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THE ANGEL
OF SYON



DOM ADAM HAMILTON O.S.B.

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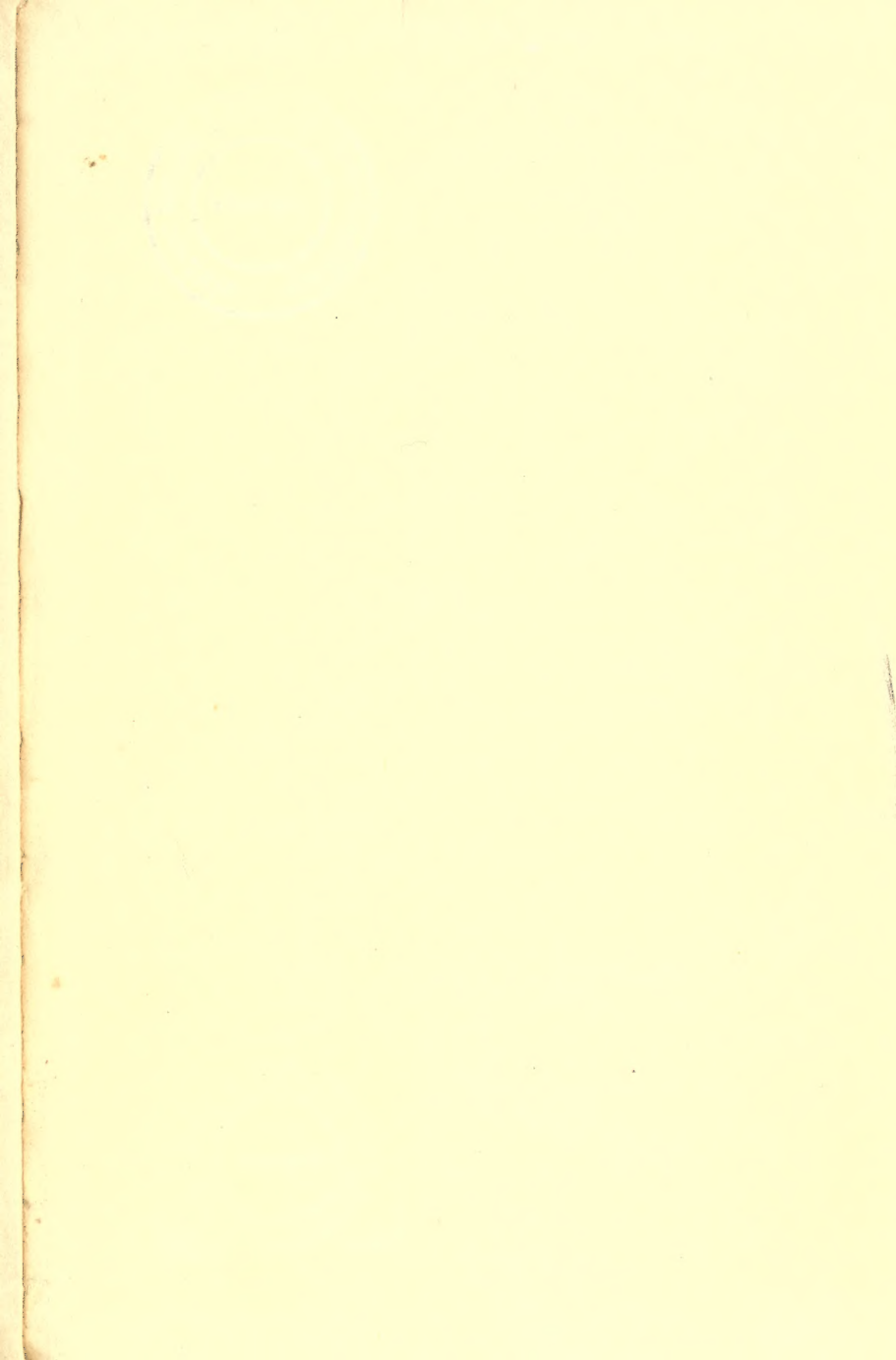


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THE ANGEL OF SYON

D. LEANDER LEMOINE

ABBAS ET VISITATOR PROVINCIÆ GALLICÆ

*Congregationis Casinensis a Primæva Observantia
Ordinis Sancti Benedicti*

*Opus cui titulus — THE ANGEL OF SYON: LIFE OF
BLESSED RICHARD REYNOLDS — a R. P. D. Adamo Hamilton
nostræ Provinciæ monacho elaboratum, ut typis publice edatur
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[Face title-page.]



BLESSED RICHARD REYNOLDS, O.S.S.
Martyred at Tyburn for the Holy Catholic Faith, May 4, 1535.

[Face title-page.]

The Angel of Syon

THE LIFE AND MARTYRDOM OF BLESSED
RICHARD REYNOLDS, BRIDGETTINE MONK
OF SYON, MARTYRED AT TYBURN,
MAY 4, 1535

BY
DOM ADAM HAMILTON, O.S.B.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE BRIDGETTINES
OF SYON, WRITTEN BY FATHER ROBERT
PARSONS, S.J., ABOUT THE YEAR 1595,
EDITED FROM A MS. COPY AT
SYON ABBEY, CHUDLEIGH



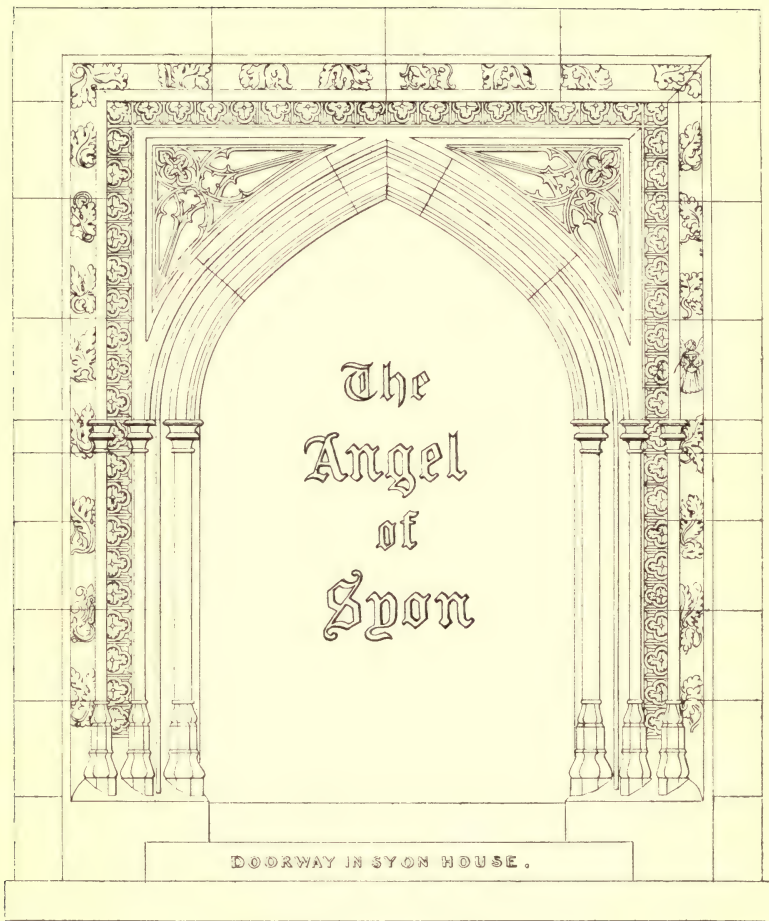
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1905





A SONG OF SYON

In honour of Blessed Richard Reynolds, Martyr, of the ancient Order of Our Most Holy Saviour, known as that of St Bridget of Sweden, who suffered for the Faith under Henry VIII., 4th May 1535.

"Diligit Dominus portas Sion, super omnia tabernacula Jacob."

"The Lord loveth the gates of Syon above all the tabernacles of Jacob."

PS. lxxxvi. 2.

RICHARD most Blessed ! Father thou and Brother,
Born of our House, as of our queenly Mother,
To thee we turn for help as to no other,
Martyr of Syon !

We the sole link with England's past, remaining
True to our ancient Faith and holy training,
Call on thy succour, now that Faith is waning,
Love growing colder !

In exile's hour thy hand would ever lead us,
Through thorny paths thy help would gently speed us,
Now in the haven, still thine ear will heed us,
Crying from Syon !

Martyr most brave, whose faith would never falter,
'Neath a king's frown, or Tyburn's knife and halter,
Gain us like faith, who round thy Syon's altar
Joy in thy triumph !

To

THE LADY ABBESS
AND THE BRIDGETTINE NUNS OF SYON
OF THE ORDER OF ST SAVIOUR

WHICH VENERABLE COMMUNITY ALONE, AMONG THOSE THAT SANCTI-
FIED ENGLAND IN THE AGES OF FAITH, WAS SAVED FROM THE
COMMON WRECK AND TO-DAY FLOURISHES ON ITS
NATIVE SOIL AT CHUDLEIGH, IN THE DIOCESE
OF PLYMOUTH,

THIS LIFE OF A BLESSED MARTYR OF THEIR ORDER AND COMMUNITY,
WHOSE CLOISTERED LIFE OF PRAYER AND SPIRIT OF
MONASTIC SIMPLICITY ARE THEIR INHERITANCE
AND THEIR PORTION,

Is Dedicated by the Writer

IN THE HOPE OF THEIR PRAYERS DURING HIS LIFE
AND AFTER HIS DEATH

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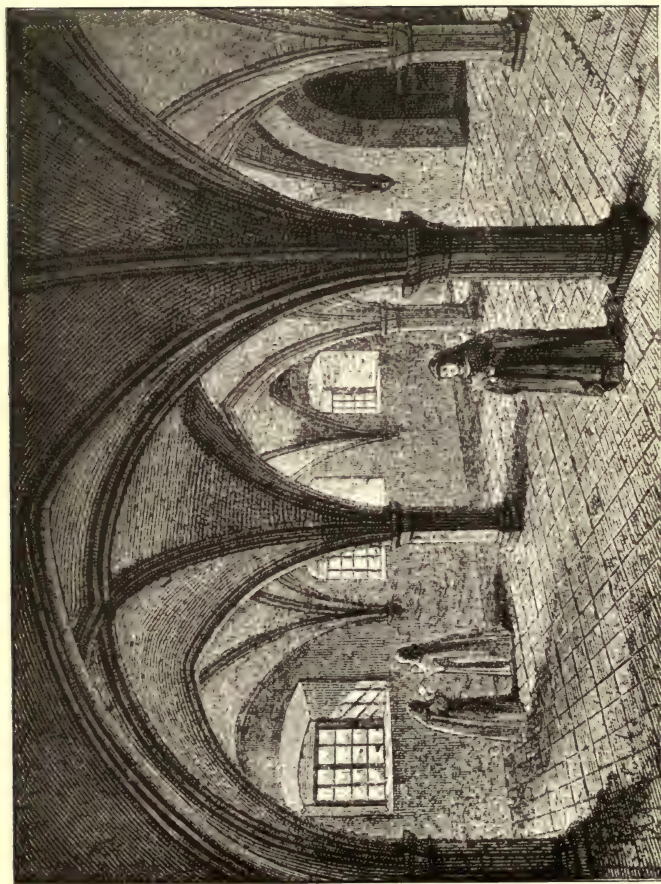
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THE MONASTERY OF WADSTENA IN SWEDEN, FOUNDED BY ST BRIDGET.

Interior of the Chapter-house of the Sisters.

THE ANGEL OF SYON

BLESSED RICHARD REYNOLDS, MARTYR,
BRIDGETTINE MONK OF SYON

HISTORICAL PREFACE

IN the year of our Lord 1406, Philippa, daughter of Henry the Fourth of England, crossed the sea with a noble retinue, to become the bride of Eric, King of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Queen Margaret, the Semiramis of the North, who had brought the three kingdoms under her sway at the Union of Calmar in 1397, was still living; but already in 1388, when Queen of Denmark and Norway, she had obtained that Eric should be joined with her in the royal title. He succeeded her at her death, six years after his marriage with Philippa, towards whom he showed himself a brutal

husband, as he had shown himself a cruel tyrant to his subjects.

But no such prospect of coming evil darkened the royal wedding festivities. Immediately after the wedding, the English princess was taken to visit the pride and glory of Sweden, the royal Abbey of Wadstena, founded by St Bridget, whose great-grandson was to be numbered among Eric's successors as Charles VIII. of Sweden. So charmed was the royal bride with the sanctity of Abbess Gerdica and her daughters, that she enrolled her name among those who were called "Sisters of the Chapter" of their community, and obtained their promise that if she should survive King Eric, she should be allowed to end her days in the cloister of Wadstena. They consoled her during her later years of suffering, and within their walls she was buried.

Among the nobles who visited Wadstena with Queen Philippa was Henry, Lord Fitzhugh, who, on seeing the zeal and fervour of the two communities, one of monks and the other of nuns, immediately made them an offer of his manor of Hinton near

Cambridge, if they would send a colony to England. He kept his promise, and two monks were sent over in 1408. Concerning this Lord Fitzhugh the Chronicler of Syon writes: "In 1426, on the 31st of December, died Henry Fitzhugh, Baron, and lord of the bed-chamber to King Henry the Fifth. Besides his being the one who brought this Order into England, he maintained for many years, at his own expense, some of the religious of the same Order who were sent from Vasten. He also gave to the monastery the lordship of Henton in the province of Canterbury. At his death he left twenty pounds a year, besides the above-named donation of Henton; therefore with reason he may be counted among our first and greatest benefactors, and we ought continually to pray for his soul." Another Henry, Lord Fitzhugh, died in the reign of Edward IV. His daughter, Helen, married Philip, Lord D'Arcy, ancestor to the Earls of Holderness. Henry, Lord Fitzhugh, though a great benefactor to the monastery, was not the founder of Syon. That honour belongs to King Henry V. Mass is said to this day in the church of the Syon community

for the repose of the soul of Lord Fitzhugh on his anniversary.

The charter by which Henry V. founded and endowed the Bridgettine house of Syon is dated March 3, 1415, though he had already laid its foundation-stone on the 22nd of the preceding month in the presence of Richard Clifford, Bishop of London. The charter decrees that it shall be founded "under the name of St Saviour and St Bridget of Syon, of the Order of St Augustine. And," it adds, "We will and decree that it shall be called 'The Monastery of St Saviour and St Bridget of Syon' through all succeeding ages." Beside granting it portion of the royal manor of Isleworth, King Henry endowed it largely. He made the community patrons of the vicarage of Felstead in Essex, and gave them lands belonging to various alien priories, in Sussex, Essex, Wilts, and elsewhere. The splendid Devonshire possessions of the Abbey of St Michael's Mount went to increase their estates. With the sanction of Pope Martin V., whom the king petitioned for the purpose, he made over to them the advowson of the parish churches of Yeovil and Crofton in

Somersetshire. Their lands in Devon included the manors of Otterton, Clifton, Yartcombe, Sidmouth, Axmouth, Lodres, and Budleigh, as registered in the survey taken in 1492. To his new monastery he transferred the religious from Hinton. Fresh arrivals from Wadstena helped to swell their numbers, and on February 5, 1420, thirty-five English novices, of whom twenty-four were nuns, pronounced their vows in the presence of Archbishop Chicheley.

Here we must stop, for it is not our purpose to give the history of Syon in this little volume. The monastery was suppressed in 1539. Under the leadership of Sister Catharine Palmer, the nuns withdrew to a monastery of their Order at Termonde in Flanders. In Mary's reign fifteen choir-nuns and three lay-sisters, through Cardinal Pole's influence, returned to their old home on the banks of the Thames. We read in Strype's *Memorials* (A.D. 1557): "August the 1st were the nuns of Sion enclosed in by the Bishop of London and my Lord Abbot of Westminster, certain of the Council and certain friars of that Order being present ;

their habit of sheep's colour, and made of such wool as the sheep beareth. They had then a great charge given them of their living, and warned that they were now never more to go forth of those walls as long as they lived." In less than two years they were again driven out.

The surviving monks of Syon, who resumed their habit in Queen Mary's reign, were Fathers Little, Stewkyn, and Godfrey. The nuns had been for some time in England before the ceremony of enclosure described by Strype.

At the accession of Elizabeth, the Duke of Feria obtained for them permission to leave the country, and the story of their long wanderings begins. They went first to Termonde (Dermond), where they received many English novices. Their abode was successively at Zurick Zee, Meshagan near Antwerp, at Antwerp itself, at Mechlin, and Rouen, everywhere flying before the advance of the heretic soldiery. At Rouen they stayed fourteen years. The war of the Huguenots and Leaguers placed them often in jeopardy, and the alliance between Henry of Navarre

and Elizabeth of England once more made flight imperative. On Good Friday, April 8, 1594, they left Rouen, and on May 20 arrived at Lisbon, after incredible dangers and a narrow escape from English pirates. They were then thirty in number ; six Fathers, two lay-brothers, and twenty - two nuns. In Lisbon they remained 260 years. In the course of the book we shall refer to the abortive attempt to establish the community in England in 1809. Their final return was accomplished in 1861, when they settled at Spetisbury. Thence, in 1887, Bishop Vaughan removed them to Chudleigh, where a little convent and church had been built on land given by the late Evan Baillie, Esq. It is a noteworthy coincidence that in the preceding year a gold coin of their royal founder, King Henry V., had been found in the field where their monastery stands.

The manuscript narrative of their wanderings, of which some account was given by Bishop Yopez, written early in the seventeenth century, is of wonderful interest. It is prefaced by a discourse by Father Robert Parsons, S.J. I am ignorant if this discourse has ever yet been published in English, and it has seemed well to

give it here in full, as I do not find it in the list of his printed works in Mr Gillow's Dictionary.

At some future date the "History of the Wanderings of Syon" will no doubt be carefully edited. I may close this chapter with the lines from Shakespeare, wherein Henry V. speaks of his two royal foundations of Syon and Sheen, in his prayer on the eve of the battle of Agincourt.

". . . Not to-day, O Lord,
O, not to-day, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown!
I Richard's body have interred anew;
And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
Than from it issued forced drops of blood;
Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
Who twice a day their withered hands hold up
Toward heaven, to pardon blood; and I have built
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
Still sing for Richard's soul."

Henry V., Act iv.

The greater part of what is contained in this volume had appeared in the *Poor Souls' Friend*, a little monthly periodical edited by the Bridgettine community at Chudleigh.

Besides such ancient sources as Stow, Strype, and Anthony à Wood, Aungier's

History of Syon, a copious repertory of information, but not free from errors, has been of great help to me in my work. Among more recently published books, Miss Bateson's *Cambridge Grace Book B.*, and the *Catalogue of Syon Library* have furnished the means of tracing some hitherto unknown epochs in Blessed Richard's career, while Fr. Bridgett's, Abbot Gasquet's, and Dom Bede Camm's labours, with Cooper's *Athenæ Cantabrigienses* and *Life of the Lady Margaret*, have supplied the too few illustrations which have been given of our martyr's university career and the close of his days. To the Lady Abbess of Syon, to Dom Norbert Birt, Dom Gilbert Dolan, and Dom Oswald Hunter-Blair, O.S.B., I owe a debt of gratitude for help most kindly given in searching the manuscripts in the British Museum and elsewhere, as well as to the Rev. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, the learned editor of the *Exeter Diocesan Registers*. The copy of the historical discourse by Father Parsons among the Syon manuscripts, which in this volume follows the Life, has this note appended to it: "The original of this Book being much

decayed, copies were written, and this copy was finished in the year of our Lord 1841." The transcriber in her orthography, especially of proper names, usually adheres to her original. I have transcribed the 1841 copy without any alteration.

BUCKFAST ABBEY,
Feast of St Bridget, 1904.

In obedience to the decrees of the Holy See, I here protest that in using the title of saint or martyr, and in all I have written concerning the virtues or miracles of any person mentioned in this book, as in everything else, I intend to submit myself and all I have written, without reserve, to the judgment of the same Apostolic See.





ST BIRGITA.

ST BRIDGET OF SWEDEN.

From a Painting at Stockholm.

CHAPTER I

ENGLAND AT THE CLOSE OF THE FIFTEENTH
CENTURY—MARGARET BEAUFORT, COUNTESS
OF RICHMOND—BLESSED JOHN FISHER—
FUTURE MARTYRS AT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY

DURING the latter part of the reign of Henry VII. and the earlier years of Henry VIII., the outwardly tranquil estate of the Church in England did not leave men altogether without warnings of the wrath to come. The Tudor sovereigns excelled in the art of fostering an attitude of obsequious courtliness on the part of the dignified clergy, and the wisest and holiest in the realm viewed with alarm the consequent growth of worldliness and religious indifference among the people. But even those whose forebodings were most prophetic did not ignore the magnificent examples of

sanctity which adorned every class and profession of English society in that age.

This thought has been powerfully brought home to the writer, while engaged on the work of bringing together into a biographical sketch the scattered details he could find in authors of that period concerning Blessed Richard Reynolds, whose angelic countenance and angelic holiness of life strikingly impressed those who have left on record their personal converse with him. Their expressions have suggested the title given to these chapters. But before beginning to relate what is known of the martyr's history, it will be well to allude briefly to some holy personages who were largely instrumental in shaping his career.

Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby, daughter of John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, and mother of King Henry VII., has been portrayed to the life by her confessor, Blessed John Fisher, martyr, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church and Bishop of Rochester. A few sentences from the sermon preached by the holy bishop at her funeral, will give the truest description of the Lady

Margaret as she was known to one enlightened by the wisdom that is not of this world.

“She was of singular easiness to be spoken unto, and full courteous answer she would make to all that came unto her. Unkind she would not be unto any creature, nor forgetful of any kindness or service done to her. She was of singular wisdom, far passing the common rate of women. Whom I have many times heard say, that if the Christian princes would have warred upon the enemies of the Faith, she would be glad to go follow the host and help to wash their clothes, for the love of Jesus.” In the holy bishop’s hands she had made vows of chastity and obedience, and although he was her director, he wrote: “I learned more from her great virtue than ever I could teach to her.”

The Lady Margaret was well known to the monks and nuns of Syon, when, in her declining years, she occupied herself with the care of her royal grandchildren, in the neighbouring palace of Sheen, whence she writes to the Duke of Ormond: “Blessed be God, the king, the queen, and all our sweet children be in good health.” She could not but be devoted to the

renowned Lancastrian foundation. On the 21st of April 1492, "at her mediation and instance, and in her right high presence," an agreement was signed between Abbess Gibbs of Syon, and Thomas, Prior of Our Lady and St Nicholas of Spalding, when the Lady Margaret charged herself with settling any future difficulties that might arise. On this and other occasions she would necessarily meet the then Prioress of Syon, Sister Anne de la Pole, called in the will of Cecily, Duchess of York, mother of King Edward IV., "my daughter Anne," though she was in reality her granddaughter. These noble ladies, representatives of the houses of York and Lancaster, were at one in their forgetfulness of earthly greatness out of love for the humility of Christ.

There were perhaps other bonds that drew the Lady Margaret to Syon. When her ill-fated brother-in-law, Sir William Stanley, was beheaded on Tower Hill, February 16, 1495, King Henry allowed from his privy purse the expenses of his funeral in the Bridgettine church. At Syon, too, Thomas Stanley, the second Earl of Derby, was buried with great pomp in 1521. It seems to have been the

favourite place of burial of the family of her third husband. But this is a digression from our subject.

Two colleges were founded in the University of Cambridge by the Countess of Richmond, acting on the advice of Blessed John Fisher—Christ's and St John's. It is with the former of these only that we are concerned in this Life of the Blessed martyr of Syon. On the same site Henry VI. had begun a college called "God's House," but from insufficiency of revenue it had not prospered. The Lady Margaret, in virtue of a licence from her son, Henry VII., refounded it for a master, twelve fellows, and forty-seven scholars. The proposal originated with the Bishop of Rochester, who was appointed visitor for life of Christ's College, while the Countess of Richmond reserved certain rooms over those of the master, whereof Bishop Fisher in her absence was to have the use during his lifetime. The royal licence was granted May 1, 1505. The chapel was built in 1506. Some beautiful plate belonging to the foundress is still treasured at the college.

In the very first batch of youthful scholars

—in those days fourteen or fifteen was the usual age for entering the university—were two of those predestined to be martyrs for Christ, and beatified by Pope Leo XIII., Richard Reynolds and William Exmew. United for a few years at the university, then living apart each his own cloistered life, one at Syon and the other at the London Charterhouse, these two noble first-fruits of the saintly Countess's foundation won at last the martyr's crown by the same terrible death, at the same place, within a few weeks of each other; the holy bishop, only three days after the second of these his children had poured out his blood at Tyburn, dying for the same glorious cause by the executioner's axe on Tower Hill. We shall see how Blessed John Fisher in his direst need sought counsel from the holy Bridgettine. But as these two fair boys, true *flores martyrum*, as St Philip Neri would have called them, heard Mass together in the College chapel, or met in hall, or conversed together in their walks, did no dream of the future draw them together with an attraction that was felt, though not understood? In the streets of Cambridge they may have met another future

martyr, if, as it seems likely, Blessed Thomas Greene, Carthusian martyr, is the same as Thomas Greenwood, D.D., of St John's College, Cambridge.

It is, perhaps, singular that among the fairly numerous authorities who have written concerning Blessed Richard, not one should have mentioned his birthplace or parentage, especially as he was renowned as a great preacher and divine in his own time. In the last of these chapters I hope to do something towards solving the mystery. None the less does his image stand out clear and distinct, as described by his contemporaries, whose testimony shall be given in their own words later on. At the outset of this brief Life we may indicate the chief features of the description transmitted to us. His brilliant acquirements, both in humanistic studies, which have caused a modern writer to style him "one of the foremost scholars of his day," and in the sacred sciences, are admitted on all hands. His eloquence in the pulpit, perhaps, earned for him, in his own time, a greater reputation than even his learning. Friends and enemies alike bear unanimous witness to his sanctity. Two independent

writers, of whom one certainly, and the other most probably, knew him by sight, describe his countenance and outward aspect as "angelic," reflecting the radiant purity of his soul, and the expression has been quoted, but not impugned, by early Protestant writers. In our next we shall trace his career from the time of his entering Christ's College.

As he was professed at Syon in 1513, and the Bridgettine Rule forbade the brothers of the Order to be admitted before their twenty-fifth year—probably it was enough if the year was begun—the year of his birth was in all likelihood 1488 or 1489.

There is a peculiar motive for occupying ourselves with the lives of English martyrs, over and above the graces always vouchsafed to all such as glorify God in His saints. Our English martyrs were more than others distinguished by an ardent love of their country, and their dying prayer for England is a touching feature of their acts. In great part that prayer has been heard. There is no other example of an heretical sect spontaneously and within its own bosom restoring, one after another, those articles of Catholic belief

which its founders had abjured. Yet this is what is now in progress, and has been in progress for sixty years in the Anglican body. True, that body remains an heretical and schismatical sect, as long as it refuses submission to the Vicar of Christ. But many believe, not without reason, that herein we are witnessing the remote preparation for a Catholic England. That glorious return will be hastened if we keep alive among us the memory of our martyrs, among whom there can be hardly any whose confession of the Faith surpasses in the splendour of its heroism, that of the Angel of Syon.

CHAPTER II

LIFE AT CAMBRIDGE

IT is in the Proctors' accounts of Cambridge University for 1504-1505, that we meet the earliest certain indication in the career of Richard Reynolds, the martyr of Syon. The two Proctors, Robert Cutler and John Watson, of whom the latter was subsequently Master of Christ's College, in entering on their books the list of "cautions" deposited by the youthful "questionists" or candidates for degrees, have recorded his name, the last of twenty-six, and his payment of two gold nobles, equal, according to the value of the noble in the reign of Henry VII., to twenty shillings. In the following year we find his name on the list of Bachelors of Arts, and it is of interest to see in the M.A. list on the same page the



SS. BRIDGET AND CATHARINE OF SWEDEN.

Frontispiece to the Altomünster Edition of St Bridget's Revelations, A.D. 1680.

name of Fewterer, destined to be his superior at Syon monastery, though not his imitator in firmness at the hour of trial.

The year 1505 was marked by Lady Margaret's refounding of God's House at Christ's College, with a master, twelve fellows, and forty-seven scholars; and we learn on good authority, as already indicated, that with his fellow-martyr, Blessed William Exmew, the Angel of Syon was among the first scholars of the new foundation. As he took his degree of B.A. in this year, he had probably been at the university during the two years immediately preceding. Where his grammatical studies were gone through, is not recorded; but in view of what I have to say in the last chapter, it may be well to note that Hugh Oldham, Lady Margaret's former chaplain, had been promoted in 1504 to the See of Exeter, of which church he had been archdeacon from the year 1492.

Of the hardy and frugal routine observed at Lady Margaret's foundations, when Blessed Richard was a scholar at Christ's, Cardinal Newman gives a succinct description. "From an account which has been preserved in one

of the colleges at Cambridge we are able to extract the following *horarium* of a student's day. He got up between four and five; from five to six he assisted at Mass and heard an exhortation. He then studied or attended the schools till ten, which was the dinner-hour. The meal, which seems also to have been a breakfast, was not sumptuous; it consisted of beef, in small messes for four persons, and a pottage made of its gravy and oatmeal. From dinner to five P.M. he either studied or gave instructions to others, when he went to supper, which was the principal meal of the day, though scarcely more plentiful than dinner. Afterwards, problems were discussed and other studies pursued till nine or ten; and then half an hour was devoted to walking or running about, that they might not go to bed with cold feet; the expedient of hearth or stove for the purpose was out of the question." The statutes forbade the nourishing of dogs or birds in the college, and required that in all elections the poor should be preferred.

The years spent in the schools at Cambridge, those impressionable years in which mind and heart are most open to influence from surround-

ings, had necessarily much to do with moulding the character of the future monk and martyr of Christ. With Blessed John Fisher as visitor of the college and chancellor of the university, a high ideal was certain to be kept before the eyes of the students. Bishop Fisher's one object in life was the formation of a saintly clergy: "All fear of God, also the contempt of God, cometh and is grounded of the clergy," was his maxim as expressed in his own language. Seminaries, afterwards ordered by the Fathers of the Council of Trent, as yet were not; the old Cathedral schools had been gradually forsaken for the universities, and priests were ordained direct from the latter. The holy bishop sought to bring an ecclesiastical atmosphere into the lives of the scholars, and all the fellows of Christ's were to be ordained priests within a year from their election. Besides the Mass of our Blessed Lady, and another for the Holy Souls, a third daily Mass was of obligation to be said in the college chapel as follows: on Sunday, in honour of the Blessed Trinity; on Monday, of the angels; on Tuesday, of the martyrs; on Wednesday, of

the apostles ; on Thursday, of the virgins ; on Friday, of the confessors ; on Saturday, of all saints.

There were many other exquisitely beautiful practices of piety in use at Cambridge. Henry VI., who continued to be recognised as a founder when God's House had been transformed into Christ's College, had ordained in the statutes of King's College, that every evening the choristers of his royal college, at the sound of a bell, wearing surplices and ranged round a statue of the Blessed Virgin, should "sing solemnly and to the best of their skill an antiphon of the Blessed Virgin, with the verse Ave Maria . . . and the prayer *Meritis et precibus.*" This was indeed a usual practice in colleges. As our devout student offered his daily homage to Mary with the gladness of a loving heart, did an indefinable desire of that martyr's crown, that was to add its lustre to his radiant purity, ever steal over him? In souls so forestalled by grace, such a desire will at times make itself felt ; though only for the privileged few is it prophetic.

The noble Countess of Richmond died in

the Abbey of Westminster, on the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul, 1509, only four years after her foundation of Christ's College, which she watched over with a mother's care. It is related that one day, looking from a window of her rooms over the gateway into the court below, as one of the deans called out a scholar to receive punishment for some juvenile delinquency, she could not help calling from her window, "Lente! lente!" (gently, gently), out of compassion for the culprit. The holy Bishop of Rochester in her funeral sermon thus described the tenor of her daily life:—"At her uprising, which commonly was not long after five of the clock, she began certain devotions, and so after them the matins of our Lady, with one of her gentlewomen; then she came into her closet (private chapel), also with her chaplain she said the matins of the day; and after that daily heard four or five masses upon her knees, so continuing in her prayers and devotions unto the hour of dinner, which of the eating day was ten of the clock, and upon the fasting day eleven. After dinner, full truly she would go her stations to three altars daily; daily her dirges and commenda-

tions she would say, and her evensong before supper, besides many other prayers and psalters of David throughout the year; and at night before she went to bed she failed not to resort unto her chapel and there a large quarter of an hour to occupy her devotions. . . . When she was in health, she failed not to say the crown of our Lady which, after the manner of Rome, containeth sixty and three Aves, and at every Ave to make a kneeling." This is what is now known as the Bridgettine rosary.

We may well be pardoned this digression, as illustrative of the spirit that influenced the foundress of the school in which Blessed Richard began his university career.

Of his brilliant success in his course of Arts, and the special bent of his studies, we are left in no doubt. Cardinal Pole, who knew him well, left on record that in the liberal arts his acquirements were extraordinary "and drawn from the first sources. . . . Not only was he a man of most holy life, but he was the only English monk well versed in the three principal languages" (Latin, Greek, and Hebrew). Here we may fittingly note that it was an Italian of Pole's household, who had

often conversed with Reynolds, that described him as a man "with the countenance of an angel and an angelic spirit"—an expression almost identical with that of Father Maurice Chauncey, the Carthusian Prior of Sheen Anglorum: "of angelic countenance and angelic life."

A recent biographer, who styles him "one of the foremost scholars of his day," is referring, not to his theological learning, of which more hereafter, but of those studies of which the foundation was laid during his course of Arts. Their testimony is borne out by the titles of the books he brought with him to Syon. Apart from theological works, we find, side by side with Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Lucan, and the like, a number of Italian writers of the classical renaissance. He was a humanist, just as Fisher, Pole, and More were humanists. In England humanistic studies were not so often mingled with the neo-paganism of the day as elsewhere, and we read of the most devout Catholic households, where even the ladies of the family were distinguished scholars in Latin and Greek. Blessed Thomas More's family is one of the best-known examples, and in the

Chronicle of the Louvain canonesses is the example of Mr Thomas Wiseman, whose four daughters, of whom two were professed at St Monica's and two at Syon, were accomplished Latinists, and had every Friday to listen to a discourse in Latin from their father.

But while gaining daily in breadth of mind and entering with zest into the enjoyment of classical studies, a far higher and nobler ideal was gaining possession of Richard Reynolds, of which we shall speak in our next chapter.



Frøst vil ræc þik Gætias huru þik
dru andelk bndæft andæle gætias
(Frøst vil ræc duk sigtias huru þik andæle
andæle andæle gætias.)

HANDWRITING OF ST BRIDGET OF SWEDEN.

From a Painting at Stockholm.

CHAPTER III

LEAVES CAMBRIDGE—PROFESSED AT SYON, JUNE
11, 1513—CLOISTERED LIFE IN THE ORDER
OF ST SAVIOUR

IN the year 1509 our future martyr for the Holy See took his degree of Master of Arts, and entered upon his divinity course. At what date he passed from Christ's to Corpus Christi College is not clear, but it is certain that in 1510 he was Fellow of the latter, and he was probably elected in that year. This celebrated college, founded in 1352 by the united guilds of Corpus Christi and of the Blessed Virgin Mary for a body of priests, to form part of the university, was for a long time generally known as Bennet College, from its association with the neighbouring church of St Benedict.

Three years later, in 1513, we find that Richard Reynolds proceeded to the degree of B.D., and was appointed University Preacher. As we shall presently see, he had been admitted a novice of the Syon community in 1512. Probably to no one in the university could the office of preacher have been more worthily committed. In his after life the fame of his eloquence exceeded even that of his learning, and the title *insignis concionator* is added to his name by contemporaries, as expressing the gift by which he was most widely known. The cultivation of his splendid natural gifts in order to this sacred office, is traceable to the influence of his holy friend and patron, Blessed John Fisher, who laboured all his life to remedy by every means in his power the crying evil of the day, the neglect of preaching. "Neglect of preaching," writes Father Bridgett in his *Life of Blessed John Fisher*, "was perhaps the greatest evil of the fifteenth century, and the source of every other. There were innumerable pulpits from which the Word of God was never heard; others were silent except on the Sundays of Lent. Very few congregations had any experience of

a weekly or a monthly sermon. . . . All this greatly afflicted the Bishop of Rochester, and he set himself to correct it by every means in his power." Among his disciples in the school of preaching the Word of God to the people, it is doubtful if there was any to equal the Angel of Syon.

At his admission in 1513 to the degree of Bachelor of Divinity, Blessed Richard obtained from the university authorities that he should not be bound to scholastic acts or residence, on the ground that he was about to enter the monastic order before St Barnabas's day. This almost certainly fixes the day of his profession at Syon monastery for the Feast of St Barnabas, June 11, 1513, at which date he was probably already in priest's orders. A comparison of dates already given would give his probable age as twenty-five, which corresponds exactly with the earliest age required for the admission of monks in the Order of St Bridget.

We have just said that he was a Bridgettine novice at least a year before leaving Cambridge. Strange as it must appear to our ideas, it is nevertheless a fact that by the

approved statutes of the Bridgettines before the Council of Trent, after a novice had been admitted, he passed his year of noviceship, not in the cloister, but under proper directions in the world.

There are circumstances which incline us to think that Blessed Richard's attraction to Syon was of long standing, and that he had for years only delayed his entry into the community because he had not yet reached the age required by its rules. The grace of his monastic vocation, as it set the seal on the many divine favours that had been showered on him from boyhood, was henceforward to mould and fashion his whole life, till in its turn it was to be sealed by a glorious martyrdom. "God had selected," said Cardinal Pole in his address to the citizens of London, "and chosen out both priests and religious men, out of those religious houses that were most reformed, such as were most notable for virtue and religion; as out of the Charterhouses, out of Syon, and the Friars Observants of St Francis; whose names are in the Book of Life; that with their blood testified the same, having life offered them if they would have swerved

from the stone set by Christ's hand in the foundation of the Church to be the stay of the same." It was indeed the monastic vocation of Richard Reynolds that led to his martyrdom.

Though the monks of Syon had no house of studies at Cambridge, as was the case with the Benedictines, Franciscans, and Dominicans, yet there is evidence of frequent communication between the community and the university, which may not have been without its influence on our future monk and martyr. Lady Margaret, the foundress of Christ's College, lived very much in the neighbourhood of Syon, as we have seen; and in 1493 Abbess Gibbs of Syon gave the University of Cambridge twenty oak trees for the fabric of St Mary's Church, then in course of erection. Among those who studied at Cambridge at the same time as Blessed Richard, John Fewterer, Fellow of Pembroke Hall, was, as we have already said, destined to be in after years a monk and Confessor-General of Syon. Humphrey de la Pole was a commoner of Gonville Hall when his sister was Prioress of Syon in 1501. The saintly Richard Whyt-

C



ford, "the wretch of Syon," as in his humility he used to style himself, the author of the *Jesus Psalter*, was a Fellow of Queen's College, Cambridge, and was professed among the brethren of Syon at about the same date as Reynolds.

It was then in 1512 that Richard Reynolds made his petition to be received into the Order of St Saviour, and with a glad heart listened to the words of the Confessor-General: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of His most holy Mother our Lady St Mary, of St Bridget, St Austin, and of all the saints, and in the name of this whole congregation, and in mine own name, I admit you to your year of proof, after the tenor of the rule of St Saviour; proceed therefore, and array yourself how you may accord with the observances of the holy rule now this year, and after a three months come again to us, and in the meantime we shall take more deliberation of you." With greater jubilee of heart did he complete his sacrifice by his profession on St Barnabas's feast in the following year. It was not the fault of Syon, if we find even here traces of that uncalled-for interference of the

crown in things spiritual which led to such disastrous consequences a few years later. The formula of profession pronounced by Blessed Richard ran as follows: "I, Brother Richard, do make profession and promise obedience before God Almighty, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, Blessed Augustine and Blessed Bridget, to thee, my Lord Bishop, and to the Confessor-General of this monastery, and to your successors, to live without property and in chastity, according to the rule of St Augustine and the constitutions of Blessed Bridget, *in as far as they are not repugnant to the prerogative of the most illustrious king, and the laws of the kingdom*, unto my death." Later on, the newly professed made a solemn promise in chapter of obedience to the Holy See, and to accept all papal letters or decrees as of binding authority. The venerable Abbess Gibbs was in the fiftieth year of her long rule when Blessed Richard took his vows; Father John Trowell had just been elected Confessor-General.

Fourteen years of peaceful cloistered life served to prepare the holy monk for his conflict with the powers of this world, under

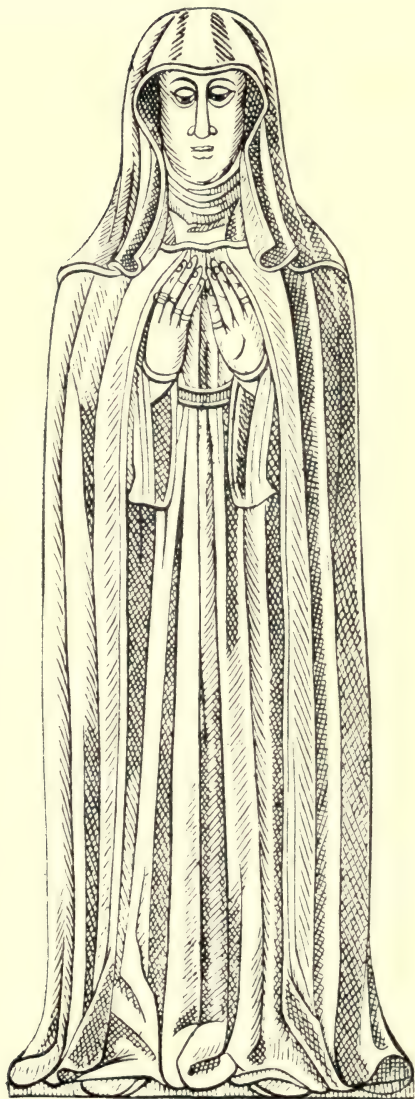
the austere and invigorating discipline of the Bridgettine rule. At midnight the brethren rose to matins, and the ever-recurring round of their daily duties, the mass, the chant of the canonical hours, the detailed ceremonial of their Order, made each day a step nearer to heaven for the Angel of Syon. And whenever the brethren retired from the church to their own monastery on its south side, their sisters moved along the cloister from their monastery on the north, to repeat the same sacrifice of prayer and praise. Study had always been an essential feature in Bridgettine life, and in the catalogue of the Syon library we find ninety-four volumes marked with the name of Richard Reynolds, the largest number contributed by any one donor. Most of these relate to his studies of theology, or were the sources from which he drew materials for preaching. Save when especially required by the bishop, the monks of Syon kept enclosure like the nuns, but were specially trained for preaching, and their church was thronged by the multitudes that flocked to listen to the preacher "of angelic countenance and angelic life." Though we believe the

author of the *History of Syon* is in error when he says that Reynolds was among the Confessors-General, as it seems to us clear that he was never elected superior of his community, and he is not given any such title in the obit-book; yet he was one of the assistant-confessors, and his fidelity to God in the Sacrament of Penance was among the causes that led eventually to his martyrdom.

CHAPTER IV

THE HOLY MAID OF KENT

ON April 20, 1534, an immense crowd assembled at Tyburn, to witness an execution for high treason. The cauldron, the axe, and the quartering knife, were sights by no means unfamiliar to the London citizens, but on this occasion the number and condition of the victims were such as to increase the eagerness of the populace. In due time the hurdles arrived on which the sufferers had been dragged from the Tower to the place of execution, and they were unbound. The first to mount the scaffold was Elizabeth Barton, O.S.B., commonly known as the Holy Maid of Kent. She was forthwith hanged and beheaded. Father Hugh Rich, guardian of the Franciscans of Canterbury, and Father Richard Risby,



MONUMENTAL BRASS OF AGNES JORDAN, ABBESS OF SYON
AT THE DISSOLUTION.

From Denham Church, Buckinghamshire.

[Face page 38.]

guardian of Richmond, followed next. They were cut down and quartered alive. The same cruel death was met with unshaken firmness by two Benedictine monks of Christ Church, Canterbury, Dr Edward Bocking and Dom John Dering; and the number of seven was completed by two secular priests, Richard Masters, parish priest of Aldington, and Henry Gold, of Aldermary, London. To the two Franciscans, and in all probability to the four others who followed after them, their life was offered on the scaffold if they would separate themselves from the obedience of Rome and acknowledge the royal supremacy. The nun's head, set on a pole, was placed on London Bridge; the heads and quarters of the others, on the gates of the city.

So close is the connection of the Holy Maid of Kent and her companions with the history of Syon, and the subsequent martyrdom of Blessed Richard Reynolds, that I have thought it well to devote a chapter to them. And since Catholics have been divided in opinion concerning these seven, especially in the case of Elizabeth Barton, I may as well state at once my own conviction, that all the

seven were undoubted martyrs of the Catholic faith. This conviction is quite independent of the question of the authenticity of the nun's alleged revelations and prophecies.

I need not say that in this, as in all else, I fully submit my private opinion to the judgment of the Holy See; I may add, that it would not be easy, at this distance of time, to affirm for certain that there was nothing imprudent or visionary to be found in the career of the Holy Maid. But graver faults than these have been held to have been expiated by the sword of martyrdom, even in some of those whom Holy Church honours among the Blessed.

Born in 1506, in the parish of Aldington, about twelve miles from Canterbury, Elizabeth Barton was twenty-eight years of age when she suffered death for opposing the impious will of Henry VIII. At the age of eighteen, while a domestic servant in the household of Thomas Cobb, a farmer of Aldington, she fell seriously ill, and during seven months that her illness lasted, seemed to have frequent trances, ecstasies, or whatever else one chooses to call them. Some events, foretold by her about

this time, coming to pass, and her reputation for sanctity beginning to spread abroad, Richard Masters, the parish priest of Aldington, seems to have referred the matter to Archbishop Warham. Warham appointed an ecclesiastical commission to inquire into her case—of course with the object of making sure that there were no appearances of imposture or delusion, and still more, that there was nothing in her alleged supernatural communications at variance with the Catholic faith. The commissioners were the following: Dom Richard Bocking, D.D., Dom William Hadley, and Dom Barnes, all three Benedictine monks of Christ Church, Canterbury; two Franciscan Fathers of the Observance; the parish priest of Aldington, and the Archbishop's own official for similar cases.

Their decision was favourable. In fact, there never was in the whole of Elizabeth Barton's career the faintest whisper against the sanctity and purity of her life, nor in all her real or supposed revelations, any suspicions against her faith. So much has been always admitted by her bitterest enemies, and it is equally beyond dispute that her influence was always

for the honour of God and the welfare of souls. Those who listened to her, and were brought into question for so doing, were men like Blessed John Fisher, Blessed Thomas Abel, Blessed Richard Reynolds—among the most learned, as well as the holiest men of their day in England. That her adversaries, such as Henry VIII., Cranmer, and Cromwell, were men of notoriously impious lives, goes without saying. Warham's learning and wisdom are well known. And as we shall see presently, there is not a shadow of doubt that the Holy Maid of Kent was really put to death because she was among the faithful few, who, in obedience to the Vicar of Christ, and for the upholding of the divine law, dared fearlessly to rebuke the lawless king for that great crime which was his motive for severing England from the Catholic Church.

At the instance of Archbishop Warham, Elizabeth Barton was received into the Benedictine priory of St Sepulchre at Canterbury, and was professed there. Many visited her, and according to the usage then frequent in England (though never at Syon), before the Council of Trent, she was not

unfrequently allowed to go out of her monastery. She denounced the laxity of the age, and brought many to a better life. More than once she visited Syon, and the Observantine Franciscans as well as the Carthusians of Sheen held her in the highest veneration. At last the time came when the king's divorce began to be agitated. Regardless of the certain danger to herself, the Holy Maid visited the primate, Cardinal Wolsey, the king himself, the Bishop of Rochester, the papal legates, and many others, and wrote to the Pope. What brought her to the scaffold, according to the bitter Protestant, Strype, was her saying that the king "take off the Pope's right and patrimony from himself; that he destroy all these new folks of opinion, and the works of their new learning; that if he took Anne to wife, the vengeance of God plague him." Such was indeed the case; and it is worthy of note, that among a list of her prophecies sent to Cromwell by one of her enemies occurs this one: "Of such persons as the Angel of God hath appointed to be at her death; when she shall receive the crown of martyrdom; and the time, with the place."

Another prophecy, recorded by a contemporary, was, "that the Lady Mary, then debased under the Lady Elizabeth, should reign in her own right before the said Lady Elizabeth." Many prophecies, as Blessed Thomas More thought, were fictitiously attributed to her, nor have we the means of verifying their authorship. That one which was made the ground of her condemnation, affirmed that "if the king went forth with the purpose that he intended (the divorce), he should not be king seven months after." On this, Abbot Gasquet writes: "It is not necessary to defend this saying of the nun, but it may be as well to note here as a coincidence that *de jure* the prediction was verified. In April 1533, Anne Boleyn was declared queen; in May Cranmer pronounced a sentence of divorce. In July the Pope annulled this sentence and pronounced Henry and Anne excommunicated if they did not separate before September, subsequently extended to October. Henry disregarded the sentence and was *ipso facto* excommunicated in October, just seven months after Anne Boleyn was declared queen. And by the

laws of Christendom, which were then in force in England, and by which the father of Henry VIII. had been confirmed on the throne by the Pope, every excommunicated person forfeited all civil rights."

Still, the genuineness of her prophecies is foreign to my present question, to wit, whether or not her execution may rightly be regarded as a martyr's death. Theologians, among whom St Antoninus deals fully with the question, are explicit in declaring that saints, even such as are truly gifted with prophecy, do usually mingle what is purely their own with genuine revelations, God so permitting, that the privilege of infallibility may be reserved to His Church. But since nothing was ever breathed against the sanctity of her life or the integrity of her faith, my contention is that she died in defence of the sanctity of marriage, and of the sentence of the Holy See vindicating that sanctity.

Blessed John Fisher, in his letters to the king and the House of Lords, admits having had three interviews with her, having conceived a high opinion of her sanctity, and adds: "My Lord of Canterbury that then

was, both her ordinary and a man reputed of high wisdom and learning, told me she had many great visions, and of him I learned greater things than ever of the nun herself." Nor would the holy bishop ever speak otherwise than hypothetically of her deception, or retract his judgment concerning her.

On the king's open revolt from Rome, when unable to obtain a sanction of the divorce, he determined to destroy such as upheld the papal decision. After an abortive trial in the Star Chamber, when, as the imperial ambassador writes, "some of the principal judges would sooner die than convict her of treason," the maid and her companions, unheard and undefended, were attainted by Act of Parliament; a pretended confession, clearly not her own composition, and as certainly that of Cromwell, in whose power she had been for several months, being read at Paul's Cross, this being deemed essential by the king to destroy her credit. On this fictitious confession, which seems to have shaken the confidence of Blessed Thomas More, I must refer my readers to Abbot Gasquet's great work.

How these events came to affect the Bridgettine monastery and led to the martyrdom of Blessed Richard, we shall relate in our next. But that the cause for which the holy nun suffered was the cause of the Catholic Church and of the Holy See, admits of no doubt—if the history of the times be carefully read—and was so apprehended at the time.

CHAPTER V

BLESSED RICHARD BRINGS THE HOLY MAID OF
KENT TO A CONFERENCE WITH BLESSED
THOMAS MORE—SECRET LETTER OF THE
BISHOP OF ROCHESTER—ARREST, AND EX-
AMINATION IN THE TOWER

AUNGIER, the historian of Syon (on the authority of Strype and of a writing among the Cotton MSS.), states, not quite accurately, the cause that led to the arrest and execution of Blessed Richard Reynolds in the following passage:—

“The monks were deemed coadjutors of Elizabeth Barton, the Holy Maid of Kent, with whom, by means of one Richard Reynold, a priest of this house, Sir Thomas More condescended to hold two conferences in a little chapel at this place, ‘concerning such secrets



ST BRIDGET AFTER DEATH.

From a Painting in the Bridgettine Monastery at Wurt, in Holland.

as had been revealed unto her, some part thereof touching deeply the matter of the Pope's supremacy, which shortly after this followed, and about the unlawfulness of the King's marriage.'"

It was not in any capacity as superior of the house that Reynolds procured the interview between the Holy Maid and his saintly friend. All the documents of the period show that Fewterer, who had been elected after the death of Father John Trowell, held the office of Confessor-General throughout these troubles. But Blessed Richard, who was the most renowned of the spiritual guides in community, would undoubtedly have been consulted by Elizabeth Barton, and as her difficulties in part concerned matters of state, and the question of the divorce, her confessor knew of no one more likely to give her prudent advice than the holy ex-chancellor. That the Fathers of Syon were divided in opinion about her, is only what we should anticipate from the sad fall of several of the monks, and is sufficiently indicated by Blessed Thomas More's expression, that when he was talking with the monks at the grate, they showed him "divers things

that *some of them* disliked in her." However, in his subsequent conversation with the Maid, he was careful to avoid speaking of "the King's Grace" or other dangerous subjects.

A mysterious incident enters in at this point of our history. It was probably about the time of Elizabeth Barton's execution, certainly before April 26, 1534, when the Bishop of Rochester was sent to the Tower, that Blessed Richard Reynolds received from the holy bishop a secret letter, concerning which we can only surmise from circumstances that it related to the matter of the king's marriage. The only light we have on the incident is in a letter of Thomas Bedyll to Cromwell, printed by Aungier from the Cotton MSS. (E. VI. fol. 168*), and written after the death of the two holy martyrs. Bedyll had been commissioned to collect and deliver to Cranmer all Fisher's writings on the subject of the divorce, as we learn from his letter. He then relates that he had gone to Syon, and adds :

"I had the Father Confessor alone in a very secret communication concerning certain letters

of the said Master Fisher's, of which Father Reynold made mention in his examination, which the said Fisher promised the King's Grace that he never showed to any other man, neither would. The said confessor hath confessed to me that the said Fisher sent to him, to the said Reynold, and to one other brother of theirs deceased, whose name I remember not, the copy of his said letters directed to the King's Grace, and the copy of the King's answer also; but he hath sworn to me upon his fidelity that the said copies tarried not with him but one night, and that none of his brethren saw the same, but those three aforementioned. He hath acknowledged to me also that the said Fisher sent unto them with the said copies a book of his made in defence of the King's Grace's first marriage."

I pass over the infamous Bedyll's attempt to caluminate the holy bishop as if he had broken a promise made to the king, when the king himself was seeking his life on that very account, and the bishop (if it is true) asks advice under strict secrecy for saving his life and his conscience. Fewterer, too, had by this time fallen. But the words he relates tally

strangely with a passage in Blessed Thomas More's letter to Dr Wilson, excusing himself from swearing to the validity of Henry's marriage with Anne Boleyn: "As touching the oath, the causes for which I refused it, no man wotteth what they be, for they be secret in mine own conscience ; some other, peradventure, than those that other men would ween, *and such as I never disclosed to any man yet, nor never intend to do while I live.*" So also his words in the Tower to his daughter: "But, Margaret, for what cause I refuse the oath I will never show you ; neither you nor nobody else, unless the King's Highness should like to command me." Whatever was the secret, it was known to Fisher and Reynolds. Could it possibly have been the fearful story published, but not invented, by Nicholas Sander, concerning Anne Boleyn's birth?

The arrest, trial, and martyrdom of the Angel of Syon are all that now remain to bring our history to a close. The three holy Carthusian Priors, Blessed John Houghton, Blessed Robert Lawrence, and Blessed Augustine Webster, about the middle of April 1535 were imprisoned in the Tower, where

they were immediately joined by Blessed Richard Reynolds, so that all four were examined together a few days later. It was exactly a year from the execution of the Holy Maid of Kent when our blessed martyr was taken from his beloved Syon, which he was never more to revisit. All the four were tried for their denial of the royal supremacy. But against Reynolds there were special charges, clearly arising from his communications with Elizabeth Barton, relating to the king's marriage. An unhappy man, one of his fallen brethren, deposed that twelve months before, at the very time when everyone was talking of the Holy Maid, he had said that "the princess dowager (Queen Catharine) was the true Queen. Also that he had had conversation *concerning the two daughters of the Queen's Grace's mother* (Anne Boleyn and her sister)." His reply probably was the same as he gave subsequently, that he had only spoken of these things in confession. This charge was not pressed; perhaps it was feared lest more terrible revelations should come to light, such as might render Henry still more infamous.

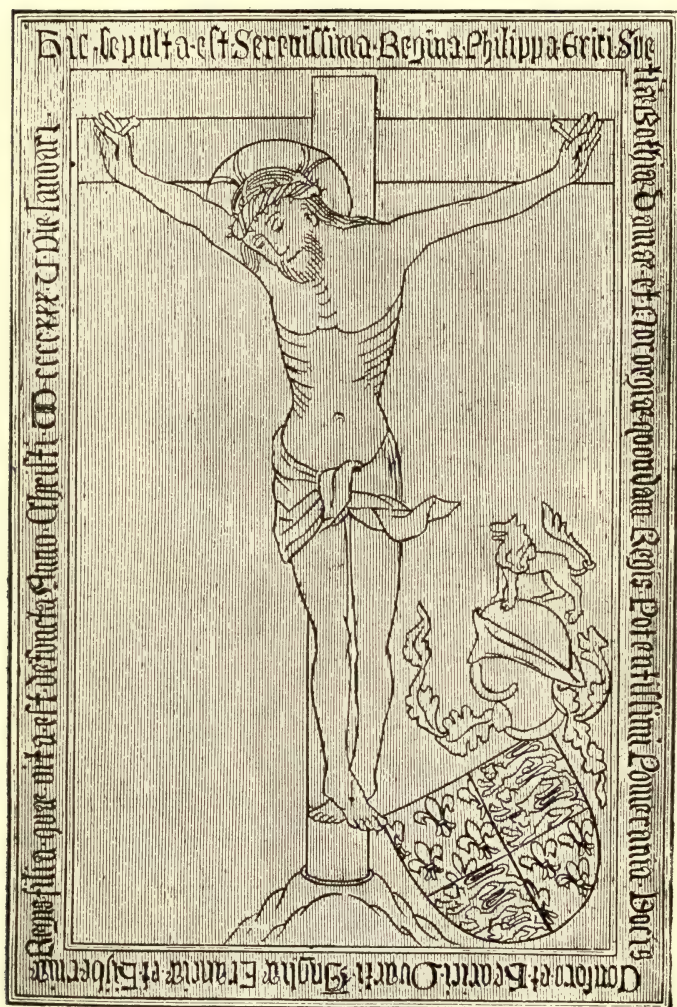
During the last ten days of April, Cromwell with the royal commissioners visited the four prisoners in the Tower to obtain their assent to the royal supremacy. All answered with a firm refusal. Reynolds' answer, as the commissioners chose to abridge it, is in these terms: "Richard Reynolds says that he intends no malice to our Sovereign Lord the King, but he would spend his blood for . . . that he is Head of the Church that hath been this three hundred years, and not the King, our Sovereign Lord; and that he shall blame them that gave him such counsel. Also that he doth this as thousand thousand that be dead." What is meant by "this three hundred years," in the commissioners' memorandum, is not clear; we shall find Reynolds defending the primacy as of divine institution.

The trial did not take place till the 28th. During the interval one of the prisoners wrote on a scrap of paper (scratched with lead, or pricked) the following notes of a speech he intended to deliver before the chancellor, which after the martyr's death was brought by the lieutenant's servant to Bishop Fisher. I have

little doubt that it was written by Blessed Richard, for at the trial he alone is recorded to have made a speech in their defence; the Carthusians, Dom Hendriks thinks, kept silence. The writing ran as follows: "My Lord, ye should not judge me to death this day, for if ye should, ye should first condemn yourself and all your predecessors, which were no simple sheep in the flock, but great bell-wethers. And, my Lord, if ye should, in detestation of this opinion, dig up the bones of all our predecessors and burn them, yet should not that turn me from this faith." The only discourse preserved of our martyr, is the brief speech made at his trial. It is calm and dignified, but full of energy.

With the trial we shall open our next chapter. It has been seen above that charges were brought against our martyr, based on words he had spoken in the confessional. This peculiarly hideous practice of suborning penitents to accuse their confessors in order to secure the death of the latter, was in vogue at the time. Concerning Blessed John Forrest, O.S.F., Stow writes: "Doctor John Forrest, a friar observant, was apprehended for that in

secret confession he had declared to many of the King's subjects that the King was not supreme Head of the Church." These heroic men were true martyrs of the confessional.



MONUMENTAL BRASS ON THE TOMB OF QUEEN PHILIPPA OF SWEDEN,
SISTER OF HENRY V. OF ENGLAND.

From the ancient Monastic Church of Wadstena, founded by St Bridget. Queen Philippa was received into the Order as a "Sister of the Chapter" in 1415.

CHAPTER VI

THE TRIAL

FROM the examination of the holy prisoners in the Tower, Cromwell went at once to the king, with whom he stayed in close conference a good portion of the night. The following morning, April 27, 1535, an order was sent to the constable of the Tower to bring up to Westminster for trial on the next day, Wednesday, the 28th, John Houghton, Augustine Webster, Robert Lawrence, Richard Reynolds, Robert Feron, and John Hale. The last two were secular priests and were tried separately and condemned to death. Feron was pardoned; Blessed John Hale, Vicar of Isleworth, suffered death with Reynolds and the Carthusians.

The indictment of the four religious stated

that they, "treacherously machinating and desiring to deprive the King of his title as supreme Head of the Church of England, did, 26th April, 27th Henry VIII., at the Tower of London, openly declare and say, 'The King our Sovereign Lord is not supreme head in earth of the Church of England.'" To the charge of treason they pleaded, *not guilty*. Being pressed to obey the royal order, they answered that they would do nothing against the laws of God and of the Catholic Church.

From the account written by Father Maurice Chauncey we learn further details of the denial of the royal supremacy, on which the indictment rested, against Richard Reynolds and his three Carthusian fellow-martyrs. "He (Cromwell) with many others of the royal commissioners came to them (in the Tower) to propose to them the order of the Parliament, to wit: that they should renounce the authority of the Pope, and confess that he had fraudulently, violently, and by extortion, usurped his primacy; and that they should renounce all foreign authority, jurisdiction, and obedience, owing or promised to any person or order whatsoever; that they should obey none but

the King or his deputy, both in spiritual and temporal matters, and should accept, believe, and affirm the King to be supreme Head of the Church. Our fathers replying, that they would agree to all that the law of God allows and as far as it allows, he interrupted: 'I will have no exception, as to whether the law of God allows it, or not; ye shall affirm what I have said entirely, fully, in the sincerity of your hearts and upon your oath, and shall firmly adhere to it.' Our fathers answered that the Catholic Church had always held and taught otherwise. He insisted: 'I care nothing for the Church; will you consent, or not?' They replied that through the fear of God they dared not contradict and forsake the Catholic Church, seeing that St Augustine saith that he would not believe the Gospel, if the holy orthodox Church had not so instructed and taught him. They were then again ordered to be confined in prison." Though Chauncey, writing long after the event and at a distance, places this about a week after their imprisonment (towards April 20), yet, I think, as I find it generally understood, that it was the occasion referred to in the indictment, of the visit to the

prison of April 26, when Reynolds was one of the holy company.

The four accused, having pleaded not guilty, were led back to prison, the verdict of the jury being put off to the next day, and the rest of the Wednesday was spent by the jurors in discussing the charge. The account given by Maurice Chauncey of their deliberation is as follows: "This cause and question (whether they were guilty or not), having been discussed during the whole of the day, they all pronounced in the negative, and decided that these holy fathers were innocent, and free from transgression of the law, and that they found themselves unable on any ground to convict them as guilty of death. Meanwhile, the King's Vicar (Cromwell), suspecting the uprightness of these twelve men, on the evening of the first day, before they had declared their verdict, sent to inquire the cause of their delay, and what they intended to do. They intimated to his messenger, that they dared not pronounce such holy men worthy of death. He brought this answer to his master, who in anger sent him back to them with this message: 'Unless you find

them guilty, you shall suffer death yourselves as having transgressed the law.' But they disregarded his threats, repeated their answer, and for that time refused compliance. On hearing this, he hurried to them at once, and by fierce menaces compelled them to find a verdict, or rather a lying sentence, condemning our fathers and declaring them guilty of high treason." This narrative tallies exactly with that contained in a manuscript in English, now in the British Museum, which may be read in Abbot Gasquet. It seems from the latter that the jury, alluding to the word *maliciously* in the indictment, said that "their consciences proved them they did it not maliciously"; and concludes, that "being overcome by threats they found them guilty, and had great thanks, but they were afterwards ashamed to show their faces, and some of them took great harm for it." The eagerness of Cromwell was doubtless the result of his colloquy with the king the night before.

On Thursday, April 29 (Chauncey seems to have confused dates), the prisoners were again brought to the bar. Audley, the Chancellor, began by questioning Reynolds. It is at this

point that Chauncey uses the phrase inserted by authority of the Holy See in the Bridgettine Breviary: "A man of angelic countenance, beloved of all, and filled with the Spirit of God." The question put to him was in these words: "Why do you alone, in your presumption, choose to persist in your opinion, against the Act of Parliament, which includes so many great lords and bishops, yea, almost all the lords of the whole kingdom?" To which (we are translating from Chauncey) the said Doctor answered: "I had indeed determined, in imitation of our Lord Jesus when He was before the court of Herod, to return no answer; but since you press me, and that I may satisfy my own conscience and the consciences of those here present, I say that our belief is of greater weight and has far more abundant testimony in its behalf than yours. For instead of the few whom you bring forward out of the Parliament of this one kingdom, I have on my side the whole Christian world except those of this kingdom; nay, I do not say all of this kingdom, for only the lesser part of it is with you. And were even the greater part of the kingdom to declare

against me, it would not be because they so believe, but only by outwardly feigning it, for fear of loss of dignity and honour or for the hope of winning the royal favour." Whereupon the King's Secretary (Cromwell) hastily commanded him, under the rigour of the law, to declare of whom he was speaking. "All good men in the kingdom," he answered, and going on with his discourse, he said: "As for the witness of the ancient fathers, I have on my side the General Councils, and all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church for fifteen hundred years, and especially Saints Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory. And I am well assured that when his most Serene Majesty shall have known the truth of this, he will be offended beyond measure with certain bishops who have given him this counsel."

At this point they commanded him to speak no further, but only to answer to a matter that seemed to aggravate his offence, to wit, wherefore he had maliciously, and against the king's authority within his kingdom, not feared to dissuade many from submitting to the authority of the King's Majesty and of the Parliament.

To which he said: "I tell you first of all, that if I were here arraigned before God's own tribunal, it would be made clear that never to living man have I declared an opinion of my own maliciously, against the King or any one (in authority); save when to clear my conscience, I spoke of it in confession, being compelled thereto. I was indeed grieved to learn that his Majesty had fallen into so grave an error, but I said so to none, except as I have declared. And had I not then declared what I believe, I would say it openly now, seeing that I am bound to it by God and my conscience, and in so doing neither my Sovereign nor any one else may rightly take offence." Here he was bidden to hold his peace, but yet added: "Since you will not let me say more, judge me according to your law." Being then told of the verdict given by the jury, he answered with great firmness: "This is the judgment of the world." Then he begged of his judges the stay of his execution for two or three days, to prepare his soul to meet death as becomes a religious and a good Christian. They told him it would rest with the king's clemency to grant what he asked,

and that it was out of the power of the judges. On which he made answer : " I trust to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living."

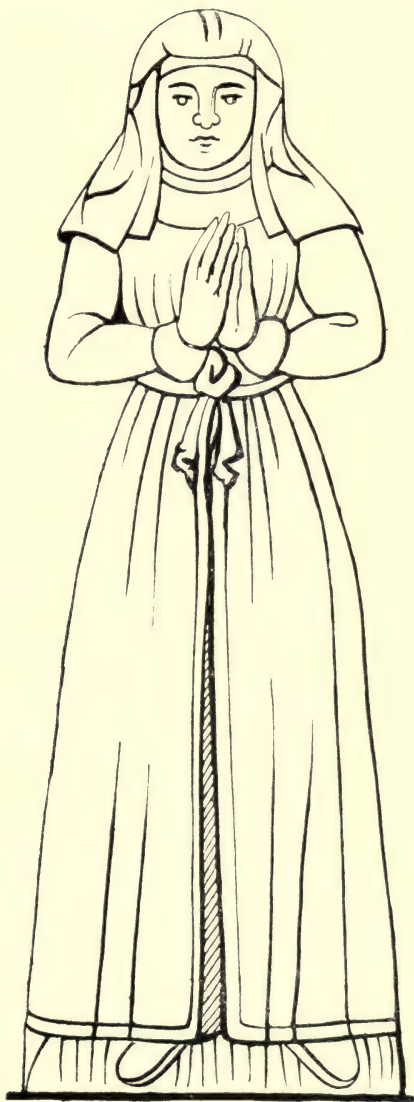
So far Chauncey. The holy Carthusians were silent. The blessed martyr experienced the fulfilment of Christ's promise, that he should be given in that hour speech and wisdom which his enemies would be powerless to resist and contradict. The martyrs were then sent back to the Tower.

CHAPTER VII

THE MARTYRDOM AT TYBURN

THE desire expressed before the Court at Westminster by Blessed Richard, that he might be allowed time to prepare for death, was granted. The sentence was given on April 29, and was executed on May 4. Cranmer, rightly judging that the king's purpose would be better served if the monks could even at the last moment be seduced from their glorious confession and led to acknowledge the royal supremacy, wrote as follows to Cromwell :

“Whereas the Prior of Axholme, named Webster, and Master Raynald of Syon, are attainted of high treason for offending against the late statute made for suppressing the usurped power of the Bishop of Rome, I



SEPULCHRAL BRASS OF SISTER MARGARET DELY, NUN
OF SYON, IN ISLEWORTH CHURCH,

Deceased, October 7, 1561.

[Face page 66.

marvel at both, as they are learned men, and Webster promised he would never support that opinion. If there is no other offence alleged against them, it will much more tend to the conversion of others to convert their consciences by sincere doctrine, and so for them to publish it, than to suffer the penalty of the law. If they were sent to me, I suppose I could do much in their behalf." His request was not granted.

Dr Thomas Starkey, who had been chaplain to Blessed Margaret Plantagenet, and was now one of the king's chaplains, was sent by Cromwell to try to pervert Reynolds. Starkey gives an account of their interview in a letter to Cardinal Pole, whose friend he had formerly been. After referring to the martyrs as maintaining the Pope to be Christ's Vicar, he says: "In this opinion sturdily stood Reynolds, whom I have heard of you many times praised; who was so rooted therein that he would admit no reason to the contrary. . . . By the licence and commandment of Master Secretary I was admitted to hear Reynold's reasons, and to confer such light as God had given me in the same cause with him. . . .

With him I conferred gladly. For sorry I was for many causes, that a man of such fame, as he was here noted both for virtue and learning, should die in such a blind and superstitious opinion. But nothing could avail, but that he would, in that opinion, as a disobedient person to the King's laws, suffer his death with the other of the same minds." Starkey died three years later. Strype says that the king "frowned upon him," and suspected him of being insincere. It may have been so. Several others, as Starkey wrote, were sent to pervert the confessors.

The memorable 4th of May dawned at last ; memorable not only for the victory of the martyrs over the Prince of Darkness, but for its far-reaching consequences in the future of England. In the morning they were called from their cells, and led to the gate of the Tower. "The faces of these men," writes a Protestant author of our own time, "did not grow pale ; their voices did not shake ; they declared themselves liege subjects to the King and obedient children of the Church." With a smile on their lips, radiant with the joy of

the Holy Ghost, they laid themselves on the hurdles at the gate. With what loving affection they greeted each other in this hour, so soon to meet in heaven, no words could utter. Blessed Thomas More was at this moment conversing in his cell with his daughter, Margaret. Perhaps the clank of armour and the trampling of horses drew him to the window, for "looking out of the window, he chanced to behold one Master Reynolds, a religious, learned, and virtuous father of Syon, and three monks of the Charterhouse, for the matter of the supremacy and matrimony going out of the Tower (in their religious habits) to execution; he, as one longing in that journey to have accompanied them, said unto my wife, then standing there beside him: Lo, dost thou not see, Meg, that these blessed fathers be now as cheerfully going to their deaths as bridegrooms to their marriage?" So writes Roper, Blessed Thomas More's son-in-law, who, of course, received it from his wife, Margaret.

The three miles journey from the Tower to Tyburn was always a painful part of the

sentence. Chauncey speaks of their suffering on the hurdle, as it jolted over the rough stones, or splashed through the pools and mud "with which the route abounded." To terrorise the people, they were taken to the place of execution and hanged in their religious habit; in the tyrant's intention as an aggravation of cruelty, but to the martyrs a dearly cherished privilege, and to their successors a glorious consecration of their sacred habit. I have not been able to find the source of what is told by some modern writers, that when the first halt was made at Holborn, a devout lady knelt by the hurdle, and wiped the mud from their faces and asked their blessing. It is true, however, that a halt in this Via Dolorosa was usually made at Holborn, when it was the custom to offer the sufferers a drink, so the fact is probable. The demeanour of the immense crowd that escorted them indicated a feeling of sullen fear, no doubt, and that there were innumerable sympathisers with the holy victims of tyranny, is certain. At last the "triple tree" was in sight, with the huge cauldron, the fire, the cart, and the usual

surroundings of the terrible spectacle of an execution for treason. Besides the vast crowd of spectators, there was a group present of such as would not usually be found on these occasions. "Yesterday," writes the imperial ambassador, "there were dragged through the length of this city three Carthusians and a Bridgettine monk, all men of good character and learning, and cruelly put to death at the place of execution, only for having maintained that the Pope was the true Head of the Universal Church. . . . And the same fate has overtaken a priest (Blessed John Hale), for having spoken and written concerning the life and government of this king. It is altogether a new thing, that the Dukes of Richmond and Norfolk, the Earl of Wiltshire, his son, and other lords and courtiers were present at the execution, quite near the sufferers. People say that the King himself would have liked to see the butchery; which is very probable, seeing that nearly all the Court, even those of the Privy Chamber, were there; his principal chamberlain, Norres, bringing with him forty horses, and it is thought that the King was of the number of

five who came thither accoutred and mounted like Borderers, with vizors before their faces. That of the Duke of Norfolk's brother got detached, which has caused a great stir, together with the fact, that while the five thus habited were speaking, all those of the Court went away."

The presence of the courtiers was intended by the king to counteract the universal disapproval of the people, and perhaps from some fear of a rising; "the whole city is displeased, as they were of exemplary and holy life," writes the papal nuncio in France. It is uncertain if the king was present. In a letter of Ortiz, the imperial agent in Rome, to the empress, he says that there "were martyred three Carthusians, a monk of Monte Sion (Syon monastery) of the Order of St Bridget, a very learned man, another priest, who would not acknowledge the King as supreme spiritual Head, but only the Pope. They died with great constancy, and with much blame of the judges who condemned them." This feeling of the people could only be increased by the demeanour of the martyrs. As each ascended the scaffold he was offered his life if he would

recant. Houghton was the first to die ; then the other Carthusians ; then Blessed John Hale ; and, lastly, our martyr of Syon. Each spoke to the people from the cart. The touching speech of Blessed John Houghton declared his belief and that of his fellow-martyrs in the divinely revealed dogma of the Supremacy of St Peter's successor. "Our holy Mother, the Church, has decreed and determined otherwise than our Lord the King with his Parliament has ordained. Therefore am I obliged in conscience to suffer this and every torment, rather than deny the teaching of the Church. Pray for me, and pity my brethren, of whom I was the unworthy Prior." Then on his knees he recited part of the 30th Psalm, beginning : "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me not be confounded" ; and when he had ended it, with the words, "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit ; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of Truth," the gentle Carthusian prior was thrown from the ladder, the rope was instantly cut, and the usual quartering followed. Our Bridgettine martyr had to witness all the butchery of the others while awaiting his own turn. They

were first half strangled with a very thick cord, that they might be fully alive during the subsequent butchery. "And as in their souls they swerved not from the way of truth," writes Fr. Maurice Chauncey, "so no pallor was seen in their faces, no trembling in their speech, no fear of death in any outward sign. Strengthened by the Spirit of Truth, for whose sake they went to their death agony, they were as cheerful as ever they were when in the fullness of health and security." It was Blessed Richard's lot to listen to the dying words of Blessed John Houghton, "in a most sweet voice," as Chauncey says, uttering the prayer, "Most merciful Jesus! have mercy on me in this hour"; and again, when the executioner's hand was on his heart, saying, "Good Jesus! what will you do with my heart?" In Dom Bede Camm's *Lives of the English Martyrs*, he has published the following, brief but important passage, from the Arundel MS. 152: "Which Reynolds, being the last that was executed, and seeing them cruelly quartered, and their bowels taken out, preached unto them and comforted them, promising them a heavenly banquet and

supper for their sharp breakfast taken patiently for their Master's sake. He never changed colour nor was disquieted, and then in the end lastly went to die manfully himself."

Not less than the angelic beauty of his countenance, and the supernatural attraction he exerted on all with whom he came into contact, does this manfulness of Blessed Richard, the fortitude which is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, appear conspicuously in the few details concerning him which we possess. Together with the gift of sacred eloquence for which he was renowned, it fitted him to be the comforter of his fellow-martyrs. As with unblanched cheek he gazed on the fearful scene, he must have felt his soul flooded with gratitude to God that his last of many sermons was to be preached amid surroundings so tremendous, that his words must needs thrill his hearers as they had never been thrilled before. The terror-stricken multitude, the savage courtiers of King Henry, grouped apart on horseback, the mangled bodies of the martyrs, the ghastly preparations for his own sacrifice; all bore witness that in that dread hour Christ

and the Prince of Darkness met once more in deadly strife before men and angels, and the martyrs were victorious and "overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of the testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death."

The expression, "that after a sharp breakfast they should have a sweet supper," was also used by Ven. John Sugar before his martyrdom: "Though I shall have a sharp dinner, yet I trust in Jesus Christ I shall have a most sweet supper." I do not know that it originated with Blessed Richard.

Each one, as soon as the rope was cut and he had fallen to the ground, was dragged to the plank, hurriedly stripped, his body cut open and his entrails and heart thrown into the fire. Then they were beheaded and quartered, and the head and quarters fixed in various parts of the city. The execution of his brethren was soon over, and it was our martyr's turn to mount the cart. From that pulpit he spoke to the people. All that we know of his discourse is the brief summary in Chauncey's work. "He exhorted the people to constant and

earnest prayer for the King, lest he who at the beginning of his reign had begun like Solomon in wisdom and piety, might like that monarch be in his latter days seduced by women to his destruction." This, of course, referred to the royal divorce, and it is unlikely that he was allowed to speak at length on such a topic. We may rest assured that a prayer for his brethren and sisters at Syon mingled with his dying aspirations.

A passage, which I give in Father Stanton's translation from Cardinal Pole's *Defence of the Unity of the Church*, contains a special reference to his martyrdom: "One of these martyrs I must not pass over without a special notice, as he was intimately known to myself. Reynolds was his name, and he was one who, for the sanctity of his life, might be compared with the very first of those who profess the more exact rule of conduct, according to the discipline of Christ. . . . To manifest to all future time the praises of his sanctity and doctrine, and to show the height of his piety to Christ and his love of his country, it was ordained that in company with the other heroes he should, in this time of so great need, give testimony to

the truth with his own blood. He gave it in truth, and was among the first to give it, and that with such constancy of mind, that as I was told by one who was present at the spectacle and had observed most attentively all that took place, when he put his neck within the murderous halter, he seemed rather to be putting on a regal chain than an instrument of death, such was the alacrity manifested in his countenance. O Blessed man! truly worthy of the fullest confidence of thee, O my country!"

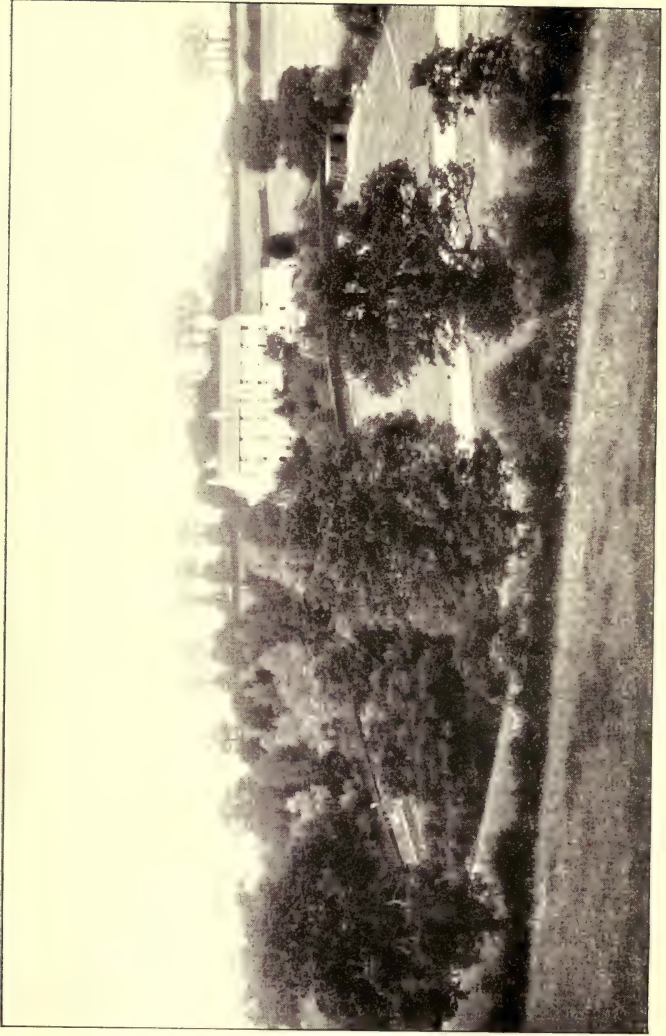
It is recorded that an arm of Blessed John Houghton was suspended over the gate of his monastery. There is no record that the same was done with any portion of Blessed Richard's relics, but from a circumstance to be mentioned in the next chapter, I have a suspicion that such was the case.

The conflict was over, and the victory won by the blessed martyrs of Christ. Our hearts have often been thrilled by that sublime "O Felix Roma!" with which the glorious hymn at the Vespers of SS. Peter and Paul utters the exulting joy of Rome, purpled with the blood of her martyred apostles. No city in the world can vie with the splendour of Rome in

her countless army of white-robed martyrs. But London's Tyburn has been hallowed and glorified by the blood of many martyrs of Christ, and the capital of our mighty Empire, that in many ways recalls Imperial Rome, is through them invested, though she heeds it not to-day, with a glory that infinitely transcends all her earthly greatness. "These men," says the Protestant writer quoted above, "were not less beautiful in their resolution, not less deserving the everlasting remembrance of mankind, than those three hundred who, in the summer morning, sat combing their golden hair in the passes of Thermopylæ. We will not regret their cause; there is no cause for which any man can more nobly suffer, than to witness that it is better for him to die than to speak words which he does not mean." And if the writer's comparison is but poor and weak, it is none the less matter for thankfulness that the heroism of our English martyrs is, at least, dimly and imperfectly discernible by Englishmen who are not of the household of the faith. That one of that heroic band went forth to die from that community, which alone of so many, has as if by a miracle continued its corporate

existence and its ceaseless sacrifice of prayer and praise to this hour, must needs increase our reverence for those who have a right to claim as one of themselves the Angel of Syon.





VIEW OF SYON ABBEY, CHUDLEIGH, SOUTH DEVON.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SYON COMMUNITY AFTER THE DISSOLUTION —RELICS OF OLD SYON

THE singular veneration in which Blessed Richard Reynolds was held even by the heretics of his time, is well known. Speaking of the five martyrs, Strype says: "Two of them, Houghton and Rainolds, were of celebrated fame for their piety."

No relics of Blessed Richard Reynolds are known to exist, nor have we any portrait of the Angel of Syon. There is an old, undated Flemish print representing his execution—probably of the sixteenth century—which has been photographed, and shows him at the moment that the executioner is fixing the rope round his neck. The Bridgettine habit is given correctly, but he is portrayed with a

beard, which was against Bridgettine usage, and the picture seems designed from the artist's imagination.

One precious fruit of the martyr's intercession, as we may without rashness believe, is that the Syon community, alone of all our pre-Reformation religious communities, has maintained its unbroken conventual existence down to the present day. Among the works of Father Parsons, S.J., there is one in English, of which the nuns at Chudleigh possess several manuscript copies. It is not in Mr Gillow's list of his printed works, nor do I know that it has ever appeared in print in the language in which it was written, though Yopez has given a Spanish translation in the sixth book of his *Historia Particular*. It will be given at the end of this volume. From a brief preamble it appears that Father Foster, the Confessor of Syon, sent the necessary information about the community to Father Parsons and Sir Francis Englefield; from which Parsons drew up this historical introduction to the narrative of the Wanderings of the Syon community. Writing shortly after the arrival of the nuns at Lisbon, Father Parsons carefully points out

how, after the suppression, the sisters, under the leadership of Sister Catharine Palmer, crossed the sea, and at Termonde in Flanders carried on their religious life, till in Queen Mary's reign Cardinal Pole brought them back to Syon in England; how at Elizabeth's accession the Duke of Feria obtained for them the queen's licence for leaving the kingdom unmolested, and adds: "It certainly seems not to be without a mystery, that by the particular Providence of God, they have been brought through so many trials and banishments to the kingdom of Portugal, there to repose themselves securely under the descendants of the House of Lancaster of the blood royal of their founder, King Henry the Fifth . . . thereby giving great hope that our Lord in His good pleasure will bring them once again home to their country."

At the beginning of the last century they passed through another and graver danger. In 1809, Abbess Halford with nine of the sisters, alarmed by the advance of the French in the Peninsula, obtained permission of the Nuncio to leave Lisbon for England. The names of these sisters were: Mary Teresa

Joyce, Helen Bride, Mary Clare Butt, Elizabeth Farnes, Francis Winifred Hillear, Mary Gertrude Allison, Monica Shimmel, Bridget Ritchetts, Mary Winefride Hutchison. Four choir-nuns (afterwards joined by Sister Shimmel) and three lay-sisters remained behind. Those who came to England did not prosper, and eventually died out. Unfortunately they took the most valuable paintings and manuscripts with them. The last nun of this migration died in 1837.

The little community left at Lisbon retained, by the decision of the Nuncio, the monastery and its estates, were alone recognised by the ecclesiastical authorities as the true Syon community, and elected their abbesses. Two batches of postulants, numbering five in each, were sent to them from England by Bishop Gradwell, and professions continued as before. It is now only three years since Abbess Jocelyn, the actual Superior of Syon, signed the deed which finally transferred the Lisbon convent to other names. But they still receive a small income from their Portugese possessions, and from this income give the *honorarium* for the annual sermon on St



CAPITAL OF COLUMN FROM THE GATEWAY OF SYON MONASTERY, ISLEWORTH
Taken away by the Nuns at the Dissolution, and carried with them throughout all their wanderings, possibly because it had supported part of the remains of Blessed Richard Reynolds. Now at Syon Abbey, Chudleigh.

[Face page 85.]

George's day, and the celebration of Masses, as formerly at Syon monastery, so now at the English College.

Thus their continuity remains unbroken. But it was for a moment in imminent danger. Though the Nuncio yielded to Abbess Halford's petition for leave to depart, yet it was against the wish of the President of the English College, and of a considerable portion of the community. The abbess's authority overcame the objections of some; the others arranged with the President that to avoid open resistance to her authority he should join them when already on the ship and conduct them back with him. Thus, as we do not doubt, through the intercession of their glorious martyr, this one relic of our ancient communities has been preserved to us. In 1861 they returned to England. But for the timely intervention of the President, there is little doubt that the community would ere this have ceased to exist.

Among the few relics of old Syon which are now at Chudleigh is the capital of a pillar, which would seem to have formerly supported a cross, of richly carved stone in

the fifteenth century style of art. Though exceedingly cumbrous and weighty, they actually succeeded in carrying it about with them in all their wanderings, which were in Father Parsons' words, "from England to Dermond, from Dermond to Sericksea (*sic*) from Sericksea to Meshagan, from Meshagan to Antwerp, from Antwerp to Mechlin, from Mechlin again to Antwerp, from Antwerp to Rouen, from Rouen to Lisbon;" and we must now add, from Lisbon to Spetisbury, from Spetisbury to Chudleigh. To any one reading the account of their often hurried flight from place to place, the difficulty of conveying it about seems incredible, and one wonders what singular motive could have urged them to it. The only tradition about it is that it stood in or before the gateway of old Syon. From the extreme veneration they always had for Blessed Richard, whom they regarded and spoke of as a martyr from the time of his execution, I have a strong suspicion that on the pillar to which this capital belongs, and which stood before the gateway of the monastery, a part of the martyr's mangled remains was affixed accord-

ing to custom, and as was done in the case of his fellow-martyr, Blessed John Houghton. A photo of this relic of old Syon is here given.

I must leave what I have to say on our martyr's birthplace to the next chapter. Since I have spoken on the unbroken continuity of his community, I may add as an unique fact that in the church of the Syon community, the annual Masses are still said and suffrages offered for the souls of King Henry V., Queen Philippa, Lord Fitzhugh, and their other founders and benefactors in days of old, besides the Masses and suffrages for William the Conqueror and the other founders of St Michael's Mount in Cornwall, the Devonshire estates of that Benedictine monastery having been transferred to Syon. The writer has himself sometimes celebrated these Masses at Syon. May the Angel of Syon obtain for him a blessing on the little tribute he lays at his feet.

CHAPTER IX

UNCERTAINTY CONCERNING THE BIRTHPLACE AND
PARENTAGE OF BLESSED RICHARD REYNOLDS
— THE REYNOLDS FAMILY OF PINHOE —
EARLY RELATIONS OF THE SYON COMMUNITY
WITH THE DIOCESE OF EXETER

It is singular, considering the widespread reputation of Blessed Richard Reynolds in his lifetime, and the number of writers by whom his fame has been attested, that not one has recorded anything of his birthplace or parentage, I cannot claim to have cleared up the obscurity that surrounds his origin, but the few notes I have to give may possibly lead others to a more fortunate result.

The one clue on which I have been able to light is given by Strype, in his *Memorials Ecclesiastical of King Edward VI.*, at the

year 1552. There he refers to a general pardon granted by the king, to which a number of exceptions were appended.

Through the kindness of Dom Norbert Birt, O.S.B., I am able to give in the words of the original Act (7 Edw. VI. c. xiv.) the list of exceptions from the general pardon :

“ Provided allwaie that this Acte of generall and free Pardone or annything therein conteyned, shall not extende to Cardynall Poole, Jeffereys Poole, Doctor Hillyard, Michaell Throkmerton, Richard Pate, (*blank*) Goldwell, John Clement Doctor of Phisycke, John Storey Doctor of the Lawe, William Rastall, Anthonye Bonvyce, Balthassar Guarsy Surgen, Benedict Bonvyce, Germayne Seo, ne to Edwarde Crayforde alias Crafforthe, Thomas Crayforde alias Crayforthe, Thomas Fynche, Thomas Raynoldes of Whitstable yeoman, ne to William Bedell, ne to Thomas Raynoldes nor to anny of them, for anny kynde of Treasone, nor for anny Fellonye, Robberye, wilful murder, or burglarye by them or anny of them committed or done before the saide xxth daye of Marche in the yere of our Lorde God a thousande fyve hundred fiftie and two ; ne to

discharge or acquite anny persone or persons which have procured, ayded, assisted, or conceled them or anny of them to breake anny Prisone or to go or flye over the sea without the Kyng's Lycence."*

Strype's account ends with these words:—
 "Thomas Raynolds of Whitstable of the county of Kent, *and another Thomas Raynolds related probably to Raynolds the monk of Syon* that was executed under King Henry for refusing the supremacy. Many of these were concerned with Cardinal Pole, and others denied the supremacy; and some concerned with the Holy Maid of Kent." All those so excepted, were clearly excepted, directly or indirectly, for motive of religion.

Who is this second Thomas Reynolds, probably a relative to our martyr? I suspect that he is Thomas Reynolds, Dean of Exeter, who afterwards under Elizabeth died a martyr in prison for the denial of the supremacy. Dr Oliver says that "in the reign of Edward VI. he was under a cloud." In fact, his rapid promotion under Queen Mary, first to the Deanery of Bristol, then to that of Exeter,

* *Statutes of the Realm*, vol. iv., pt. 1, p. 196.

with his nomination to the See of Hereford, is in keeping with the queen's usual action towards those who had suffered for the faith under Edward. His resolute refusal to take the oath of supremacy under Elizabeth, for which refusal he died in prison, shows a man of character likely to be ranked with Goldwell, Clement, Rastall, Story, and the others excepted from the general pardon, though, of course, we cannot on these grounds affirm for certain that he is the Thomas Reynolds referred to.

Dr Oliver, in his *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Devon* (vol. ii., p. 127) mentions his appointment in 1541 to the portion of Pitt in Tiverton Church. On applying to the late Rector of Tiverton for further information, he wrote me among other details of his career: "He was 'Papal' Rector of Pitt at the same time that George Carew was 'Protestant' Rector of Tidcombe, and distinguished himself by his zeal for the Pope during Queen Mary's reign."

But if this could be made clear, we should have thrown some light on the parentage of Blessed Richard, whom Strype believed to be

a relative of the Thomas Reynolds aforesaid. For the Dean of Exeter was of the family of Reynolds, settled in Pinhoe in Devon for many generations before the date of Blessed Richard's martyrdom. His father and grandfather, and one of his brothers, bore the name of Richard Reynolds. They were substantial yeomen. His brother Richard is called by Wood "a sufficient farmer." He sent his six sons to study at Oxford. John, his third son, was the well-known puritan divine; William, the second, one of the translators of the Rheims New Testament, a holy and learned priest, died at Antwerp, August 24, 1594. They were, as Dr Oliver says, "a family fertile in learned men," in which quality our martyr would have been one of their brightest ornaments.

What still further inclines me to think that Blessed Richard was a Devonshire man, is an inspection of the names of the brothers and sisters of the community in the sixteenth century, as I find them in the Syon manuscripts. Father Thomas Kirkham (elsewhere spelt Kirkhall or Kirkhaugh, but correctly in the obit-book of the community), died in 1523.

The Kirkhams were at that date lords of the manor of Pinhoe. But the number of Devonshire names in the lists of the community at this period is very large. Some of them are to be found in other counties, but a Devonshire man would be at once struck by the list of names here collected together which would be familiar to him. Besides Reynolds (Richard and Edith) and Kirkham of Pinhoe, he would recognise Gibbs of Staverton, Hokar and Spicer of Exeter, Duke of Otterton, Pollard of Way, Michell of Talleton, Drew of Drewsteignton, Atwill, Crispin, Russell, Clinton, Kirton, Denys, Brereton, Tregot, Curzon, and many others. No doubt some of them came from other counties, but the prevalence of West-country names is quite unmistakable.

The reason for this is not far to seek. Almost the earliest, and the most splendid royal endowment of Syon was that of lands in Devonshire, including the manors of Otterton, Clifton, Yartcombe, Sidmouth, Axmouth, and Budleigh, and the community's great influence and wealth in the county made their name well known there, while their reputation for sanctity would attract many to enter their

Order. The Reynolds of Devonshire gave many of their sons and daughters to the Church and the cloister, as may be seen in the Episcopal Registers of the diocese, and we find them Rectors or Vicars of Pinhoe, Ottery St Mary Church, Holcombe Burnell, etc. All these circumstances add to the probability that Blessed Richard Reynolds was connected with the diocese with which his community was so largely identified, and where it has found its present home. Pinhoe is distant only a few miles from the former Syon estates in Devon. It would be incorrect to call these reasons conclusive, and it is possible documents may yet be discovered such as to make them untenable, but they stimulate inquiry, and they give a probability to our opinion.

It is a coincidence that the very latest of all their endowments before their long exile, a gift made during their brief restoration under Mary, should have been granted by an Earl of Devon. In the Syon obit-book, October 18, is this entry: "Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon, who gave this monastery forty pounds a year in perpetuity. His exequies are to be solemnized once a year for his soul. At the

same let them pray for his four executors after their decease: Sir Francis Englefield, Sir Edward Waldegrave, William Cordall, James Basset." In Risdon I read: "Whimple . . . (a village at a little distance from Pinhoe) was conveyed by Edward Courtenay to Sir Francis Englefield and Sir William Cordall, Knights, in trust, as it was thought, but after his death they continued this manor." It was in all probability the manor of Whimple that was burdened with the annual payment of £40 to Syon.

In concluding these chapters, I cannot refrain from expressing the singular interest of the lists of the Syon benefactors. There we find Thomas Clifford, Bishop of London; Archbishop Chicheley; Thomas Langley, Bishop of Durham; Margaret, Duchess of Clarence; Sir John Babthorpe; Henry, Earl of Northumberland, and Mary his wife; Humphrey, Earl of Stafford; Lady Agnes Say; Elizabeth, Countess of Oxford; Sir Thomas Hungerford; Geoffry Boleyn; Thomas Basset; Bishop Kemp; William Hemming, who, in 1487, gave them a missal worth ten marks; Sir Ralph Jocelyn, a name so

auspiciously connected with Syon at the present day ; the Lady Mabel Tempest ; and a long list of others. The value even of these lists to the Catholic historian is very great. The year of death is often appended to the benefactor's name, but not always.

Syster Barbara Wyseman Abbes.

Sister Margery Flaxt of moulton

Syster Anne. Markyngfeld

Syster Elizabeth Shilton

Sister Dorothy Fowler:

Syster Eleonora Lucas

Syster Susan Bacon

Syster Ursula Colbecke

Syster Mary Sabinske.

All these above signed & were present at the signat vniuerselle charge which they do repurpose

Syster Clare doman

Syster Brigit Broome

Syster Katharin Knyghtly.

Syster Margari Winderfor

Syster Clare Salsbury

Syster Anne Wyseman Prioress

Syster Elizabeth Preston

Syster Cecill Audele

Syster Anne Walton,

Syster Brigit mendham

Syster Margaret Becket

Sister Mary Barnes

Sister Joseph Kingam

Sister Marianna

Sister Lucy Browne

Sister Gentrud Beckett

Sister Barbara Brooke

Sister Agatha Hildissex

Sister Priscilla Dimmock

Sister Brigit Smith

Sister Francis Houlter

Sister Dorothy Wilson.

SIGNATURES OF THE BRIDGETTINE NUNS OF SYON.

From an Undated MS. written at Lisbon about 1610, preserved at Syon Abbey, Chaldleigh.

A PREFACE, WRITTEN BY FATHER
ROBERT PARSONS, S.J., TO THE
HISTORY OF THE WANDER-
INGS OF SYON. FROM A MANU-
SCRIPT PRESERVED AT SYON
ABBEY, CHUDLEIGH.

“Preface collected by Father Parsons, from an information which the said Father Parsons and Sir Francis Inglefield sent for to our Father before the printing their Spanish Relation.

“THAT the reader may better understand the estate and manner of life of the monastery of Sion, and what passed in the convent since their coming from England, I will briefly say somewhat which may serve as a preface to this relation of their departure from France.

“This monastery in England was a royal foundation, very noble and greatly esteemed by all ; it was founded and very richly endowed by King Henry the Fifth, who was the second

king of the House of Lancaster, and one of the most famous princes that ever was in England, not only for warlike affairs and extent of dominions, but particularly for matter of religion and piety, who was so renowned that the historians of England call him Alexander the Great of that isle; as his dying at the same age and his reigning the like time, viz., nine years; in which space (like the other Alexander who conquered almost all Asia) King Henry won almost the whole kingdom of France; so that his son Henry the Sixth (a child of nine months) upon his father's death, was crowned in Paris king of both realms. This valiant King to the end that God might prosper him (as He most miraculously did), before he began his wars, proposed to found two of the most ample monasteries which were in England, the one of religious men, the other of religious women, ordaining that there should be perpetual prayer and divine service day and night without ceasing in these monasteries, so that where one monastery ended their office the other should begin, and so continue successively. The King built these monasteries nigh a palace of his

own, called Richmond, situated two leagues above London on the river Thames, the one on the same side of the river, the other over against it, on the opposite side of the said river, that each might hear and behold the other.

“ And the better to continue in England the remembrance of the Holy Land and the mysteries of our Redemption, he dedicated both these monasteries to Christ our Saviour, naming one Sheen, and the other Sion, the latter being nuns of the Rule of our Saviour, commonly called the Order of St Bridget ; a most noble and famous saint of the blood royal of Sweden ; who dying in Rome in the year of our Lord God 1373, was canonized by Pope Boniface the Ninth, and her Order approved by Pope Urban the Fifth.

“ This monastery of Sion was founded in the year of our Lord 1415, and endowed that there should be continually in it (according to their Rule) threescore nuns ; and at a little distance from their monastery or enclosure, the King built another habitation, wherein there were twenty-five religious men of the same Order, who daily performed divine service in the

same Church in their own choir, and the religious women above according to the institution of that Order. Of these twenty-five religious men one was to be Superior over all the rest and also General-Confessor and Pastor of all, as well of the Abbess and Sisters as of the Brothers ; so though the Abbess be head and chief dispenseress of the temporal foods of the monastery, and thereby bound to sustain and maintain the whole congregation, both of the Sisters and Brothers, yet she is neither head, nor Superior, nor hath any jurisdiction at all over the Brothers, as it is expressly declared in the 31st article of the Bull of Pope Martin the Fifth.

“ This most religious and reverend monastery of Sion being thus founded, it began to flourish and increase with so great fame of piety and religion, and gave such a sweet odour of virtue, that in short time it gained great esteem and reputation throughout all England, and continued so till the time of Henry the Eighth. For which cause, as also a certain reverence and respect which this king had to the great King Henry the Fifth, their founder, when he turned himself from God and his Church, and

resolved on the impious course of dissolving, and with impious hand casting down to the earth all the other monasteries of England, yet withheld himself from doing the like to the said monasteries of Sion and Sheen; and although at length he did not spare them, yet they were the last against whom he executed his fury and madness; and even at their dissolution commanded that these two should not be pulled down, but remain for the habitation of secular gentlemen, and settled a certain pension and maintenance on every Religious, as well women as men, according to their quality, and commanded them to live in the houses of their parents and relations. Nevertheless, he dealt in a quite different manner with the Reverend and learned Father Richard Reynolds, Confessor to the said nuns; for though King Henry greatly revered and respected him for his great sanctity and learning, yet because he would not consent to the King's will in his abominable schism, he commanded him to be publicly executed; which cruel execution he valiantly suffered, and died a glorious Martyr.

“ In this manner the heavy disconsolate nuns

of Sion passed their days, the rest of the life of King Henry the Eighth, and five years after his death, in the reign of his son King Edward the Sixth; attending and expecting (like the children of Israel in their Babylonish captivity) their return to their old desired Sion, continually beseeching our Lord with deep groans and tears that He would please to restore their former most happy estate.

“In this time our Lord inspired one of the principal of these religious women, called Sister Katharine Palmer, to join herself with other sisters of the same monastery of Sion, and so to leave England, and go to the city of Dermond in Flanders, to live in a monastery of the same Order of St Bridget, where they continued some years, being received with great love and charity by the Abbess and Religious of that place, rejoicing much to have reserved there some relics of the famous monastery of Sion. And here the most illustrious and worthy Cardinal Poole found them; who coming from Rome to England, his native country, in the second year of the reign of the most Catholic Princes, Philip and Mary, King and Queen of England, who

requested his coming of the Pope for the reconciliation of that kingdom.

“This Cardinal proposed to their most Religious Majesties that as they were most zealous of the house of God, it would please them to restore the two monasteries of Sheen and Sion to their first estate; which, with most Christian, zealous and royal hearts, they commanded immediately to be put in execution. Both the monasteries were yet entire and whole (though applied to profane uses as aforesaid), so that in a very few days the monastery of Sion was restored to its first estate, and the aforesaid Religious, Sister Katharine Palmer, who was chosen Abbess, soon gathered together the religious Fathers, her brothers, and those religious women who had been dispersed in their native country, England, but now returned to their infinitely beloved and wished-for Sion; where with great comfort and joy they sung a thousand hymns and praises to our Lord, diligently and punctually putting all things of their institute and religion in due order.

“In this manner they lived all the reign of Queen Mary. But as her life and reign was

short, so the tranquillity and repose of this monastery was also short, our Lord in His secret judgments permitting the calamity and misfortune of this kingdom to return upon her death. For Queen Elizabeth succeeding to the crown, began afresh to bring in heresy, which caused the Religious of Sheen and Sion to consult of their departure from England to some place where they might live Catholick and religiously. To this end they desired Dom Gomez de Figueira, Duke of Feria, to be their mediator; who being married to a principal Lady of England, resided there by his Majestie's order; by whose means they obtained licence of the Queen in the first year of her reign, the said Duke preparing a ship by his Majestie's order for their more secure passing the seas, A.D. 1558.

“Thus the convent and monastery of Sion was the second time exiled into Flanders; and not finding at present a commodious house for them in those parts, they joined themselves with the aforesaid religious Flemish of the same Order of St Brigit in Dermond, where they remained, though in a distinct quarter of the monastery, making as it were two

monasteries, one of the Flemish, the other of the English nuns, each with their own different Abbess. The English were sustained by such alms as they received from their Friends and Catholicks in England, their number still encreasing with principal men's daughters, whose hearts our Lord moved daily to come from England to receive the Habit, and make profession of the Rule of St Saviour, commonly called St Brigit's Order.

“In this manner they lived some years in Dermond, but the flame and fury of Heresy spreading more and more in England with great hatred against religious persons, their sustenance from England were soon much diminished. But our Lord, who never faileth to favour those who hope and put their trust in Him, moved the heart of his Catholick Majesty to grant them an ordinary pension for their subsistence, greatly pitying their poverty and want for such a cause. At the same time the Duchess of Parma, Regent (A.D. 1563) or Governess for his Majesty in Flanders, assigned them a monastery in the territory of Sericsea [Zuric Zee] in Zealand, wherein certain Flemish nuns had lived before, but had

left it, partly for want, because the monastery had no rents, and partly because the place was not healthy. The nuns of Sion remained in this monastery, though so unwholesome, four years, till in the year 1568 almost the whole isle was infected and corrupted with heresy, whereupon they determined to depart thence, being also persuaded thereto by Dr Nicholas Saunders, one of their own nation and deservedly famous for his great learning and virtue.

“Thence they went to Brabant, a province more healthy, secure, and Catholick, where the said Dr Saunders with alms (which he procured of the Catholicks in England and other places) bought them another house and church, a league from Antwerp, called Meshagan, where they remained four or five years, till heresy so encreased and prevailed in those parts that the Lutheran ministers daily preached in the woods which encompassed the monastery. And not only so, but certain hereticks had many times endeavoured to break open the doors of the monastery and to climb their walls by night, so as those poor religious Sisters stood in manifest peril of their lives and honour,

and they had scarce left the house ten hours when the hereticks came with carts, horses, and other preparations to carry them and their goods away. Wherefore, seeing the evident danger they fled in a great deal of fear to the city of Antwerp, where they remained above a year very ill accommodated ; for not finding a convenient house to fix in, they were forced to leave the city and go to Mechlin, where they hired another house by the favour and help of Sir Francis Inglefield, a principal man of their own nation, who came from Spain to Flanders not long before, sent (no doubt) by God to succour them in this necessity.

“ This noble knight was Counsellor to King Philip and Queen Mary in England, and departed the realm for his conscience sake, as soon as Elizabeth began to reign, and brought as much of his riches with him as he could, wherewith afterwards he sustained these religious women, and other Catholicks of his country exiled for their consciences, as long as he was able. The nuns of Sion lived seven years in Mechlin, until heresy did so much encrease, together with the aversion which that rebellious people had against their king,

that the sustenance of these poor Religious did entirely fail, and the alms which his Catholick Majesty had allowed them (as aforesaid) could not be recovered in these times of those revolts.

“ Their friend also, Sir Francis Inglefield, was then gone to Spain to obtain a pension of the King, not being able to sustain himself otherwise, so that it was likely these poor Religious would perish with extream necessity.

“ They had now no other means left but to send some of their number into England, to procure alms for the rest, who remained in Mechlin till it should please our Lord to dispose better of their affairs. And although this separation and parting of some from the others was most grievous to them, yet afterwards it appeared to have been done by the particular Providence of God; for those that went for England being there taken by the Hereticks, and brought before their tribunals, made a most constant and glorious confession of their religion; who being divided by the Queen's orders, in diverse places and prisons of the realm, stirred up the affection of diverse in whose

company they were, to their holy Order and Rule. Finally, this monastery stayed in Mechlin till that city, by means of secret hereticks within it, was taken by the Prince of Orange; in which misery and confusion it is too long to rehearse how barbarously these Religious who remained there were treated by the soldiers and hereticks, and in what extream danger they were to lose their lives and honours, if our Lord had not by His marvellous Providence miraculously delivered them, by moving the hearts of some English captains belonging to the Prince of Orange; who, though hereticks, having respect to their honour and the reputation of their country, defended their poor countrywomen. And amongst them one of good account felt himself so inwardly moved to favour these holy Religious, that often when at table, at play, or about other affairs, he would have such strong emotions, that he would rise up, saying to his companions: Let us go help these poor Religious, for sure they are in some danger; and as often as he felt this, he found it so to be, and helped and delivered them. And though the city and whole

country was in arms and full of hereticks, that it seemed impossible for these Religious to depart and escape their hands, yet the said English captains guided them safely unto the very gates of Antwerp. But finding that there also they had no security because of the people's inclination to heresy and rebellion, in a short time they fled thence by sea to the city of Rouen in France, through great and manifold dangers of hereticks and pirates from whom our Lord by His special Providence and Protection delivered them.

“In this city they remained fourteen years; thence, A.D. 1594, for the same reasons as before, viz., for the preservation of their faith and religion [they departed] and arrived in the kingdom of Portugal, which is the eighth time they have changed their habitation and country in the space of thirty-seven years, all which time they have been in exile and banishment from their so greatly beloved monastery of Sion:—these journeys being three or four times by sea, and as often by land; from England to Dermond, from Dermond to Sericksea, from Sericksea to Meshagan, from Meshagan to Antwerp, from Antwerp to Mechlin, from

Mechlin again to Antwerp, from Antwerp to Rouen, and at last from Rouen to Lisbon, which last voyage is the subject of the following treatise.*

“And now, considering the circumstances of these Religious, it certainly seems not to be without a mystery, that by the particular Providence of God they have been brought through so many travels and banishment to the kingdom of Portugal, there to repose themselves securely within the protection of the descendants of the House of Lancaster, and of the blood royal of their founder, King Henry the Fifth, who (as aforesaid) was the second king of that house : for the kings of Portugal descend in a right line from the royal house of Lancaster, Queen Philippa, daughter to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and sister to Henry the Fourth, King of England, being wife to John the First, King of Portugal, and mother to Don Edward, his son and successor.

* “The Wanderings of Syon.” Never yet fully published in English, but extant in manuscript at Syon. It will, we hope, ere long be edited. In what follows, Father Parsons alludes to the political plans in which he was then engaged.

“Of the other monastery of Sheen we shall say nothing at present, it not concerning the ensuing Relation ; although the monastery is still in Flanders, sustained by the alms of his Catholick Majesty, and hath its Prior of the same nation, as is aforesaid of the Abbess and Confessor of Sion. Which two monasteries remain as the only relics of all the Orders and Religious* which in Catholick times were in England, which, as all know, were very many. And these two are continued and preserved so many years so miraculously, in the midst of so many travels, persecutions, and perils in their banishment, even to our days, giving great hope that our Lord in His good pleasure will bring them once again home to their country, to be the seed and seminaries of many others, which shall serve Him in religious life. Which hope is greatly confirmed by another succour which our Lord in these times of so great trouble hath given to this nation by the seminaries of English priests in France, Flanders, Rome, and Spain, whose design is to preach the Catholick Faith in their country, and to reduce it to the

* The Carthusian house of *Sheen Anglorum* at Nieuport was suppressed in 1783 by the Emperor Joseph II.

obedience of the Holy Apostolick See, offering their blood and lives in that behalf.

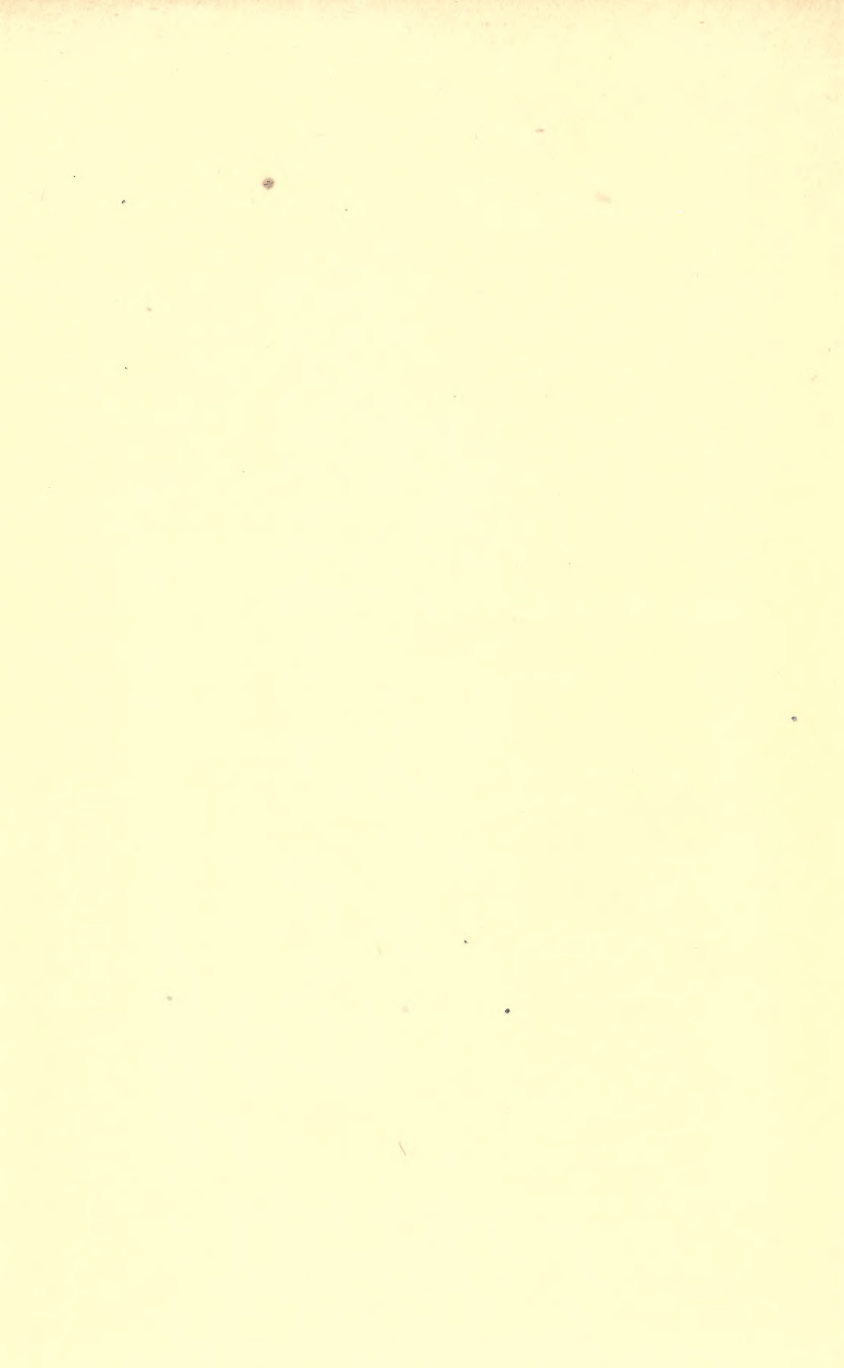
“So that these two monasteries of religious persons giving themselves to prayer and contemplation, are Moses, Aaron, and Hur, lifting up their hands to God for redress of their country, and for victory over the enemies of the Church of God. And in like manner the five seminaries perform the office of Joshua and the other valiant captains of the People of God against the Amalakites, that is, against the hereticks. God in His infinite Mercy give them all, both Religious and Seminaries, their desired victories; and also eternal glory and reward in Heaven to those who with their liberal and charitable alms do sustain them in this time of their warfare and banishment. Amen.”

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