspring	8	0	0
Bath Abbey	10	2	6
Bath, St. John's		8	0
Muchelney	11	3	0
Montacute	23	8	6
Athelney	22	18	2
Cleve	26	18	4

	£	s.	d.
Barlynch	8	1	0
Dunster		14	8
Bridgewater, St. John ...	32	6	8
Total	£356	14	10

For the much smaller county of Warwickshire, the amount of income assigned of obligation to the poor or in hospitality from the religious houses was far more considerable, as is shown by the following table :—

	£	s.	d.
Warwick, St. Sepulchre's ...	25	7	0
Studley	25	6	3
Alcester	6	13	4
Wroxall	23	0	0
Pensley	9	9	4
Thelesford	2	13	4
Coventry, Benedictines ...	60	18	6
" Carthusians ...	77	6	9
Combe	45	16	8
Erbury	26	19	8
Kenilworth	23	17	7
Stoneleigh	52	19	8
Merivale	12	16	8
Maxstoke	22	1	8
Avecote	18	0	6
Nuneaton	34	6	8
Polesworth	31	6	0
Henwood	8	10	8
	£507	9	7

But such tables as these are wholly inadequate if we desire to give a true idea of English monastic charity.

In addition to these definitely pledged sums, a really much larger amount was distributed in kind by many a religious house up and down the country. Nor were these doles the mere lazy handing out of surplus food to be scrambled for by the sturdiest beggars, as is not infrequently represented by cynical and ill-informed writers of romance.

All monastic custumals lay down the most careful directions as to the duties of the almoner. "Every conventual almoner," says one English mediæval writer, "must have his heart aglow with charity; his pity should know no bounds, and he should possess the love of others in a most marked degree; he must show himself as the helper of orphans, the father of the needy, and as one who is ever ready to cheer the lot of the poor and help them to bear their hard life." As alms were a chief daily function of every monastic house, the almoner had leave of absence from the morning offices whenever his duties required him. He was not only the distributor of the alms of the house to those who sought them, but he was to visit all the aged, blind, or bedridden poor within a reasonable distance.

According to the wording of the custumal of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, recently printed by the Henry Bradshaw Society, the almoner was to

make the most solicitous enquiry, through some trustworthy servant, as to the cases of illness and infirmity in the neighbourhood. When he went in person on visits of inquiry, two servants accompanied him, carrying the materials for immediate or urgent relief. If perchance the sick man asked for anything that the almoner did not possess, he was to do all in his power to acquire it for him. Although the poor in their need were never sent empty away from the monastery gate on whatever day they might apply, every house had its general day or days in the week when a general distribution was made to all the needy. At St. Augustine's there were two such days every week throughout the year, when the needy attended at the monastic almshouse for the general distribution of food and broken meat that had been collected from the refectory, the "misericorde," and the abbot's chamber and hall. For this purpose attendants went round after meals with baskets, and vessels for beer. Moreover, such was their care that no needy applicant should fall short, that the almoner had full power to go to the granary and take sufficient grain for the making of fresh bread for these two days of general relief if there was any probability of the surplus bread falling short.

In most monasteries the whole commons of a deceased monk were distributed to the poor for thirty days after his death.

To the almoner and his subordinates were

entrusted the old clothes of the convent for distribution to the necessitous. Nor were such gifts always second-hand, for the almoner was instructed to lay in a store of stockings and shoes and other small presents for widows and orphans before the Christmas season.

In another way also the hospitality of every monastery was bound to be exercised in proportion to its size, and that was in the entertainment of travellers of whatever degree. The custumals insist, in differing terms but with much explicit detail, on the due discharge of this obligation with all courtesy and kindness. According to the very wording of St. Benedict's rule, guests were to be received as if they were Christ Himself. None were to be refused admission; all were to be made welcome, but more especially monks, clergy, poor, and foreigners. Every custumal enjoins on the hosteler or guest-master the primary duties of having everything ready, clean, and sweet in the guest-house or the appointed chambers, such as wood for the fire, straw for the beds, water for the jugs and basins, rushes for the floor, and candles for lighting. Guests were to be supplied, if possible, with better food than the ordinary monastic commons. Well-to-do guests, using the house as a convenience on their travels, would doubtless, from time to time, make presents to the convent treasury, but such offerings would be quite the exception.

In almost every English episcopal register of the fourteenth century occur petitions from monas-

teries asking the Bishop's sanction to the appropriation of churches or rectories, of which they already held the advowson. In such cases it is generally found that the main reason given for asking the favour is that the stress of hospitality on the particular house is so great—owing very often to increase of traffic on a neighbouring highway—that the income is insufficient. There certainly were several objections that can readily be urged to this removal from a parish of the greater part of the income arising from tithe and glebe; but it may be remarked *en passant* that in pre-Reformation days there was, broadly speaking, much more security for the just administration of the Church revenues of an appropriated parish rather than of one that remained a rectory. If there is any one thing certainly established by the study of episcopal Act-books, it is that the best of mediæval Bishops were practically powerless to prevent the evils of lay patrons appointing youths in minor Orders to rectories and of the frequent non-residence of even older rectors. Consequently the rectories were far too often merely served by parochial chaplains removable at will. In the case of ordination of vicarages, the vicars were perpetual, and their residence insisted on; whilst the income from the greater tithes was, as a rule, fairly used for good purposes by the religious house to which it was appropriated, a certain portion of it being definitely assigned to the poor of the particular parish.

Another point to bear in mind with regard to, at all events, the spirit of monastic charity, as shown in statutes and custumals, was the endeavour that all the professed religious should cultivate a special sympathy with the poor, as God's poor, and that such ideals should not be the exclusive privilege of the almoner and sub-almoner, or to some extent of the hosteler. Hence came about the maundy, or washing of the feet of the poor. This was under the superintendence of the almoner. At Abingdon monastery there was a daily maundy, when every morning, after the Gospel of the morrow or early Mass, the almoner went to the door of the abbey, and selected three from the poor waiting for an alms, whose feet were washed by the abbot, or by some monk deputed by him ; the chosen almsmen were afterwards fed and given a small present of money. On the great maundy of Thursday in Holy Week it was the custom in most Benedictine houses to call in as many very poor men as there were monks. They were placed opposite each other in two rows, the poor men on one side, the monks on the other. Then, after certain appropriate antiphons, psalms, and collects, each brother crossed over to his poor man, knelt before him, endeavouring to see in him Christ Himself, and washed his feet ; then rising he kissed him on the mouth and eyes, sat him down to meat and ministered to him.

At the great monastery at Evesham the rule provided for the continuous support of thirteen

poor persons, who were fed from the surplusage of the abbot's table; and this in addition to the twelve "maundy" poor who were clothed as well as fed, and fifty sick persons who were also supported at the abbey's expense.

The one only claim to monastic alms and monastic charity was to be poor and needy. Modern "Charity Organization" methods of subjecting every claimant to strict interrogatories as to the cause of poverty were as unknown to England's mediæval monks as they were to the Christian Fathers of the sub-apostolic age.

It remains to mention under this heading that many a monastery, in fact the great majority of the larger houses, were the chief supporters of subsidiary hospitals under their control, where beds were provided for the sick and infirm, and where food and lodging were also given to needy wayfarers. This was specially the case when the religious house was on the confines of or within a town. Derby, Coventry, and Northampton are among the many towns that afford examples of this kind of charitable work. In many other instances a modicum of assistance to hospital work formed a regular charge on the eleemosynary funds of the greater foundation. Thus the bursar's rolls of the great priory of Durham, for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, show under the head of customary alms—in addition to £5 4*s*. 8*d*. distributed to the poor on Maundy Thursday, and £13 on the thirteen principal feasts—a sum of

about half a mark for shoes for the poor of the Domus Dei or God's House, and a furthur sum for a like purpose for five widows of the hospital of St. Mary Magdalen. The actual almoner's rolls of the same priory of the fourteenth century and onwards show that they maintained a great infirmary at Durham for the poor entirely in their own management, £5 6*s*. being the annual charge merely for the garments and shoes supplied to the inmates. There was also a hospital at Witton, originally designed for lepers, which was managed and supported by the Durham priory.

Like evidence can be readily produced all over the country. An interesting item of practical charity in the West of England may fittingly conclude these brief gleanings as to instances of monastic charity. The priory of Bath supported the hospital that was designed to help the poorest to the use of the city's curative waters.

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CHAPTER V

MONASTIC DIET

ONE of the commonest and cheapest ways of abusing the religious, and bringing monastic life into contempt, has always been to depict the monk, and sometimes the nun, as usually given up to extravagant living in the satisfying of the appetite for food and drink. The coarse ballad of older times flung such charges broadcast, and to-day the tenors and basses of high-class concerts continue to sustain popular delusions by songs of "Simon the Cellarer" stamp. Moreover, the modern poster and smaller advertisements appear to think that nothing tends so much to increase the sale of wines and spirits as the often cleverly rendered pictures of jovial monks tippling beer or sampling vintages amid impossible surroundings.

The Devil, naturally enough, was ever ready specially to tempt the monk, vowed to a limited dietary, to gluttony and drunkenness, and to do his work on insidious and gradual lines. Now and again, in some very rare cases, he succeeded; and

occasionally a corrupt superior infected for a time his flock until sharply pulled up by a visitation. Such cases, though severely punished, could seldom be kept secret, and the worldling, whose own conduct was rebuked by the generally high level of the religious life, took an evil pleasure in retailing and exaggerating the news. But on the whole, in days when there was much proneness to coarse sins even among those of high position, the vowed religious of England led exemplary lives, and occupied a decidedly higher plane than the secular clergy. We do not take the rest of our history from scurrilous writers of either prose or verse; the student who attempted to do this would be laughed out of court; it is merely the innate and perpetual hatred of the world for Christ that has made many an historian, or writer of historical sketches, so ready to turn aside from any patient study of the lives of those who tried specially to deny themselves for the Master's sake, and to accept cynical sneers in the place of sober facts.

Perhaps a few plain statements with regard to the eating and drinking of England's religious may tend to dispel views that are far too common even among those who have no desire unfairly to belittle the cloistered life. A diet roll for the year 1492 that has been printed *in extenso*, and was fully analysed by Dean Kitchin, yields interesting results as to the fare at a large Benedictine house in the days when they certainly fared better than in earlier periods. On Monday before Christmas Day there

were placed on the refectory tables of St. Swithun's for general consumption at the two meals, dishes of moile made from marrow and grated bread, tripe, beef, mutton, calves-feet, and 170 eggs. The cost of this food was 8*s*. 4*d*., or about £4 of our money. On Christmas Day the fare was only a very little better, and cost 9*s*. 6*d*.; the dishes were seasoned vegetables, tripe, brose or bread soaked in dripping, beef, mutton, and stew or onion broth. On days of strict fast their fare that year was salt fish, relieved by dried figs or raisins as an extra, and mustard. "The charge for mustard, 1½*d*.," says Dean Kitchin, "runs through all the fast days; it would appear that during the time of a meagre indigestible fish diet the brethren needed something to warm and stay their poor stomachs."

One or two remarks are necessary for the due understanding of Benedictine diet-rolls, of which several are extant besides those of Winchester. Although there were a variety of dishes, it was usual, save on feast days, for the monk to partake of only one dish, though the old as well as those in the infirmary were often allowed a pittance, or something extra. The general method of serving was for two dishes to be handed to or placed in reach of each; "if any one cannot eat of one dish let him eat of the other, if of neither they shall bring him something else so long as it is not a delicacy." The great quantity of eggs used—eggs not being permitted as an addition to but instead of meat—seems to prove that even in the somewhat

easy-going house of St. Swithun, towards the end of its days, the large majority of the professed monks did not follow a flesh dietary but only those who were dispensed. No. 39 of the old Benedictine rule strictly forbade flesh of quadrupeds or of birds except to those who were genuinely weak or ill (*omnino debiles et egrotes*); but this rule was afterwards relaxed by general councils of the order.

A homely touch occurs in the refectory custumal of the monks of St. Swithun's, Winchester. The convent gardener had to find apples as a slight relief to the severe fare of Advent and Lent on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, save when some festival intervened. The apples were distributed in numerical accordance, with due gradation, to the monks in official position. It is to be hoped that they were permitted to distribute the fruit within or without the house! The prior, if present, had fifteen of the apples, the second prior ten, the third prior eight, and so on with the rest of the obedientiaries or officials. In recognition of his trouble in this respect the gardener was to receive a conventual loaf on the first and last days of each of these festivals.

In the same house cheese was provided daily in the refectory both at dinner and supper, from Easter until Lent began. Butter was supplied after a very limited fashion, namely on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and that only from May 1st to September 14th.

The three reformed congregations of Benedic-

tines, Carthusians, Cluniacs, and Cistercians, all made a point of more rigid observance of the dietary rule. The Carthusians adhered to the absolute and perpetual refusal of every kind of flesh-meat right up to the dissolution; for them it was never lawful even in times of the gravest illness. The Cistercians, whose abbeys were so frequent throughout England, were in the first instance rigid in prohibiting flesh save in the infirmary. Their strictness in this respect in England for some time after their establishment is well illustrated by the following fact. In June 1246, the new conventual buildings of the great Hampshire monastery of Beaulieu were dedicated by the Bishop of Winchester at a function which was attended by the King and Queen and by a large assembly of the magnates of the realm. At the next visitation both prior and cellarer were deposed from their offices because, even on a supreme occasion of this kind, they had broken the rule by serving secular visitors with flesh in the refectory. Early in the fifteenth century power to dispense from this rule was granted for a time to Cistercian superiors; but this worked badly, and in 1485 those who desired it (even if well in health) might have meat three days in the week—namely, Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, provided they took it in a separate chamber built for the purpose, usually termed the *misericorde*, and not in the refectory or fratry.

By some it was pleaded that the greater coldness of England, as compared with the rest of

Christendom, demanded a better diet; but this notion did not commend itself to Gilbert of Sempringham, the devout and yet very practical English founder of the essentially English order that bore his name. In the guest-houses of the Gilbertine foundations the canons were prohibited from ever eating or drinking with their guests, unless it was an Archbishop or Bishop; and as it was lawful to give obedience to a Bishop, if such a guest invited a canon to eat or drink, he might do so once or twice to avoid discourtesy. But even in the guest-houses no flesh was on any account to be served save for an Archbishop, Bishop, or Papal Legate, or in the case of real sickness. Supposing a Bishop required it, Gilbert laid down that none of his canons or lay-brothers were to prepare the meat, but the prelate's own attendants, "for," he adds, "in our houses nothing of the nature of flesh or blood ought ever to be eaten save by the sick, nor within the walls of the granges save by the sick and hired labourers."

The remarkable series of obedientiary rolls of every kind pertaining to the great Benedictine priory of Durham, which have recently been printed for the Surtees' Society in three volumes by Canon Fowler (1898—1901), throw remarkably full light on the dieting of monks in a great house whose funds were never lacking. The accounts are exceptionally complete for the year 1333—4. The cellarer's roll contains each week's expenditure for food. The roll begins with the week after

Martinmas, when the following were the cellarer's purchases:—1000 herrings, 6*s.* 9*d.*; a horse-load of whiting, 4*s.*; 7 salmon, plaice, and smelts, 4*s.* 2*d.*; pork and veal, 9*s.* 0½*d.*; 7 sucking pigs, 14 geese and 17 fowls, 7*s.* 4½*d.*; wildfowl, 3*s.*; butter and honey, 10*d.*; 48 fowls, 8*s.*; and 700 eggs, 42*s.* 6*d.* The following are the entries for the week that included Christmas Day:—8 horse-loads of whiting, 26*s.* 9*d.*; 2 horse-loads of plaice, smelts, and lobsters, 17*s.* 1*d.*; 2 turbots and 1 salmon, bought in the town, 6*s.* 9*d.*; veal, 3*s.* 2*d.*; 68 fowls for gifts, 5*s.* 4*d.*; 10 ducks and wildfowl, 9*s.* 9*d.*; 4 stone of cheese and 4 stone of butter, 7*s.* 6*d.*; and 12 fowls, 2*s.* 2*d.* There were no eggs bought in Christmas week, but in the following week 900 were purchased. Throughout the whole of Lent the weekly purchases were strictly confined to fish, not even eggs being allowed; the week before Lent 900 eggs were bought, and in Easter week 300. It may here be mentioned that the eggs purchased by the cellarer in the whole year amounted to 44,140. The purchases made in the second week in Lent were:—9 horse-loads of whiting, bought at the seaside and elsewhere, 43*s.* 6½*d.*; 9 fresh salmon and 3 turbot, 26*s.* 10*d.*; and 27 crabs, plaice, smelts, and mussels, 6*s.* 7*d.* The third week's purchases were:—1000 red herrings, bought at Newcastle, 9*s.*; 9 horse-loads of whiting, bought at the seaside and in the town, 55*s.* 9*d.*; 2 salmon, 5*s.* 2*d.*; 80 salt fish bought at Newcastle, 16*s.* 6*d.*; and 140 salt mackerel and mussels, for the servants, 6*s.* 7*d.* Lent was evidently

rigorously kept, for twice during the great fast the prior entertained an earl and his household without any change in the fish diet. This monastery was certainly fortunate in being within easy distance of the best part of England's fishing coast. The Durham monks and their retainers and guests could always procure a considerable variety of fish diet. During this particular year, in addition to the varieties already named, the cellarer was able to supply for the tables, whelks, kippers, cod, codling, trout, skate, sturgeon, eels, lamprey, fresh herrings, and porpoise.

There must have been a very moderate and occasional use of both cheese and butter; the year's purchase of the former only amounted to 32 stone 2 lbs., and of the latter to 25 stone. Rice, which was imported in large quantities from the East, has been mentioned as a pittance at Winchester; on two occasions in the whole year it seems to have served as a delicacy for a few at Durham, for there are two entries of the purchase of 12 lbs. of rice.

When the number of mouths to be filled at this great monastery are considered, it is obvious that the weekly purchases of the cellarer, which averaged about £5 a week, must have been wholly inadequate for the bare support of life. It is therefore a relief to find that he had a well-stocked larder of salt flesh and fish to fall back upon. In this year William Hexham, the cellarer, had in the larder 202 "Marts" or Martinmas cattle, killed and salted for winter and subsequent consumption, some from

their own manors, and others bought at Darlington and elsewhere. A large stock of mutton, and occasionally lamb, beef, and pork, was also received at intervals from the manors, and now and again purchased, which was also salted down for larder purposes. Moreover, upwards of sixty barrels of herrings, and 1000 cod fish were bought to be salted as larder storage, as well as 205 dried fish (probably large cod) for the servants.

This seems a mighty store; but how many were there to support? The ideal number of monks for a large Benedictine establishment was seventy, but it was seldom realised. We know the exact numbers at Durham on various occasions; probably at this date it was sixty. Then there were the chaplains, the lay brothers, the singing boys, the almonry boys, and a considerable number of paid servants of the house, as well as those of the priors' lodgings, and of the great and roomy guest-house, and the monks' infirmary. The cellarer had to provide food for all these, as well as for the large infirmary outside the gates, and to a considerable extent for a hospital in the town. Altogether, the mouths that had to be provided for (inclusive of guests of all ranks) may be safely estimated as averaging at least 250 a day. The great guest-house, with its courtly sets of apartments (the principal of which were termed the King's chambers, the knights' chambers, and the clerks' chambers) were frequently filled, and this irrespective of humbler lodgings for middle-class folk and the poorer way-

farers. Moreover, "the releefe and almesse of the hole Convent was alwaies open and free, not onely to the poore of the citie of Durham, but to all the poore people of the countrie besides."—(*Rites of Durham.*) During 1333–4, the King paid three visits to the priory, once accompanied by the Queen. The King's justices tarried with the prior when visiting Durham; on one of these three occasions during this year they stayed at the monastery for four days, and on another for a whole week. During another whole week the prior entertained the members of his council; visits were also paid by bishops and earls, on one occasion by two bishops at the same time. The retinue of these distinguished visitors was always considerable. It may also be remembered, when thinking of the two hundred salted "marts" that found their way into the larder during the year, and the carcases of sheep bought for salting or occasionally for fresh use, that the cattle of those days were decidedly smaller than what are now seen in butchers' shops, whilst the sheep resembled the small Welsh mutton.

It is no guess-work that the Durham cellarer provided all the necessary food for the hostelries and for the prior's table, or even an assertion based upon the usual custom of Benedictine houses. It is testified to in extant rolls. For this year, 1333–4, Brother Robert de Middleham was hosteler, and his expenses show that he found—in addition to wine, of which more anon—nothing save diverse

special pittances for guests and for prior, sub-prior and their companions, at diverse special occasions, at the small cost of 21*s.* 3*d.*; a pittance made to the convent in the refectory on the first Rogation Day at the price of 26*s.*; and a pittance of 11*s.* 6*d.* provided for the chaplain who heard the confessions in Lent of the parishioners of St. Oswald's. Everything else, even for kings, bishops, or earls, was provided by the cellarer; and we find at the end of his roll, under the heading *Empcio specierum*, various small purchases of almonds, pepper, saffron, mace, cinnamon, sugar, rice, honey, figs, and raisins, of much of which it is expressly stated that it was for the prior's table. In later days delicacies of confectionery were occasionally provided by the priory cooks or purchased, such as anise comfit, madryan, gobett reall, pinyonade, sugar-in-plate, chardecoyne, or geloffors, but always for the guests.

So far as the Durham rolls are concerned, a close study of them proves beyond doubt that the fare of these monks was (for the times in which they lived, when meat was plentifully enjoyed by the poorest) simple in quality, and moderate in quantity, and further, that the fasts were most carefully observed. Neither in amount nor in variety of food did the monks of Durham fare so well as the inmates of an average English workhouse of the present day.

A recent most capable historical writer (Miss Bateson) has said: "At St. Albans the diet seems to have been very severe; it was an innovation

there in the thirteenth century to allow the sick in the infirmary to have meat. It is clear from the detailed custumals of Abingdon and Evesham that mutton and beef were not eaten in their refectories, but bacon was generally consumed, and all kinds of fat."

The pittance was an occasional relief to the usual strict dietary in the way of some exceptional or extra food or delicacy. In some monasteries, as at Durham, it was customary for the chief officials or obedientiaries to give a pittance to the whole convent on some special festival. In not a few monasteries there were special endowments for certain pittances, usually of early origin. This is a matter of decided interest in connexion with monastic fare; for it shows that early benefactors were so impressed with the usual ascetic fare of the religious that they desired to secure for them an occasional alleviation. The word "pittance" has been by some, rather absurdly, derived from *picta*, a small coin of Poitiers, imagining that it was originally a dole of that value; but almost every monastic roll with which we are acquainted spells it *pietancia*, and the true derivation comes from *pietas* and implies pity or commiseration. There are lists of provisions made for pittances both on flesh days and fish days at St. Albans in the second volume of the annals of that house in the Rolls Series. In some houses it happened that a fashion set in of giving lands or rents for pittances, and their very frequency, as lands increased in value,

and the sternness of rules of dietary relaxed, became an embarrassment. In these circumstances the whole question of the pittances required rearrangement, for it would have been extravagant and luxurious to continue to use such funds according to the primary intention of the pious founders. In such cases the whole funds of this kind were sometimes put in the custody of a particular obedientiary who expended them in accordance with the decision of the chapter and visitor, and was himself termed the pittancer.

A good instance of this occurs in the later rolls of the abbey of St. Benet's, Holme, many of which are at the Bodleian, and have never been published or printed. John Takylston was both prior and pittancer of this abbey at the beginning of Henry VIII.'s reign. His accounts for 1511—12 show that his total receipts as pittancer for that year were £9 17*s.* 1½*d.*, which would have been a monstrous sum to spend on extra fare. In genuine food-pittance the only expenditure was in providing figs and other fruit for the convent at a cost of 3*s.* 4*d.*, and in a sum of 12*d.* spent on peas and beans and butter, probably for some tasty dish of vegetables specially cooked, for peas and beans had for some time been considered only fit for cattle. The seven principal feasts of the year were brightened by a very moderate expenditure on wine; the total cost for the whole seven occasions was but 16*s.*, and as the monks of St. Benet's then numbered twenty-three, the individual consumption on each occasion,

even if the wine was strictly confined to the professed monks, must have been diminutive. Three definite pittances, of early bequest, intended to provide an extra dish for each inmate, were at this time commuted for money payments, each monk receiving at different periods of the year the respective sums of *6d.*, *10d.*, and *12d.*, the abbot and prior both receiving double the amount. Small sums of money for each religious to provide personal necessaries, or to serve as pocket-money when on exterior service, were not unusually allowed in the later days of English monasticism. The considerable balance still left in the hands of this pittancer was used in a variety of ways towards the relief of the needs of the house. Thus the pittancer that year found his own clothes and the wages and clothes of his servant; made payments for collection of rents, for felling trees and making faggots for fuel, for mowing the grass of the cloister-garth; discharged the abbey's share of 33*s.* due to the King as voted by Convocation, and the sum of 4*s.* as the abbey's subsidy to the general chapter of the Benedictines; paid for the repairing of the glass windows of his own apartments, and the re-thatching it with reed; and had withal 3*s.* left to distribute in alms during Lent. Those who know the dreary swamps and general surroundings of St. Benet's will not be surprised that early benefactors desired to fortify the inmates against damp and chills by the relief of a more generous diet; and we cannot but admire the self-restraint and wise economy that

directed the superfluity of these pittances into other channels. The Benedictines, in their practical dealings with the benefactions of the piety or pity of former centuries, set an example which might with profit be followed by modern Charity Commissioners.

This brings us to the consideration of what the religious drank. It is scarcely necessary to say that the solace of tea, coffee, or cocoa was utterly unknown to the monks and nuns of Old England. Water as a regular beverage was almost equally unknown; home-brewed beer was the usual drink that accompanied every meal. Most of the religious formed no exception in this respect to the general rule. Beer-drinking was accepted in England as a matter of course, and when we learn occasionally of the limit allowed, it does not seem to err on the side of niggardliness. Number 40 of the old Benedictine rule laid down that an *emina* of wine was to suffice for the day, save when extra labour or the heat of summer made more desirable, in which case it was left to the judgment of the Superior. Much discussion used to arise on the continent as to the true interpretation of an *emina*, and it was generally agreed that it meant about two-thirds of a pint of our liquid measure. But so rarely was wine used in England that this rule was but seldom required. Among the mitigations of the rule sanctioned by the Pope for the English province, as cited in the customary of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, was the permission to drink

"beer, which, as the rule mentions no particular measure, may be had daily as commons without any precise limit (*in communi sine taxacione aliqua*)." This does not, of course, mean unlimited beer, but that it was left to each house to regulate the quantity. The brewhouse was a general adjunct of the outer conventual buildings; in the larger houses beer was brewed in two qualities. The ordinary beer was very light. Pious Gilbert of Sempringham, in his minute regulations, could scarcely imagine a grosser or more awkward piece of carelessness on the part of the canons who supplied the temporal needs of the nuns than a failure in beer. In that portion of the Gilbertine rule that concerns itself with the provision of beer it is laid down that: "For the avoiding of scandal, if the nuns, having no beer, are obliged to drink water, it is only just that the masters of the house who provide the supplies shall share in their deprivation. Whenever the nuns, through the negligence or carelessness of the proctors, have to drink water, the four proctors are to associate themselves with them in their water-drinking, even if on a journey or absent from the house, unless across the seas."

With regard to wine, irrespective of the much stricter dieted reformed congregations, the ordinary Benedictine monk or the regular canon but rarely tasted it, and only on special festivals or at times of illness. Gilbert of Sempringham enjoined on his canons never to take wine unless it was well watered. The higher class guests were responsible

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for the lion's share in the consumption of wine at the larger monasteries. These houses served, *inter alia*, as inns, *minus* the bills, for the magnates of the land, including royalty, when on their travels. For such visits they were usually well prepared. Those who study the itineraries of our kings as gained from the date places of public documents know how frequent was the entertainment of royalty within monastic precincts. Even in Northamptonshire, where there were several royal residences, kings sojourned with the Cistercians of Pipewell and the White Canons of Sulby, as well as with the lordly Benedictines of Peterborough.

The wine for entertaining guests was in the joint charge of the abbot or prior and the hosteler. In the already cited Durham hosteler's account for 1333–4 there occurs an expenditure of 35*s.* 10*d.* for sixty-five gallons of wine, bought for the prior's lodgings, for the solar, and for the guests who attended at the time of audit. The practice of giving wine at the time of drawing up the accounts, when the bailiffs of different manors and other external officials attended, was usual. Even the pittancer of St. Benet's expended 8*d.* in wine when his accounts were made. At Durham there were occasional large purchases of wine, intended to last for some considerable time, and there always appears to have been a good store. In 1299 nine casks of wine were bought at Hull and seven at Hartlepool and Newcastle at a cost, including

carriage, of £36 *7s.* Just a century later the bursar bought fifty-two gallons of red wine for the prior for filling up a cask. When the Justices were entertained by the prior, certain special and more costly wines were generally set upon the guest table; thus in 1528–9, although £9 had been spent that year on ordinary red wine, the bursar bought malmsey and claret in the town, at a cost of 20*s.*, on an occasion when the Justices and the Bishop happened to be among the prior's guests. Wine was also offered to the confraters, or well-to-do lay associates of the house, when they were admitted to the confraternity, or when they visited the house. The *Rites of Durham* expressly says of the prior that "for ther better intertaynement he had evermore a hogsheade or two of wynes lying in a seller appertayninge to the halle to serve his geists withall."

Wine was probably always on the prior's board, and would be set before him when he dined in the refectory. Its use by the Durham monks at large was rare in occurrence, and then in most moderate quantities. A curious custom prevailed on St. Aidan's Day (August 31st), when wine and pears were provided for the whole establishment; the usual amount was 900 pears and nine gallons of wine. The wine was of a cheap light character, for on one occasion, when the separate price of this pittance is given, the pears cost 2*s.* 9*d.* and the nine gallons of wine only 6*s.* 6*d.* In 1413 four gallons and a pint of wine were given to the

convent on the feast of the Purification, at a charge of 4*s.* 1½*d.*, entered in the almoner's accounts. A small quantity of wine was usually given to the novices in the common room on the day of their profession.

The master of the conventual infirmary gave a pittance of spices and wine to those in his department of the monastery on St. Andrew's Day; but he also regularly provided it for the sick and weakly in special cases. The quantity used for this purpose was but small; for several years in succession in the fifteenth century the infirmarian's charge for wine only amounted to 5*s.* or 6*s.*; but perhaps this was the wine for the altar of the infirmary chapel, that for the sick coming from the cellarer's stores.

The constant round of Masses in a religious house required a considerable supply of wine. Though sometimes a succession of sacrist rolls are found wherein there is no wine entry—in which cases the church wine would come from the common store—it is usual to find that the sacrist purchased specially for this purpose. At Durham, in the fifteenth century, this officer's roll for many years contains the annual entry of a pipe of red wine for altar use. A pipe was 126 gallons, so that this works out at about three pints a day; from such a quantity as this, when the great number of altars and Celebrations are remembered, there could have been but little, if any, surplus. Henry III. granted charters to the great Cistercian

Abbey of Beaulieu, and four of the other large monasteries of the south of England, bestowing on each of them a yearly tun of wine, out of the prisage wine of Southampton, for sacramental purposes. The sacristan of St. Benet's spent *26s. 8d.* on wine for the church in the very year that preceded the Dissolution.

About the most interesting wine entry in the whole of the voluminous accounts of Durham priory is one on the roll of Adam of Darlington, bursar, for the years 1355–6. Edward III. returned hastily from the north of France in November, 1355; for whilst he was invading France, the Scots invaded English territory and surprised Berwick. In January Edward, in his turn, invaded and ravaged Scotland and recovered Berwick. On his march to the north the priory sent forth one of their monks, William de Masham, to join the King, in charge of the sacred banner of St. Cuthbert, and with him he also took a pipe of wine. May we not conclude that this was intended for the relief of the wounded on the expected battle-fields?

The last monastic record relative to wine that shall be here named tells of the self-denial of the monks of St. Albans. At a time when funds were sorely needed for the rebuilding of the refectory and dormitory, the monks agreed to forego their allowance of wine on festivals altogether for fifteen years, the value to be added to the building fund.

CHAPTER VI

MONASTIC MORALITY AND FOREST COURTS

SEEING that a well-occupied life is always acknowledged to be the least likely to fall into mischief and sin, the rule of St. Benedict—which required a monastery to be, as far as possible, complete in itself, equipped with workmen of every requisite trade and industry, and independent of external supplies—was one of great wisdom. Prayer, labour, and study, with brief occasional pauses for recreation and rest, filled up the entire day. The Austin Canons were not bound to manual labour like the monks; but in every well-ordered house of regular canons the necessity for a full occupation of time was one of the very first principles of the religious life. On the very eve of the utter and violent overthrow of monastic life in England, when, according to the average run of historians, religious life was in a state of considerable decadence, the commissioners for dissolving the Austin priory of Ulvescroft describe the canons as engaged in "embrothering [illuminating] or

writing bookes in a very fair hand; making their own garments, carving, painting, and graffing; the house keeping such hospitality that except by singular good provision it would not be maintained; and the relief of the poor inhabitants."

The continuous round of work with head or hand, blended with the frequently recurring services of prayer and praise by night as well as by day, regularly practised by those who were leading well-ordered, disciplined, and chaste lives, served to produce not a few of the finest characters that the world has ever known. Such as these were brought into prominence by some adventitious circumstances, and were but samples of thousands of others of equally pious life and conversation, but unknown outside their own precincts or the area to which their relief of the poor extended. The general attachment and devotion of the religious to their own houses, wherein they found so deep-seated and genuine a joy, and so true a knowledge of the higher life in the midst of evils and turmoils that rent the world around them, is not infrequently expressed in terms of almost ecstatic delight by chroniclers who wrote from within the walls with no idea of publicity. The genuineness of their utterances, after making due allowance for the flamboyant exuberance of the Latinity of the day, is amply shown by the freedom with which they at the same time commented on the occasional littleness displayed by superiors, or still rarer lapses from virtue. Thus, a fourteenth-century Cistercian

monk who wrote glowingly of the general peace and happiness within his cloisters, and how the lives of his predecessors and contemporaries had made the whole district into a valley odorous with the sweet flowers of virtuous living, told a quaint tale of a recent abbot who would have his own name stamped on the silver spoons given to the community by a predecessor. There can indeed be no doubt that the great majority of the religious of mediæval England led a well-occupied and busy life, and found therein some measure of the true happiness they sought.

Montalembert, in an eloquent passage in his *Monks of the West*, when writing of happiness in the cloister, cites about forty place-names given in early days by the religious of France to their earthly homes, which are expressive of the joy or heavenly delights they therein experienced. Nor is England, considering its more limited area, one whit behindhand in the selection of names for monastic sites that tell more of gleams of spiritual joy than of mere natural beauty. Such names were peculiarly dear to the stern Cistercians. It was the White Monks who gave to Netley on the Southampton Water its first name of Lutley or Place of Joy. Beaulieu was the title chosen for their house, not only by the Cistercians of Hampshire, but by the Benedictines of Bedfordshire, and by the White Canons of Sussex ; whilst Beauvale, or the Fair Valley, was the choice of the Nottinghamshire Carthusians, Belvoir of the monks of the

Leicestershire cell from St. Albans, and Bella Landa, or Byland, of the Yorkshire Cistercians. To their house near Leek the White Monks gave the name of Dieu l'Encresse, or Dieulacres, and Gracedieu to their abbey near Dean Forest; the latter title was also chosen by the Cistercian nuns of Leicestershire. One of their Lincolnshire houses was known as Vaudey, a corruption of Valle Dei. Both in Somerset and Cardigan these White Monks termed their home a Vale of Flowers, whilst in Warwickshire they had the happy Valley of Merevale. Mountgrace expressed the thankfulness of the Carthusian Monks for their Yorkshire Charterhouse, and the Austin Canons' name for their Norfolk cell at Heveringham was Mountjoy.

It is the aim, however, of these chapters to deal with facts in an endeavour to dispel fictions, and not to rest on generalities or vague assertions. It is, therefore, incumbent on us to admit that scandals from time to time occurred within the cloisters in England as elsewhere, and were indeed bound to do so as long as sin exists. Sin cannot be walled out. It is wicked to gloat over sin, it is diabolical to exaggerate it. There is no good in unnecessarily dwelling upon sin, but there is also distinct evil in denying it. "It is better," said St. Gregory the Great, who was monk as well as Pope, "to have a scandal than a lie." That there were abuses must be frankly and honestly admitted, but in that connexion it is well to recollect the bold and vigorous writings of Lacordaire. "Abuse," he

writes, "proves nothing against any institution; if it is necessary to destroy everything subject to abuse—that is to say, of things which are good in themselves, but corrupted by the liberty of man—God Himself ought to be seized upon His inaccessible throne, where too often we have seated our own passions and errors by His side."

When undoubted monastic evils come to light through visitations, they bring to mind a graphic story that was a favourite pulpit illustration of that saintly French parish priest of last century, the Curé d'Ars, showing the fierce and persistent temptations that beset the earnest strivers. A hermit, who doubted of the reality of the powers of darkness, had a prayer granted that he might for one day be able to see these hidden forces. Taking a journey that day to a distant city, mainly heathen, he had to pass a house of religious men of great repute. To his horror he noticed devils hovering over the roofs, and perched on every point of vantage on the walls, and at first thought that it was a terrible abode of hypocrisy. But journeying on to the bad city, and finding only one sleepy imp over the gateway, he realised that Satan knows well the power of goodness, and how best to distribute his forces.

We believe, with emphasis, after a close and absolutely candid study of the whole of the episcopal act-books of several of our more important English sees, and of a great variety of monastic records, as well as of all that has been printed

pertaining to England's old religious houses, that no unprejudiced person could possibly follow such a line of study without coming to the conclusion that goodness of life very largely predominated, and that the records of evil—all things considered—were singularly few and far between. It also appears to be well established that the general morality and uprightness of the regular clergy was a good deal in advance—as it ought to have been—of that of the secular clergy.

In proof of the last point a singular and quite novel piece of evidence can be adduced. Hitherto but little attention has been given by general, county, or local historians with regard to England's old forests, or royal wastes appropriated to sport, which were often of vast extent and to be found in almost every shire. There is, however, a very considerable store of documents, from King John's time downwards, dealing with the exceptional and somewhat severe forest legislation, wherein are recorded the forest offences that were brought before the Justices at the occasional sittings for Forest Pleas, and also at the constantly recurring smaller courts of Swainmote or Woodmote. With England's forests the religious houses were most intimately associated. There was not a single forest wherein several monasteries had not particular and exceptional privileges conferred in early days by royal charters—privileges that brought their inmates or their servants into the closest connexion with these great game-stored preserves.

Over the great wild stretch of Peak Forest, Derbyshire, or certain parts of it, the abbeys of Basingwerk, Beauchief, Darley, Dernhall, Dieulacres, Leicester, Lillenhall, Merivale, Roche, and Welbeck, together with the priories of Kingsmead, Launde, and Lenton all had rights. When Forest Pleas were held and chartered claims had to be put in, it almost invariably happened that those of monasteries far exceeded those of the laity. Not only had the surrounding monasteries, and sometimes those at a distance, particular rights, but, as a rule, there was at least one religious house within the forest bounds, to say nothing of the granges of more distant convents. Thus there was Ivychurch Priory in the centre of the Wilts Forest of Clarendon, Flaxley Abbey in Dean Forest, Rufford Abbey and Newstead Priory in Sherwood, Tutbury Priory in Needwood, Beaulieu Abbey in the New Forest, Pipewell Abbey in Rockingham Forest, or Chertsey Abbey in the Forest of Windsor.

These rights, for the most part, referred to wood, sometimes permitting the felling of all timber necessary for their conventual buildings, churches, and farmsteads and fences, but more usually applying to undergrowth or dead wood for fuel. One house might have the right to send a horse and cart daily for a load of fuel, and another to do the same once a week or fortnight. The agistment of cattle at certain seasons and the pannage of swine were granted here and there, whilst venison-rights were by no means unknown. Occasionally the

abbot or superior had certain rights granted him over the game or deer in a chase bordering on a royal forest, as was the case with the abbot of Whitby and Pickering Forest—a grant of much higher value than the far commoner right of free-warren, which covered hares and rabbits, and which pertained to a variety of manors. But such a grant as this did not imply that the abbot sent his monks hunting through the chase.

Venison-grants, when made, usually took the form of a tithe of the hunting. The tithe of the wild boars killed in Dean Forest went to the abbey of St. Peter's, Gloucester; the tithe of the deer hunted in Pickering Lythe went to the abbey of St. Mary's, York; and that of Duffield Frith and Needwood to the priory of Tutbury. As a result of these and like grants, venison pasties no doubt very occasionally smoked on the common tables of those laxer monasteries where flesh-eating was permissible; but, as a rule, the only venison consumed within conventual buildings would be reserved for guests of considerable distinction, or for use in the infirmary.

Next to charges of deep drinking, charges of hunting, poaching, and venison-gorging have always been the commonest and most generally accepted accusations against England's religious. This notion was not only one of the mainstays of ribald contemporary ballads, or used to lend point to the rollicking jests of such writings as "Ingoldsby Legends," but has even been gravely endorsed and

circumstantially told both in the poetry and the prose of writers of repute. Now it so happens that an opportunity of testing the truth of such charges, after a dry legal fashion, has just recently occurred. It has long been known that in the very few cases where hunting or deer-stealing of any form came to the knowledge of monastic Visitors, it was severely condemned and punished; but how about the general records of the various forest courts, wherein "benefit of clergy" could not be pleaded after the same fashion as elsewhere, and where clerks of every kind were subject to presentment? Within the past twelve monks almost the whole of the muniments at the Public Record Office have been overhauled for an historical purpose altogether apart from any such question as the one now under discussion. The proceedings of forest courts were extraordinarily thorough, and screened none. The verderers who sat in judgment at the smaller courts were elected by the freeholders in county court, but subject to removal by the Crown; the foresters were partly hereditary and partly Crown appointments; the reeves and four chief men had also to attend from each township, as well as bailiffs and jurors from each hundred in the forest precincts. Moreover, before each Eyre or Forest Pleas before the Justices, a "regard" of the whole forest was undertaken, which was a most thorough and exhaustive investigation under many heads, carried out and duly scheduled by twelve resident knights. Nor would there be any disposition, but

the contrary, to screen monks or canons, for they were often regarded with keen jealousy by high-placed officials and seculars of influence. From the temptations that lay at the very threshold of the majority of the monastic houses—the inmates of many never being able to set a foot outside their walls which was not on forest ground—and from the genuine excuse that not a few would have of entering forest thickets in search of fuel for their hearths and ovens, it might have been naturally expected that the charges against them of venison-trespass would be fairly frequent. But what is the case? Throughout the length and breadth of England, in the extant forest documents extending over several centuries, only three or four charges of venison-trespass against the religious have been found, and about a like number for the receipt of venison, or the harbouring of forest offenders. It is not to be understood that the examination has been quite thorough, save of a certain number of forests; but it is highly improbable that the charges against monks or canons regular, if the search was exhaustive, could not be counted on the fingers of both hands. And yet at the same time the charges against rectors, vicars, or parochial chaplains, and the heavy fines, sometimes exceeding a whole year's income, are fairly common. No charges have been noticed against the monks of Rufford or the canons of Newstead, though both in Sherwood; and yet there was hardly a parish pertaining to that forest whose rector or vicar was not, at

some time, convicted of deer-slaying with bow and arrows, or with greyhounds.

Such a result as this may fairly be claimed as an official testimony to the superior morality of the vowed religious in a matter wherein there was often great laxity of principle and practice even among those of high-standing and good position.

CHAPTER VII

VISITATIONS

IN accordance with the various Canons and Councils, both general and particular, all English monasteries in pre-Norman times were subject to the Bishop as visitor; but after the Conquest, when special houses gained in power, and new or reformed congregations obtained a lodgment, the diocesan's right of visiting became materially abridged. Up to their end all the English Benedictine houses of men or women, which numbered about 200, were subject, save for a few exceptions, to the Bishop. In fact, so great was the Benedictine influence in England that no fewer than nine of the old cathedral foundations had monastic chapters, whilst another one (Carlisle) belonged to the canons regulars of St. Austin. In these cases, which were peculiar to England, the Bishop was regarded as taking the place of the abbot, whilst

LLANTHONY PRIORY (Austin Canons)

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the acting superior of the house itself was only termed prior. All the Austin houses, save one, were also subject to their diocesan. The exempt Benedictine abbeys were Westminster, St. Albans, Bury St. Edmunds, Battle, St. Augustine's, Canterbury, and Peterborough ; the last named was, moreover, subject to the Primate. To these must be added the Austin abbey of Waltham. In these cases the cumbrous and costly custom prevailed of either very heavy fees or a journey to Rome for confirmation ; their exemption seems to have proved a hindrance to discipline and good order.

The two great orders of the reformed Benedictines, the Cluniacs, and the Cistercians—the latter of whom were a great power in England—were free from diocesan visitation, and the appointment of their superiors had not to be confirmed by the Bishop, though his benediction was usually sought. The exemption in each of these cases arose from the central houses, which were respectively at Cluny and Citeaux, in Burgundy, obtaining general powers of visitation throughout Christendom. The White or Premonstratensian canons, who were subject to some extent to their central house at Prémontré in the diocese of Laon, also obtained papal exemption from their diocesans, although it was not unusual for the abbot and chapter-general of Prémontré to appoint a Bishop as visitor-general of the whole of the English province. The Gilbertines, as well as all houses of mendicant friars, were also exempt.

It thus came to pass that in certain dioceses where the Benedictines or Austins were not very strong, the Bishop only visited a minority of the religious houses of his diocese. It has sometimes been assumed that these exemptions of whole orders conduced to disorder and carelessness. Although it would seem that the episcopal supervision of the diocesan of each religious house was on the whole most desirable, the supposition of laxness in its absence cannot be sustained; and the visitations made by the Commissioners of particular orders were, as a rule, more regular in occurrence, and, for the most part, as searching in character.

The customary time for visitations was once in every three years; but in the cases where the diocesan was visitor the period was not unfrequently deferred; though sometimes, in cases of delinquency, repeated at much shorter intervals. The object of the visit was twofold—namely, to ascertain the temporal as well as the spiritual and moral conditions of the house. The former was a most important part of the inquiry, for not only were houses taught to be as far as possible self-contained, but in the days when funded property was almost unknown, the very existence of the house depended upon the condition of its pasturage and tillage, and the amount of cattle, grain, and general stores for the sustaining of life. The visitor was received with peculiar honour, met at the gates in procession, and conducted to church and chapter-

house. In addition to the usual services, the Bishop preached a sermon in the chapter-house to the inmates, and his secretary often entered the text in the brief entry of the visitation made in the episcopal register—possibly with a view to check the Bishop giving the like discourse on the next occasion. The Bishop, with whom was generally associated some diocesan official as assessor, began the visitation by asking for a report from the superior as to the general condition of the house, both temporal and spiritual, and as to the conduct of the inmates. Then the obedientiaries, or those who held office, were called before him in due gradation, each one being specially questioned as to the affairs of his own office. After this each religious inmate, novices as well as the professed, was called up in turn before the visitor, the examination being always conducted severally and separately, so that the communication might be unchecked and frank. All were expected to be absolutely open in their declarations without fear or favour, and to conceal no evil of any kind of which they were aware. Meanwhile the Bishop's secretary took notes of the evidence given by each. Where everything seemed going smoothly, and there was no reason to suspect any hidden mischief, the visitor sometimes allowed inmate after inmate merely to testify his *Omnia bene*, or that all was well; on the contrary, the questions became searching if there appeared to be any attempt at concealment.

It was difficult under such a system, not only for scandals to escape, but even for the milder forms of disorder or laxity to avoid detection.

The most complete record of English monastic visitation is to be found in a volume at the Bodleian, pertaining to Norwich diocese during the episcopates of Bishops Goldwell and Nicke; it covers a period of forty years, namely from 1492 to 1532. The number of religious houses, exclusive of hospitals and collegiate churches, under episcopal visitation in this diocese was 34; those that were exempt, including thirty friaries, were 38. Details are given of 141 formal visits paid to the religious houses of Norfolk and Suffolk, the actual statements of each inmate being briefly recorded. In the large majority of cases the visitor found that no reform of any kind was needed. Fifteen visits, or about one in nine, brought to light matters that certainly required mending, and for the reformation of which strict injunctions were issued.

Out of thirty-four visits paid to the eight nunneries of the diocese, one resulted in detecting a case of grievous sin, and there was a painful scandal brought to light in one of the inspections of the Austin canons of Westacre. By the end of the fifteenth century the numbers had become much reduced through poverty in many of the houses of East Anglia, particularly in the small settlements of Austin canons. It is estimated that there were then in Norfolk diocese about 230 Austin canons, 120 Benedictine monks, and 80 Benedictine nuns.

There seems no reason whatever to doubt that the vast majority of these were leading exemplary lives. As an evidence of the patience of the visitor in hearing every kind of complaint, it may be mentioned that the older nuns of Flixton complained to the Bishop of the mutton served in the refectory being burnt, and the beer being too weak; the further complaint as to the too rapid repetition of the psalter at the offices would probably appeal to him as more worthy of the attention of the diocesan. The whole of these visitations were printed a few years ago for the Camden Society, under the capable editorship of Dr. Jessopp. In commenting upon this valuable proof as to the real condition of England's religious houses just before their fall, the learned editor cordially welcomes all possible publicity being given to further documentary evidence from any known source, adding that ". . . then it may happen that we shall be forced to confess that in the sixteenth century there were creatures in human form who exhibited as shocking examples of truculent slander, of gratuitous obscenity, of hateful malignity, as can be found among the worst men of any previous or succeeding age, but we shall have to look for them, not within the cloisters, but outside them, among the robbers, not among the robbed."

The Worcestershire Historical Society has done good service in printing the important *Sede Vacante* Register in the possession of the Dean and Chapter of Worcester. When there was a vacancy in the

see, the spiritualities were administered by the Prior of Worcester, who then had the right to visit both the parochial clergy and the religious houses subject to diocesan control. This register covers all the vacancies—sometimes extending over more than a year—between the death of Bishop Giffard in 1301 to the enthronement of Bishop Bourchier in 1435. During this period the prior, either in person or through two commissioners, visited the episcopally-controlled monasteries, eighteen in number, on eleven different occasions. Eighty-four of these visits are duly recorded ; only two of them revealed any special cause of offence, one of them being at Wroxall nunnery and the other at Studley priory. This voluminous register has been fully edited, with prolonged introductions, by Mr. J. Willis Bund, chairman of Quarter Sessions, etc. ; a gentleman entirely free from mediæval proclivities. Commenting on the usually received supposition of monastic immorality, he considers that this register disproves such charges, and gives it as his opinion that the English monastic clergy were not one bit more immoral "than the secular clergy of the nineteenth century."

The jests and jeers of cynical and satirical writers of mediæval days, who were themselves usually men of depraved lives, as to the supposed laxity of life of monks and nuns, based upon the actions of a few degraded and disgraced religious, coupled with the foul slanders of Henry VIII.'s self-interested tools, have so long succeeded in

saturating unreflective minds with scandal that it has become difficult for even well-intentioned writers (who have made no personal investigations) to escape from the evil and lying atmosphere with which the whole subject has been so long surrounded.

A particularly fine and exhaustive topographical work has recently appeared entitled *The Records of Wroxall.* Wroxall Priory, Warwickshire, was a small house of Benedictine nuns with an interesting history. In these pages full extracts are given (with one overlooked omission) of all the visitations of the priory recorded in the Worcester diocesan registers. The earliest of these is 1268, and the latest in 1433. There are fourteen recorded visitations in all, made either by the Bishop or by the prior of Worcester's Commissaries *sede vacante*, and in only three of the fourteen was any evil detected—namely, in 1323, 1339, and 1410. Yet Wroxall is by far the worst case of any nunnery in the Worcester diocese, so far as extant visits are concerned. Its character was remarkably good on the eve of its suppression. Henry VIII.'s own Commissioners of 1536, six in number, reported that the nuns then numbered five with the prioress, and were all "off good converssacion and lyvyng, and all desyer yf the house be suppressed to be sent to other religious houses." The priory itself is described as "a propre litle house, and in convenyent and good repaire." The writer of this Wroxall book, who is evidently not desirous to go

beyond the truth, has failed to find a scrap of evidence between the visitation of 1433 and that of 1536; and yet, although not a breath of scandal is known to have rested on the nuns of Wroxall since 1410, he actually ventures thus to libel the last days of this house entirely out of his own imagination: "Idleness had crept within its walls, together with the vices of the world; it had become more a source of danger than a blessing to the community itself and to the public outside." Such an unsupported statement is a blot on the book where it occurs, and it is cited here as a proof of the usual unfairness of the average English mind, saturated with over three centuries of reckless misrepresentation, when it approaches the question of the vowed religious life.

During the vacancy between the death of Archbishop Morton in October, 1500, and the election of his successor in the following April, the prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, asserted his right to hold metropolitical visitations *sede vacante*. At this time the sees of Winchester and Ely were also both vacant, and Dr. Hede, as commissary of the prior, made a visitation tour of both dioceses. The results, giving the details of the individual statements of the inmates, are extant in a volume at Canterbury, which, it is hoped, may ere long be printed. The record of this series of visits, unknown save perhaps to half-a-dozen ecclesiologists, is of considerable value in bearing remarkable witness to the general integrity of the religious

houses. Such evidence is all the more valuable, because of the obvious thoroughness of the work undertaken by Dr. Hede; in a single case, the large nunnery of Romsey, there was a sad scandal, and the investigation led to the dismissal of the abbess.

With regard to the visitations scattered throughout episcopal registers, the few who are acquainted with the whole series of these act-books will agree —and they only are competent to judge—(1) that only those cases where injunctions were issued are entered in any detail, in order that it might be seen whether the *reformanda* were carried out; (2) that where injunctions on one or two points were required, it was usual for the Bishop's official to introduce a variety of customary decrees, which were for the most part a summary of the salient points of the general rule, and which were considered suitable for the admonition of the religious all over the country; (3) that allowance must always be made for the stilted and hyperbolical phrasing of official ecclesiastical Latin—a fact universally admitted by all mediæval scholars; and (4) that incidental mention is made in these registers of a very great number of visitations taking place of which there is no detailed record, and in which it is but common sense to conclude there was nothing to redress.

To these reflections may be added the caution that ought to be obvious to everyone of intelligence, that the object of a visitation is to detect

laxity and possible evil, and not to record devoutness and good discipline. To judge of the bulk of the religious from a few given up to bad living, and who were heavily punished for their misdeeds, is as monstrous and childish as it would be to condemn the inhabitants of some given area by the actions of the minute minority who figure in the police-court records.

So far as the visitation of monasteries by delegated ecclesiastics from the parent house is concerned, we are not aware of any general record of that character having come to light, either at home or on the continent, with regard to the Cistercians. As to the visitations of English Cluniac foundations, Sir G. F. Duckett did good service in printing a great amount of matter of the thirteenth century, together with some of later date, from the original records in the National Library at Paris. As these important visitations have recently been the subject of controversy, it is not necessary to allude to them any further, save by saying that it is best to consult Duckett's two volumes in Latin, rather than the abbreviated English rendering; and that they cannot possibly fail to carry conviction to every unjaundiced mind of the good lives that were on the whole led by the monks under alien rule amid circumstances of peculiar difficulty.

The Royal Historical Society has lately printed the first of two volumes entitled *Collectaneæ Anglo-Premonstratensia* by Abbot Gasquet, which are

devoted to the contents of an original register of the order of White Canons, in the Bodleian and other documents in the British Museum. The second volume will contain also details of Richard Redman's visitations of all the English Premonstratensian houses. Redman was originally Abbot of Shap, Cumberland. In 1478 he was nominated by the Abbot of Prémonstré to be vicar of the English province; at that time he had been already Bishop of St. Asaph for ten years, and thence he was successively translated to Exeter and Ely, dying Bishop of Ely 1505. He remained visitor of the Premonstratensians till the time of his death. Redman's visitation register, well-known to the writer of these chapters, shows that there was often much to correct; but the houses far oftener could show a clean bill of health, and where there was evil it only affected one or two individuals. It will also be found that the punishment of the guilty was usually most genuine and severe.

For serious sins Redman's usual punishment was forty days *gravioris culpa,* with the further penance of being sent to another house of the same order for seven years, during which long period the offender was under a certain amount of particular discipline and observation, and never allowed to leave the precincts. The chief points of the preliminary forty days' punishment were :— To sit alone in the refectory on the ground at meal-times, with bread and water as the only

fare; to lie prostrate at the entrance to the choir when the canons were entering or departing at the various hours; to be spoken to by no one; and to be excluded from the Communion.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TWO COMMISSIONS OF HENRY VIII

MOVED, as he chose to assert, with a desire "to purge the Church from the thorns of vices and to sow it with the seeds and plants of virtue," Henry VIII., the most immoral and covetous king that England has ever known, determined towards the end of 1534 to take active steps to secure the suppression of the religious houses. The Supreme Head Act of that year had conferred visitatorial powers on the Crown. For this purpose Henry appointed Thomas Cromwell as his Vicar-General, suspending meanwhile all episcopal or other forms of visitation. This absolutely unscrupulous minister, well worthy of the king who appointed him, and who never lost an opportunity of obtaining bribes in money, goods, leases, or estates, had the fullest authority and jurisdiction conferred upon him, with power to visit and exercise such control through his appointed commissaries. The visitation of Cromwell's agents began in August, 1535, and extended to February, 1536.

The chief visitors were the notorious Legh, Layton, and London. They had not completed the visitation of the Northern Province when Parliament met, but reports were forwarded to Cromwell of the visited houses, both small and great. They had also during this period managed to frighten some houses into making "voluntary surrenders," and, by imposing a series of harsh and unreasonable injunctions, had endeavoured to drive out the remainder. Legh, writing to Cromwell with reference to these injunctions, had no hesitation in showing his hand: "By this ye see that they shall not need to be put forth, but that they will make instance themselves, so that their doing shall be imputed to themselves and no other." In March 1536 a bill for the dissolution of the smaller houses under £200 a year was introduced and forced through Parliament by royal threats—"I hear that my bill will not pass, but I will have it pass, or I will have some of your heads." About 400 houses then fell; the superiors receiving pensions, and the monks, notwithstanding their alleged depravity, obtaining admission to the larger houses or leave to act as secular priests. This first suppression was hateful to the majority of English folk, save those who profited by the spoils, and brought about the Pilgrimage of Grace, with the execution of twelve abbots, as well as many monks and sympathetic laymen of all ranks.

The main excuse for this step in the general suppression was the report of Cromwell's visitors

as to the condition of the monasteries. This was the infamous *Comperta*, a pestiferous document of unrivalled mendacity and malignity, which for three-and-a-half centuries surrounded the memory of the latter days of England's religious with a miasma of noxious effluvia. If any unscrupulous or hasty controversialist desires to think evil of monks and nuns, he will herein find a surfeit of garbage. But with the printing of the Domestic State Papers, and the revelations therein afforded of the character of the visitors as displayed in their own letters, the falsity of most of their statements has been manifested beyond gainsaying. Dr. Gairdner's cool judgment in editing the official Letters and Papers of Henry VIII.'s reign gave the first definite blow to the possibility of placing any reliance on the *Comperta* documents, as they are flatly contradicted in so many places, and are obviously incredible in others. Abbot Gasquet has further exposed their worthlessness after a masterly and searching fashion ; but it has been reserved for scholarly members of the Anglican communion, such as the late Canon Dixon and Dr. Jessopp, to denounce the authors of the monastic Black Book in terms of extraordinary but justifiable severity. In short, it would not be possible for any one of a decently-balanced mind—we care not whether he is English Catholic, of the Roman obedience, nonconformist, or agnostic—to make a careful documentary study of the times of the suppression of the monasteries of this country, without rising from

the task with a feeling of almost unqualified disgust for the actual visitors, and of indignation with a king and a minister who could use such miscreants as their tools.

"When the Inquisitors of Henry VIII. and his Vicar-General, Cromwell," writes Dr. Jessopp, "went on their tours of Visitation, they were men who had had no experience of the ordinary forms of inquiry which had hitherto been in use. They called themselves Visitors; they were, in effect, mere hired detectives of the very vilest stamp, who came to levy blackmail, and, if possible, to find some excuse for their robberies by vilifying their victims. In all the *Comperta* which have come down to us there is not, if I remember rightly, a single instance of any report or complaint having been made to the Visitors from anyone outside. The enormities set down against the poor people accused of them are said to have been confessed by themselves against themselves. In other words, the *Comperta* of 1535—6 can only be received as the horrible inventions of the miserable men who wrote them down upon their papers, well knowing that, as in no case could the charges be supported, so, on the other hand, in no case could they be met, or were the accused even intended to be put upon their trial."

On another occasion, when criticising minutely Legh's reports of the Papist houses, the same scholar says:—

"This loathsome return bears the stamp of malignant falsehood upon every line, and it could

only have been penned by a man of blasted character and of so filthy an imagination that no judge or jury would have believed him on his oath."

Such testimony is all the more remarkable, for Dr. Jessopp tells us that few men in their early days had the current views against the monks more firmly fixed in their minds, and few had more difficulty in surrendering them under the stern pressure of historic facts.

The *Comperta*, or abstracts of minutes drawn up by the visitors, are almost entirely concerned with questions of morality; lists of offenders were compiled, with the charge against the name. The charges are absolutely unsupported, as a rule, by a shadow of evidence, save that the odious sins are said, absurdly enough, to have been voluntarily confessed by the culprits.

What was the character of the chief visitors, on whose word the average uneducated Protestant is still inclined to believe in all that is odious against both monks and nuns? Cromwell himself was steeped in peculation and in the giving and taking of bribes. All England knew that he had his price for everything, great or small; his own papers reek with it; and when he fell so suddenly, and earned a well-merited scaffold death, his selling offices and grants "for manyfold sums of money" was one of the chief charges against him.

As with the master, so with the men.

Visitors Legh and Layton, and, in a smaller degree, those less busy visitors London and

Ap Rice, were only too ready to extort money from the houses on which they reported, and to appropriate all they could or dared of the confiscated spoils. The evidence of this is overwhelming. Dr. Gairdner, writing some years ago in his preface to the tenth volume of the Calendar of Letters and Papers, expressed the guarded opinion that "we have no reason, indeed, to think highly of the character of Cromwell's visitors;" and since then very much more evidence has come to light.

Layton—a man from the ranks, and entirely dependent on Cromwell's favour and support, to whom he showed a blasphemously expressed servility—lost no opportunity of obtaining and extorting bribes. Moreover, he was ever ready to sacrifice truth to please his masters; and wrote filthy suggestions and coarse jests with obvious relish. Cromwell rewarded him with much ecclesiastical preferment, which included the deanery of York. He utilised his position by pawning the cathedral plate, which the Chapter had to redeem after his death. He died at Brussels in 1545; England became apparently too warm a place for him, for he pestered Cromwell to get him "placed beyond the seas."

Of Legh we have a vivid picture drawn by his occasional assistant-visitor, Ap Rice. He was a young man of "intolerable elation," and of an "insolent and pompatique" manner. He dressed himself after a most costly fashion. At his visitations he was accompanied by twelve liveried attendants; he bullied and browbeat the Superiors,

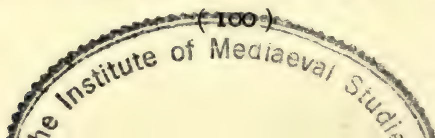
rating certain abbots most roundly for not meeting him at the abbey gates, even when they had had no intimation of his visit. The almost open way in which he extorted heavy fines, passed to his private account, was systematic. His accusations and bullyings went so far that his colleague Ap Rice felt constrained to write a protest to Cromwell, but he implored Cromwell to keep his communication private, as otherwise he felt confident that he would receive "irrecoverable harm" (a euphemism for murder) from "the rufflers and serving men" by whom Legh was surrounded. Legh took equal delight with Layton in telling coarse tales which were his own invention. Sanders, the Roman Catholic historian, does not hesitate to lay still more serious accusations against him. As a reward for his unhallowed zeal, Legh was made master of the Hospital of Sherburn, co. Durham, an office which he disgracefully abused, to "the utter disinheritance, decay, and destruction of the ancient and godly foundation of the same house," as was stated in depositions made in 1557 before a Commission of Inquiry.

Ap Rice himself, the accuser of Legh, had been in certain grievous trouble, was abjectly subservient to Cromwell, and was obviously, from his own letters, willing, nay eager, to give his reports the necessary colouring.

Dr. London, who made for himself a greater reputation as a spoiler than a maligner of monasteries, and who was particularly cruel towards the

friars, held considerable preferments. He was canon of Windsor, dean of Osney, dean of Wallingford, and from 1526 to 1542 warden of New College. London also distinguished himself as a visitor of nunneries, a position for which he was eminently unfit through the coarseness of his life. Archbishop Cranmer calls him "a stout and filthy prebendary of Windsor." "I have seen complaints," writes Bishop Burnet, "of Dr. London's soliciting nuns." His after-life was peculiarly odious; he was put to open penance for double adultery with a mother and daughter; and being subsequently convicted of perjury had to ride with his face to the horse's tail through Windsor, Reading, and Newbury, and was then committed to the Fleet prison, where he died in 1543.

Another reason for distrusting the report of the visitors, even if their letters and other extant disproving documents did not exist, is the hasty nature of their visits. Is it for one moment credible that these two or three men, in those days of difficult locomotion, could have made any true examination into the affairs and morality of some 10,000 monks and nuns in less than six months? The rough estimate of the religious of those days is usually put at 8000; but it is forgotten that the visitors' injunctions ordered the instant dismissal of the inmates under twenty-four years of age, as well as those who had been professed under the age of twenty; so that about 2000 more would be driven out by Legh and Layton and their



colleagues, without a fraction of pension, in addition to the 8000 still resident when the actual suppression was enforced.

Bad as are the reports of the extant *Comperta*, there was a limit even to the eager credulity or the lying imagination of the visitors. For very shame's sake in many cases, particularly where the house was under the patronage of some highly-placed nobleman, such men as Legh and Layton could not, or dare not, allege any grave misconduct. Out of 155 houses on which they report, 43 escaped with no reflection on their morality. In the visited dioceses a number of houses are not even named, presumably, as Dr. Gairdner thinks, because there was nothing to say against them. Even in the numerous houses where gross evil was reported, the charges were only levelled, on the average, against a decided minority.

Happily, however, for the general and particular character of England's religious houses and their inmates in the sixteenth century, it was found to be impossible to carry out the work of suppression of even the smaller houses on the vague charges of the visitors, who had confined themselves, for the most part, to scandal and slander, and had made no regular financial statements.

On the passage of the Bill for suppressing those foundations under £200 a year, in the spring of 1536, only a few months after the completion of the visitors' *Comperta*, the Crown issued a commission to report on the number of professed

inmates and their dependents, and the "conversation of their lives," together with a statement as to the income, debts, and condition of the buildings. The commissioners were to be six in number for each district—three officials, namely, an auditor, the receiver for each county, and a clerk; whilst the remaining three were to be nominated by the Crown from "discreet persons" of the neighbourhood. The returns of these mixed commissions for the counties of Huntingdon, Leicester, Rutland, Sussex, and Warwick, with a condensed form for Lancashire, were known to exist when Dr. Gairdner issued the Calendar dealing with the documents of 1536. Some of the very houses against which Legh and Layton had breathed forth their pestilential tales were found by the second set of visitors—who were not Cromwell's tools, but now that their suppression was resolved the Crown cared little or nothing whether the moral report was good or bad—to be "of good and virtuous conversation," and the whole tone of the reports is for the most part so favourable that Dr. Gairdner remarks: "The country gentlemen who sat on the commission somehow came to a very different conclusion from that of Drs. Layton and Legh."

A few years after Dr. Gairdner had thus expressed himself, Abbot Gasquet came upon the reports of the mixed commissions relative to the religious houses of Gloucestershire (and city of Bristol), Hampshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Wilts,

which had been misplaced. Those for Norfolk have been printed by Dr. Jessopp in the *Norfolk Miscellany*, those for Hampshire by Dr. Cox in Volume II of *Victoria County History of Hants.*, and the whole of them by Dr. Gasquet in the *Dublin Review* for April, 1894. Space forbids mentioning more than that house after house is named as "of good conversation," "of good religious conversation," "of honest conversation," "of convenient conversation," "of very good name and fame," or "of virtuous living." Occasional defaulters from a virtuous or orderly life are named, which make the generally favourable reports all the more valuable. The extant reports deal with 376 religious men and women; of this number only twenty-two men and three women are noted as not of good repute. The great relief that the houses were to the poor and distressed of the district is mentioned time after time by the commissioners, who were occasionally bold enough to beg for the continuance of a particular foundation.

The foul charges of Legh, Layton, and their colleagues had served their turn; many copies of the abstracts of their minutes were made for circulation, several of which are still extant, and amid the odium of these malignant lies the suppression of the monasteries became possible. But it is quite clear that those in power believed in their hearts the reports of the mixed commissions of officials and country gentlemen instead of the egregious tales of Cromwell's tools. Had the

charges made in the first visitation been accepted as true, it is quite impossible to believe that the guilty ones would have been pensioned, as was so frequently the case. Thus it can be proved that out of twenty-seven nuns accused of incontinence seventeen were pensioned. Various Superiors accused by the first visitors of criminal offences were afterwards given high secular preferment in the Church.

One of the specially bad cases, if Legh is to be believed, who visited the house on 29 September, 1535, was Chertsey Abbey; he reported that seven were incontinent, four guilty of unnatural sin, and two apostate. The house at that time only consisted of an abbot and fourteen monks, so that there were but two of virtuous life! Two years later Chertsey was surrendered. The fickle King at that time was establishing "King Henry VIII.'s new monastery of Holy Trinity, Bisham," to consist of an abbot and thirteen Benedictine monks, who were to pray for the King and Queen Jane. To this short-lived new foundation Henry VIII. actually transferred the abbot of Chertsey and his whole convent in their entirety, although Legh two years before had solemnly reported them to be the foulest set of monks that he had anywhere discovered! The King had wit enough to use the lies of his first set of visitors to further his own covetous ends; but he could never have done more than pretend to credit them.

Among all the foul scandals set afloat by the

King's first visitors, and afterwards supported by the discredited Bale, none was worse than that charged against the last abbot of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, John Essex (alias Vokes). Another of the monks, who was incriminated with his superior, was John Digon, the last prior of the house. If the odious charges had been true, it is hardly possible to believe that they would have been pensioned; but recently a strong piece of evidence has unexpectedly been brought to light through Abbot Gasquet drawing attention, in the *Downside Review*, to a small volume published in 1590 by Thomas Twyne, a learned doctor of medicine, containing a Latin tract by his father, John Twyne, the celebrated antiquary. It is entitled *De rebus Albionicis Britannicis atque Anglicis Commentariorum libri duo.* In the introduction we are told that John Twyne, who died in 1581, and left this tract behind him relative to the early antiquities of this island, was in the opinion of competent judges a most learned man. But it is the form in which the treatise is drawn up, and not the actual contents, that is of so much interest from a monastic standpoint. It is cast in the shape of a conversation supposed to be held between Abbot Essex, Prior Digon, and Nicholas Wotton, the first Dean of Canterbury after the ejection of the monks, a man of brilliant gifts. Though the conversation is imaginary, John Twyne tells his son that he had often heard these three men carry on similar learned discussions, and was evidently on terms of

intimacy with them. The son entered Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 1560, and this treatise was written for his information when on the eve of proceeding to the University. Had two of these men been odious reprobates, the father could not possibly have held them up to his young son as models of good scholarship. Moreover, he goes out of his way to praise them in no slight terms, telling his son that "above all the many people whom I have ever known I have especially revered two, because in their days they were above all others remarkable for the high character of their morals (*morum gravitatem summam*), and for their remarkable acquaintance with all antiquity; they were, if you know not already, John Vokes and John Digon. The first was the most worthy (*dignissimus*) abbot, and the second the most upright (*integerrimus*) prior of the ancient monastery of St. Augustine."*

When the time comes for the writing of a true and fearless Life and Times of Henry VIII. (a monarch who has been aptly dubbed "the professional widower") by some thorough and conscientious student of history, there can be no reasonable doubt that Canon Dixon's statement will be amply substantiated when he wrote:—"I am inclined to believe that in the reign of Henry VIII. the monasteries were not worse, but better,

* Those who wish to see this exceedingly rare book for themselves, and to read other particulars of the last abbot, may like to know that there is a copy at the British Museum, press-mark 600, *b*, 47.

than they had been previously, and that they were doing fairly the work for which they had been founded."

Be this as it may, the time has surely come for all educated English Churchmen to cease to gird at monks and nuns, or to sneer at the vowed life; for it is to such as these that England owes its conversion to the Faith, whether we think of the Celtic missionaries from the North, or of St. Augustine and his forty companions from the South—all trained in the "School of the Divine Service."

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUDING WORDS

ALTOGETHER apart from the outrageously scandalous way in which the suppression of the English monasteries was carried out—a fact that any historian worth his salt is now bound to admit—it is a wholesome sign of the times to find that English Churchmen are gradually coming round to a general acceptance of the religious and social blessings that came to this country through monasticism during the many centuries in which it played so important a part in the national life. This is certainly the estimate formed by those amongst us who study the history of the vowed religious life with sober devoutness. There are few churchmen of the immediate past whose judgments can be followed with more implicit trust than the late Dean of St. Paul's; and there are none among our living churchmen, who, from patient research, are more capable of uttering a reliable opinion on monasticism than the present Dean of Durham.

Concluding Words

Dr. Church penned a beautiful and comprehensive chapter on the discipline of a Norman monastery in his *Life of St. Anselm*. From it we borrow a single paragraph:

"In an age when there was so much lawlessness, and when the idea of self-control was so uncommon in the ordinary life of man, the monasteries were schools of discipline; and there were no others. They upheld and exhibited the great, then almost the original, idea, that men needed to rule and govern themselves; that they could do it, and that no use of life was noble and perfect without this ruling. It was hard and rough discipline, like the times, which were hard and rough. But they did good work then, and for future times, by impressing on society the idea of self-control and self-maintained discipline. And crude as they were, they were capable of nurturing noble natures, single hearts, keen and powerful intellects, glowing and unselfish affections."

Dean Kitchin, when commenting on the division of administration among the obedientiaries or office-holding monks of St. Swithun's, writes:

"It must never be forgotten that this organisation of offices within the convent was useful in its best days. Where in the whole world of the thirteenth century can we meet with so completely framed and active a system as that of a Benedictine House? Not, certainly, in the feudal castle, with its fierce warrior-lord and turbulent horde of 'devils, not men,' as the English Chronicle calls them; not

in the mediæval city, with powers and privileges still uncertain and precarious, though there was here, perhaps, a nearer parallel than elsewhere; not even in King's courts, which came and went, and had not yet developed their complete *chancellerie*, nor had learnt the importance of ministers and departments of administration. In a well-ordered monastery, with its eighteen or twenty obedientiaries, life went on smoothly and prosperously. There only were the divisions of time fully understood, and the importance of time appreciated; there only were the departments of work, the directions of industry, carefully marked out; there too the main principle of official responsibility began early to be asserted."

As to "the stories of corruption and immorality on which sinful minds have ever fastened greedily," writes the Dean in another place, "they have attracted far more than a fair amount of notice and attention, and have given the excuse for those interested and truthless persons, who, in the Reformation time and in later days too, have thought to honour God by blackening wholesale the monastic character. *Deo per mendacium gratificari* is still far too often the guiding line of many a polemic, who tries to win his battle by flinging dirt in the faces of his opponents. . . . In these respects the brethren at St. Swithun's may look the world in the face without fear."

It is not within the province of an English Churchman to deal with the maintenance of mon-

asticism on our shores by those of the Roman obedience, save to say that its flickering stealthy flame survived continuously in glimmers of light in spite of bitter and now obsolete statutes; and further to note that the oppressive action that drove large numbers of "religious" men and women from France to England a century ago has been renewed in recent days. Those most competent to judge have no hesitation in believing that the various orders of religious men and women of the Roman communion in this country are doing an inestimable service—educational, charitable, and spiritual—to those of their own faith. Our best literary critics recognise too the genuine work that not a few are doing in elucidating history, and in other ways adding to the general sum of human knowledge; whilst all Englishmen can well afford to be proud of the attainments and researches of Dr. Gasquet, the abbot-president of the English Benedictines.

With regard to the marvellous growth of community life in the Church of England during the past half-century, it is only necessary to consult the pages of the *Official Year Book*. In the issue for 1904, seven closely-printed pages are occupied with terse accounts of the houses and work of Sisterhoods living under the vowed life, whose members are the very salt of the Church in their devotion to the religious life and to the discharge of corporal works of mercy.

As to Brotherhoods, the growth has been

steady; whilst certain rash attempts to establish communities of men have had but an ephemeral existence, others (notably the Cowley Fathers, the Order of the Resurrection at Mirfield, and the Society of the Sacred Mission) are doing a noble and apparently an abiding work.

Explicit

J. PALMER, PRINTER, CAMBRIDGE.

1915

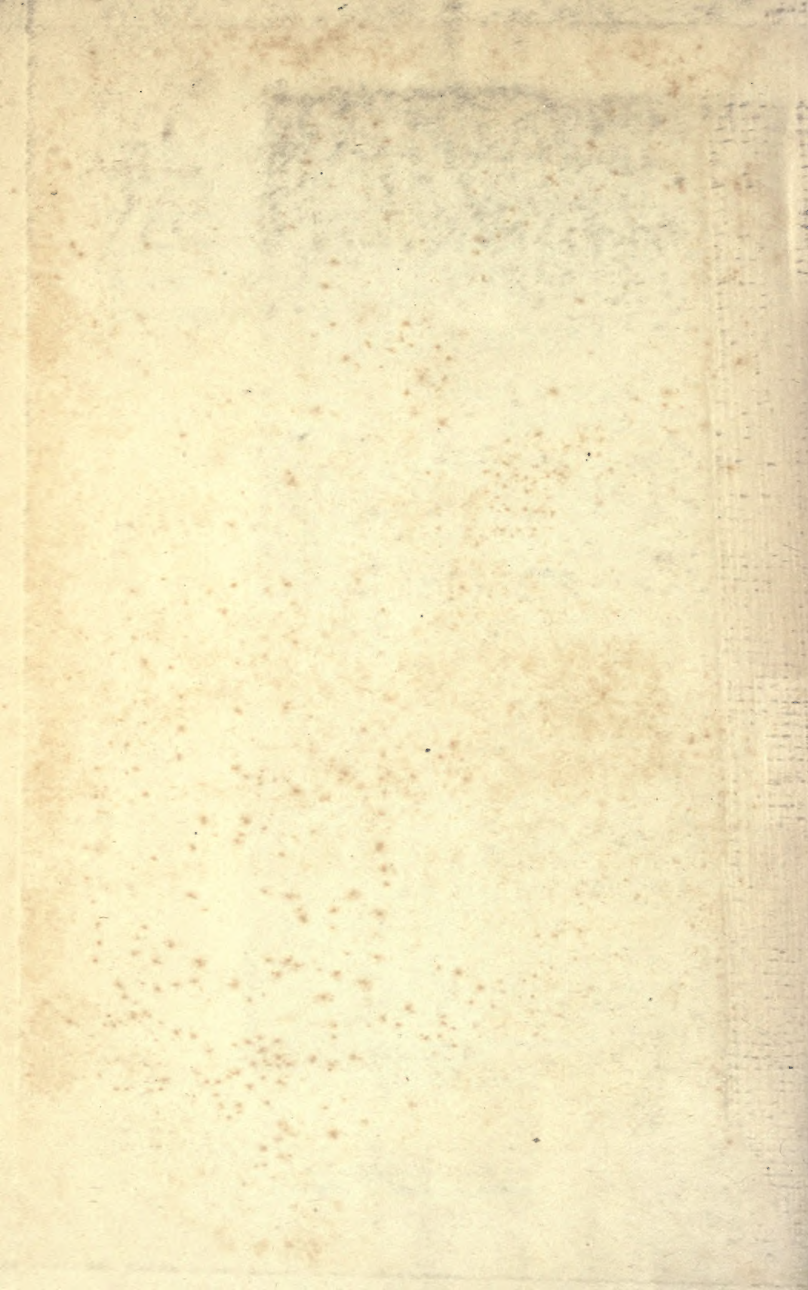
THE PERSHORE BENEDICTINES.

Viscount Halifax has given an emphatic contradiction to the statement that the Benedictine Community at Pershore has come to an end owing to the fact that Dom Anselm Mardon, the late Superior, has left the Church of England and gone back to Caldey. When the Benedictines of Caldey Island went over to Rome, Brother Anselm was the only monk professed under Anglican auspices who remained loyal to the Church of England. Pershore Abbey, which belonged to the Caldey Community, was, at the urgent request of the donor, Mr. Henry Wise, returned to him, and the house and grounds have been used for carrying on the contemplative life, the Rev. W. G. C. Prideaux, an Oblate of Caldey, acting as chaplain and spiritual director. The *Tablet* assumed that the effort had collapsed with the return of Dom Anselm to Caldey, but we have the assurance of Lord Halifax that the Community will continue as before under the authorisation and blessing of the Bishop of Worcester. The movement has also the sympathy of the Primate, and it was begun under the blessing and sanction of his predecessor, Archbishop Temple. One of the

ost noteworthy features in the later history of e Church of England is the revival of the religious life, of which Cowley and Mirfield are such notable examples. The work of these communities has been extended with remarkable results to India, South Africa, and elsewhere; and it is hoped that the appeal of the Rev. A. C. Scott, vicar of St. Mary and St. John, Cowley, for funds to erect a churchyard cross as a memorial to Father Benson, the revered founder of the Cowley Fathers, will meet with an adequate response.

... luncheon, told how twenty years ago he started the work with only a sovereign in his pocket. It was won by faith, by inspiration, from the tragic death of his predecessor, whose voice he heard, and by the wonderful stability of England. In no other country could the work have gone on undisturbed during the war.

Cardinal Bourne, who also spoke, emphasised the generosity of England to the alien.



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