

BARING-GOULD SABINE

**THE LIVES OF THE
SAINTS, VOLUME II
(OF 16): FEBRUARY**

Sabine Baring-Gould

**The Lives of the Saints,
Volume II (of 16): February**

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S. Baring-Gould

The Lives of the Saints,

Volume II (of 16): February

February 1

- SS. Cæcilius, *B. of Elvira*, and Companions, *MM. in Spain*, 1st cent.
S. Ignatius, *B. of Antioch*, *M. at Rome*, a. d. 107.
SS. Pionius and Companions, *MM. at Smyrna*, a. d. 251.
S. Eubert, *B. of Lisle*, 4th cent.
S. Ephraem Syrus, *D. C. at Edessa*, a. d. 378.
SS. Severus, *B.*, *Vincentia his wife*, and *Innocentia, V.*, *their daughter*, at *Ravenna*, end of 4th cent.
S. Paul, *B. of Trois-Chateaux in France*, beginning of 5th cent.
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S. Kinnea, *V. in Ireland*, 5th cent.
S. Bridget, *V. Abs. at Kildare*, a. d. 525.
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S. Severus, *B. of Avranches*, 6th cent.
S. Præcordius, *P. at Corbie*, 6th cent.
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SS. Agripanus, *B.*, and *Ursicinus*, *MM. at Le Puy*, after a. d. 650.
S. Sigebert III., *K. C. at Metz*, a. d. 656.
B. Wolfhold, *P. at Hohenwast in Bavaria*, after a. d. 1100.
S. John of the Grate, *B. of S. Malo*, a. d. 1163.
S. Raymond, *of Fitero, A.C., Founder of the Order of Calatrava*, a. d. 1163.
S. Verdiana, *V. R. at Castel Fiorentino, in Tuscany*, a. d. 1242.

S. IGNATIUS, B. M

(A.D. 107.)

[S. Ignatius is commemorated variously, on June 10th, Oct. 8th, Nov. 24th, Dec. 14th or 19th; but by the Roman Martyrology his festival is fixed for Feb. 1st. In the Bruges and Treves Martyrologies, his commemoration was placed on Jan. 31st, so as not to interfere with that of S. Bridget on this day. The authorities for his life and passion are his own genuine Epistles, the Acts of his martyrdom, Eusebius, and S. Chrysostom's Homily on S. Ignatius.]

SAINT IGNATIUS was a convert and disciple of S. John the Evangelist. He was appointed by S. Peter to succeed Evodius in the see of Antioch, and he continued in his bishopric full forty years. He received the name of Theophorus, or one who carries God with him. In his Acts, Trajan is said to have asked him why he had the surname of God-bearing, and he answered, because he bore Christ in his heart.¹

¹ Vincent of Beauvais, and other late writers, say that the name of God was found after his death written in gold letters on his

Socrates, in his "Ecclesiastical History," says, "We must make some allusion to the origin of the custom in the Church of singing hymns antiphonally. Ignatius, third bishop of Antioch in Syria from the apostle Peter, who also had conversed familiarly with the apostles themselves, saw a vision of angels, hymning in alternate chants the Holy Trinity; after which he introduced this mode of singing into the Antiochian Church, whence it was transmitted by tradition to all the other churches."²

It seems probable that Evodius vacated the see of Antioch about the year 70. There are traditions that represent Evodius to have been martyred; and Josephus speaks of a disturbance in Antioch about that period, which was the cause of many Jews being put to death.³ There is a difficulty in supposing S. Peter to have appointed Ignatius bishop of Antioch, if he did not succeed Evodius till the year 70. But it is probable, that later writers have confounded the appointment of Ignatius to the see of Antioch, with his consecration to the episcopal office; and it is highly probable that he received this from the hands of the Prince of the Apostles.

The date of the martyrdom of Ignatius can be fixed with tolerable certainty as occurring in the year 107. The Acts expressly state that Trajan was then at Antioch, and that Sura and Senecio were consuls: two events, which will be found to meet only in the year 107.

Trajan made his entry into Antioch in January; his first concern was to examine into the state of religion there, and the Christians were denounced to him as bringers-in of strange gods. Ignatius was brought before him, and boldly confessed Christ to be God. "Dost thou mean Him who was crucified?" asked the emperor, scornfully. Ignatius answered, "The very same, Who by His death overcame sin, and enabled those who bear Him in their hearts to trample under foot all the power of the devils."

Then Trajan ordered him to be taken to Rome, and exposed to wild beasts in the amphitheatre. It was generally a distinction reserved for Roman citizens, that if they had committed an offence in the provinces, they were sent for punishment to the capital. This, however, does not appear to have been the reason in the case of Ignatius. The punishment to which he was condemned was generally reserved for culprits of the lowest condition; and the Christians were perhaps viewed in this light by the heathen. Ecclesiastical history has scarcely preserved a more interesting and affecting narrative, than that of the journey of Ignatius from Antioch to Rome. In tracing the procession of the martyr to his final triumph, we forget that we are reading of a prisoner who was dragged to his death in chains. He was committed to a guard of ten soldiers, who appear to have treated him with severity; and, after taking ship at Seleucia, they landed for a time at Smyrna. He had here the gratification of meeting with Polycarp, who was bishop of that see, and who, like himself, had enjoyed a personal acquaintance with S. John. His arrival also excited a sensation through the whole of Asia Minor. Onesimus, bishop of Ephesus; Polybius, bishop of Tralles; and Demas, bishop of Magnesia, came from their respective cities, with a deputation of their clergy, to visit the venerable martyr. Ignatius took the opportunity of writing from Smyrna to the Churches over which these bishops presided; and his epistles to the Ephesians, Trallians, and Magnesians, are still extant. Hearing also of some Ephesians, who were going to Rome, and who were likely to arrive there more expeditiously than himself, he addressed a letter to the Church in that city. His principal object in writing was to prevent any attempt which the Roman Christians might have made to procure a reprieve from the death which was awaiting him. He expresses himself not only willing, but anxious, to meet the wild beasts in the amphitheatre; and there never, perhaps, was a more perfect pattern of resignation than that which we find in this letter.

From Smyrna he proceeded to Troas, where he was met by some of the neighbouring bishops, and the bishop of Philadelphia became the bearer of a letter which he wrote to the Christians in that city. He also wrote from the same place to the Church of Smyrna; and the personal regard which he

heart; but this is only one instance of the way in which legends have been coined to explain titles, the spiritual significance of which was not considered sufficiently wondrous for the vulgar.

² Lib. vi. c. 8.

³ De Bel. Jud. vii. 3.

had for Polycarp, the bishop of that see, will explain why he also wrote to him, and made it his dying request that he would attend to the Church of Antioch. These seven epistles, which were written by Ignatius from Smyrna and Troas, are still extant.

It appears that Ignatius had intended to write letters to some other Churches, from Troas; but his guards were impatient to proceed, and once more setting sail, they followed the course which S. Paul had taken upon his first journey into Greece, and landed at Neapolis. Hurrying through Macedonia, he embarked once more on the western coast of Epirus, and crossing the Adriatic, arrived at Rome. There was now an exhibition of games, which lasted some days; and it seems to have been intended that the death of Ignatius should form part of the spectacle. The voyage had been hurried on this account; and on the last day of the games, which was the 19th December, the holy martyr was led into the amphitheatre, and his death seems to have been the work of a moment. In his letter to the Roman Church, he had prayed that the wild beasts might despatch him speedily, and not refuse to touch him, as had sometimes been the case. His prayer was heard; and the Christians of Rome, who had thought themselves blessed to have even seen the apostolic bishop of Antioch among them, had now to pick up a few of the larger and harder bones, which was all that the wild beasts had spared. These were carried to Antioch, and it is evidence of the great reverence at that early age shown to the relics of the saints, that the same honours were paid to the sacred relics as had been paid to the holy martyr himself, when he touched at the different cities. The friends of Ignatius speak of his remains as "an invaluable treasure;" and as such they were deposited near one of the gates in the suburbs of Antioch.

The relics of S. Ignatius were retranslated to Rome, and are dispersed among several of the churches of the city. The head, however, is in the possession of the Jesuits of Prague.

SS. PIONIUS, P. AND COMPANIONS, MM

(A.D. 251.)

[Roman and many ancient Martyrologies on this day. The Greeks on March 11th; the Martyrology attributed to S. Jerome, on March 12th. Authorities: – The genuine Acts of these martyrs, and the brief account in Eusebius, lib. iv. c. 15.]

In the persecution of Decius, S. Pionius, a priest of Smyrna, was apprehended; together with Sabina, Macedonia, Asclepiades, and Linus a priest, whilst they were celebrating the festival of S. Polycarp, on February 23. Pionius having fasted on the vigil, was forewarned of his coming passion in a vision. On the morning, which was the Sabbath, or Saturday, they took holy bread (the Eulogies) and water, and were then surprised and taken by Polemon, the chief priest of the idol temple in Smyrna, and his satellites. Polemon in vain urged them to conform to the imperial edicts, and sacrifice to the gods; but they set their faces as flint against his solicitations, and were led into the forum, where Pionius took the opportunity of haranguing the crowds who hurried up to be present at their trial.

The Smyrnian Church was then suffering the shame of having seen its bishop, Eudæmon, apostatize, and his example had been followed by many timorous Christians.

The interrogatory was conducted by Polemon, and is dryly recorded by the notary who wrote the acts: – The Idol priest said, "Pionius! sacrifice." But he answered, "I am a Christian." "Whom," said Polemon, "dost thou worship?" "The Almighty God," answered Pionius, "who made heaven and earth, and all things in heaven and earth, and us men; who giveth to all men liberally, as they need; whom we know through His Word, Christ." Polemon said, "Sacrifice then, only to the Emperor." Pionius said, "I cannot sacrifice to any man. I am a Christian."

Then – the notary writing all down – Polemon asked, "What is thy name?" He answered, "Pionius." Polemon said, "Thou art a Christian?" He answered, "Certainly I am." "To what Church

dost thou belong?" asked Polemon. "I belong to the Catholic Church," answered Pionius. "There is none other with Christ."

Then he went to Sabina, and put to her the same questions, which she answered almost in the same words. Next he turned to Asclepiades, and asked, "What is thy name?" "Asclepiades." "Art thou a Christian?" "I am." Then said Polemon, "Whom dost thou worship?" Asclepiades answered, "I worship Jesus Christ." "What!" asked Polemon, "Is that another God?" "No," answered Asclepiades, "He is the same God of whom the others spake."

After this the martyrs were taken to prison, followed by a crowd jeering and insulting them. On the morrow they were led forth again to trial, and the idol priest endeavoured to force them to enter the temple, and by violence to compel them to sacrifice. Pionius tore from his head the sacrificial garlands that the priest had placed upon him. Polemon, unable to bend the holy martyrs to submission, delivered them over to Quintilian, the pro-consul, on his arrival at Smyrna, and he sentenced Pionius to be hung on a rack, and his body to be torn with hooks of iron, and afterwards to be nailed to a post, and burnt alive. Metrodorus, a Marcionite priest, underwent the same punishment with him.

S. EPHRAEM THE SYRIAN, D. C

(A.D. 378.)

[Roman and all Latin Martyrologies, except that of Bede, which gives July 9th. Commemorated by the Greeks on Jan. 28th. His death took place in summer or autumn. Authorities: – His own narration to his monks of his conversion, his confession and testament; also the oration upon him by S. Gregory Nyssen; an account of him in the Life of S. Basil, attributed to S. Amphilochius, Sozomen, etc.]

Saint Ephraem was the son of poor parents of Nisibis, who had confessed Christ before the persecutors, under Diocletian or his successors. In his narrative of his conversion, S. Ephraem laments some of the faults of his youth. "When I was a boy," says he, "I was rather wild. One day my parents sent me out of the town, and I found a cow that was in calf feeding in the road leading to the wood. This cow belonged to very poor people. I took up stones, and began pelting the cow, and driving it before me into the wood, and I drove the beast on till in the evening, it fell down dead, and during the night wild beasts ate it. On my way back I met the poor man who owned it, and he asked me, 'My son, have you been driving away my cow?' Then I not only denied, but heaped abuse and insult upon him." Some few days after he was sent out of the town by his parents again, and he wandered in the wood, idling with some shepherds, till night fell. Then, as it was too late to return, he remained the night with the shepherds. That night the fold was broken into, and some of the sheep were carried off. Then the shepherds, thinking the boy had been in league with the robbers, dragged him before the magistrate, and he was cast into prison, where he found two men in chains, charged, one with homicide, the other with adultery, though they protested their innocence. In a dream an angel appeared to Ephraem, and asked him why he was there. The boy began at once to declare himself guiltless. "Yes," said the angel, "guiltless thou art of the crime imputed to you, but hast thou forgotten the poor man's cow? Listen to the conversation of the men who are with thee, and thou wilt learn that none suffer without cause."

In the morning, the two men began to speak, and one said, "The other day, as I was going over a bridge, I saw two fellows quarrelling, and one flung the other over into the water; and I did not put forth my hand to save him, as I might have done, and so he was drowned."

Presently the other man said, "I am not guilty of this adultery of which I am charged, but nevertheless I have done a very wicked thing. Two brothers and a sister were left an inheritance by their father, and the two young men wished to deprive their sister of what was her due, and they

bribed me to give false evidence whereby the will was upset, and the property divided between them, to the exclusion of the poor girl."

After an imprisonment of forty days, Ephraem was brought before the magistrate along with his fellow prisoners. He says, that when he saw the two men stripped, and stretched on the rack, "An awful terror came over me, and I trembled, thinking I was sure to be subjected to the same treatment as they. Therefore I cried, and shivered, and my heart altogether failed me. Then the people and the apparitors began to laugh at my tears and fright, and asked me what I was crying for? 'You ought to have considered this before, boy! but now tears are of no avail. You shall soon have a taste of the rack too, never doubt it.' Then, at these words, my soul melted clean away."

However, he was spared this time, and the innocence of his companions having been proved, they were set free. Ephraem was taken back to prison, where he spent forty more days; and whilst he was there, the two men who had defrauded their sister of her inheritance, and the man who had flung his adversary into the river, were caught and chained in the dungeon with him. These men and Ephraem were brought forth to trial together, and the men were sentenced, after they had been racked, and had confessed their crime, to lose their right hands. Ephraem, in another paroxysm of fear, made a vow that he would become a monk, if God would spare him the suffering of the rack. To his extreme terror the magistrate ordered him to be stripped, and the question to be applied. Then Ephraem stood naked and trembling beside the rack, when fortunately the servant came up to the magistrate to tell him that dinner was ready. "Very well," said the magistrate, "then I will examine this boy another day." And he ordered him back to prison. On his next appearance, the magistrate, thinking Ephraem had been punished enough, dismissed him, and he ran off instantly to the mountains, to an old hermit, and asked him to make of him a monk.⁴

He was eighteen years old when he was baptized, and immediately after he had received the Sacrament of Regeneration, he began to discipline his body and soul with great severity. He lay on the bare ground, often fasted whole days, and spent a considerable part of the night in prayer. He exercised the handicraft of a sail-maker. He was naturally a very passionate man, but he learned so completely to subdue his temper, that the opposite virtue of meekness became conspicuous, so that he received the title of the "Peaceable man of God." Sozomen relates that once, after Ephraem had fasted several days, the brother, who was bringing him a mess of pottage, let the dish fall and broke it, and strewed the food upon the floor. The saint seeing his confusion, said cheerfully, "Never mind, if the supper won't come to me, I will go to the supper." Then, sitting down on the ground by the broken dish, he picked up the pottage as well as he could.

"He devoted his life to monastic philosophy," says Sozomen; "and although he had received no education, he became, contrary to all expectation, so proficient in the learning and language of the Syrians, that he comprehended with ease the most abstruse problems of philosophy. His style of writing was so full of glowing oratory and sublimity of thought, that he surpassed all the writers of Greece. The productions of Ephraem were translated into Greek during his life, and translations are even now being made, and yet they preserve much of their original force, so that his works are not less admired in Greek than in Syriac. Basil, who was subsequently bishop of the metropolis of Cappadocia, was a great admirer of Ephraem, and was astonished at his condition. The opinion of Basil, who was the most learned and eloquent man of his age, is a stronger testimony I think, to the merit of Ephraem, than anything that could be indicted in his praise."⁵

S. Gregory Nyssen gives the following testimony to the eloquence of S. Ephraem: "Who that is proud would not become the humblest of men, reading his discourse on Humility? Who would not be inflamed with a divine fire, reading his treatise on Charity? Who would not wish to be chaste in

⁴ As S. Ephraem related the incident several times to his monks, and they wrote it down from what he had related, there exist several versions of the story slightly differing from one another.

⁵ Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. c. 16.

heart and soul, by reading the praises he has lavished on Virginity? Who would not be frightened by hearing his discourse on the Last Judgment, wherein he has depicted it so vividly, that nothing can be added thereto? God gave him so profound a wisdom, that, though he had a wonderful facility of speech, yet he could not find expression for the multitude of thoughts which poured from his mind." At Edessa, S. Ephraem was ordained deacon; it has been asserted that he afterwards received the priesthood from the hands of S. Basil, but this is contradicted by most ancient writers, who affirm that he died a deacon. He was elected bishop of one town, but hearing it, he comported himself so strangely, that the people and clergy, supposing him to have lost his mind, chose another in his place; and he maintained the same appearance of derangement till the other candidate was consecrated. The city of Edessa having been severely visited by famine, he quitted the solitary cell in which he dwelt, and entering the city, rebuked the rich for permitting the poor to die around them, instead of imparting to them of their superfluities; and he represented to them that the wealth which they were treasuring up so carefully would turn to their own condemnation, and to the ruin of their souls, which were of more value than all the wealth of earth. The rich men replied, "We are not intent on hoarding our wealth, but we know of no one whom we may trust to distribute our goods with equity." "Then," said Ephraem, "entrust me with that office."

As soon as he had received their money, he fitted up three hundred beds in the public galleries, and there tended those who were suffering from the effects of the famine. On the cessation of the scarcity, he returned to his cell; and after the lapse of a few days expired.

S. Ephraem was a valiant champion of the orthodox faith. Finding that the Syrians were fond of singing the heretical hymns of Bardasanes, he composed a great number of orthodox poems which he set to the same tunes, and by introducing these, gradually displaced those which were obnoxious. One instance of his zeal against heresy is curious, though hardly to be commended. The heretic Apollinarius had composed two reference books of quotations from Scripture, and arguments he intended to use in favour of his doctrines, at a public conference with a Catholic, and these books he lent to a lady. Ephraem borrowed the books, and glued the pages together, and then returned them. Apollinarius, nothing doubting, took his volumes to the discussion, but when he tried to use them, found the pages fast, and retired from the conference in confusion.

S. SEVERUS, B. C., OF RAVENNA

(ABOUT A.D. 390.)

[S. Severus, B. M., of Ravenna, is commemorated on Jan. 1; S. Severus, B. C., of Ravenna, on Feb. 1st. Authorities: – Three ancient lives, with which agree the accounts in the Martyrologies.]

S. Severus was a poor weaver in Ravenna. Upon the see becoming vacant, the cathedral was filled with electors to choose a new bishop. Severus said to his wife Vincentia, "I will visit the minster and see what is going on." "You had much better remain at home, and not show yourself in your working clothes among the nobles and well-dressed citizens," said she. "Wife! what harm is there in my going?" "You have work to do here, for your daughter and me, instead of gadding about, sight seeing." And when Severus persisted in desiring to go, "Very well," said Vincentia, "go, and may you come back with a good box on your ear." And when she saw that he was bent on going, she said, mocking, "Go then, and get elected bishop."

So he went, and entering the cathedral, stood behind the doors, as he was ashamed of his common dress covered with flocks of wool. Then when the Holy Spirit had been invoked to direct the choice of the people, suddenly there appeared in the cathedral a beautiful white dove, fluttering at the ear of the poor spinner. And he beat it off, but the bird returned, and rested on his head. Then the people regarded this as a heavenly sign, and he was unanimously chosen to be their bishop. Now

Vincentia was at home, and one came running, and told her that her husband was elected bishop of Ravenna. Then she laughed, and would not believe it, but when the news was repeated, she said, "This is likely enough, that a man who tosses a shuttle should make a suitable prelate!" But when she was convinced, by the story being confirmed by other witnesses, her amazement rendered her speechless.

After his consecration, Severus lived with her as with a sister, till she died, and was followed shortly after by her daughter, Innocentia. Then he laid them both in a tomb, in the church, which had been prepared for himself. And after many years he knew that he was to die. So he sang High Mass before all the people, and when the service was over, he bade all the congregation depart, save only one server. And when they were gone, he bade the boy close the doors of the cathedral. Then the bishop went, vested in his pontifical robes, to the sepulchre of his wife and daughter, and he and the boy raised the stone, and Severus stood, and looking towards the bodies of his wife and daughter, he said, "My dear ones, with whom I lived in love so long, make room for me, for this is my grave, and in death we shall not be divided." Having said this, he descended into the grave, and laid himself down between his wife and daughter, and crossed his hands on his breast, and looked up to heaven and prayed, and then closing his eyes, gave one sigh, and fell asleep. The relics were translated to Mayence, in 836, and Oct. 22nd is observed as the feast of this translation. In art, Severus is represented as a bishop with a shuttle at his side.

S. BRIDGET, V. ABSS

(A.D. 525.)

[S. Bridget, or Bride as she is called in England, is the Patroness of Ireland, and was famous throughout northern Europe. Leslie says, "She is held in so great honour by Picts, Britons, Angles, and Irish, that more churches are dedicated to God in her memory, than to any other of the saints;" and Hector Boece says, that she was regarded by Scots, Picts, and Irish as only second to the B. Virgin Mary. Unfortunately, little authentic is known of her. The lives extant are for the most part of late composition, and are collected from oral traditions of various value. One life is attributed, however, to Bishop Ultan Mac Conubar, d. circ. 662; another, a metrical one, is by the monk Chilian, circ. 740; another by one Cogitosus, is of uncertain date; another is by Laurence, prior of Durham, d. 1154; and there is another, considered ancient, by an anonymous author.]

Ireland was, of old, called the Isle of Saints, because of the great number of holy ones of both sexes who flourished there in former ages; or, who, coming thence, propagated the faith amongst other nations. Of this great number of saints the three most eminent, and who have therefore been honoured as the special patrons of the island, were S. Patrick their apostle, S. Columba, who converted the Picts, and S. Bridget, the virgin of Kildare, whose festival is marked in all the Martyrologies on the 1st day of February.

This holy virgin was born about the middle of the fifth century, in the village of Fochard, in the diocese of Armagh. Her father was a nobleman, called Dubtach, descended from Eschaid, the brother of King Constantine of the Hundred Battles, as he is surnamed by the Irish historians. The legend of her origin is as follows, but it is not to be relied upon, as it is not given by Ultan, Cogitosus, or Chilian of Inis-Keltra.⁶ Dubtach had a young and beautiful slave-girl, whom he dearly loved, and she became pregnant by him, whereat his wife, in great jealousy and rage, gave him no peace till he had sold her to a bard, but Dubtach, though he sold the slave-girl, stipulated with the purchaser that the child should not go with the mother, but should be returned to him when he claimed it.

⁶ Moreover it contradicts the positive statements of more reliable authors, that Bridget was the legitimate daughter of Brotseach, the wife of Dubtach.

Now one day, the king and queen visited the bard to ask an augury as to the child they expected shortly, and to be advised as to the place where the queen should be confined. Then the bard said, "Happy is the child that is born neither in the house nor out of the house!" Now it fell out that Brotseach, the slave-girl, was shortly after returning to the house with a pitcher of fresh warm milk from the cow, when she was seized with labour, and sank down on the threshold, and was delivered neither in the house nor out of the house, and the pitcher of warm sweet milk, falling, was poured over the little child.

When Bridget grew up, her father reclaimed her, and treated her with the same tenderness that he showed to his legitimate children. She had a most compassionate heart, and gave to every beggar what he asked, whether it were hers or not. This rather annoyed her father, who took her one day with him to the king's court, and leaving her outside, in the chariot, went within to the king, and asked his majesty to buy his daughter, as she was too expensive for him to keep, owing to her excessive charity. The king asked to see the girl, and they went together to the door. In the meantime, a beggar had approached Bridget, and unable to resist his importunities, she had given him the only thing she could find, her father's sword, which was a present that had been made him by the king. When Dubtach discovered this, he burst forth into angry abuse, and the king asked, "Why didst thou give away the royal sword, child?" "If beggars assailed me," answered Bridget calmly, "and asked for my king and my father, I would give them both away also." "Ah!" said the king, "I cannot buy a girl who holds us so cheap."

Her great beauty caused her to be sought in marriage by a young noble of the neighbourhood, but as she had already consecrated herself by vow to Jesus, the Spouse of virgins, she would not hear of this match. To rid herself of the importunity of her suitor, she prayed to God, that He would render her so deformed that no one might regard her. Her prayer was heard, and a distemper fell on one of her eyes, by which she lost that eye, and became so disagreeable to the sight, that no one thought of giving her any further molestation.⁷ Thus she easily gained her father's consent that she should consecrate her virginity to God, and become a nun. She took with her three other virgins of that country, and bidding farewell to her friends, went in 469 to the holy bishop Maccail, then at Usny hill, Westmeath; who gave the sacred veil to her and her companions, and received their profession of perpetual virginity. S. Bridget was then only fourteen years old, as some authors assert. The Almighty was pleased on this occasion to declare how acceptable this sacrifice was, by restoring to Bridget the use of her eye, and her former beauty, and, what is still more remarkable, and is particularly celebrated, as well in the Roman, as in other ancient Martyrologies, was, that when the holy virgin, bowing her head, kissed the dry wood of the feet of the altar, it immediately grew green, in token of her purity and sanctity. The story is told of her, that when she was a little child, playing at holy things, she got a smooth slab of stone which she tried to set up as a little altar; then a beautiful angel joined in her play, and made wooden legs to the altar, and bored four holes in the stone, into which the legs might be driven, so as to make it stand.

S. Bridget having consecrated herself to God, built a cell for her abode, under a goodly oak, thence called Kil-dare or the Cell of the Oak; and this foundation grew into a large community, for a great number of virgins resorted to her, attracted by her sanctity, and put themselves under her direction. And so great was the reputation of her virtues, and the place of her abode was so renowned and frequented on her account, that the many buildings erected in the neighbourhood during her lifetime formed a large town, which was soon made the seat of a bishop, and in process of time, the metropolitan see of the whole province.

What the rule embraced by S. Bridget was, is not known, but it appears from her history, that the habit which she received at her profession from S. Maccail was white. Afterwards, she herself gave a rule to her nuns; so that she is justly numbered among the founders of religious Orders.

⁷ But this legend is given very differently in another Life, and Cogitosus and the first and fourth Lives do not say anything about it.

This rule was followed for a long time by the greatest part of the monasteries of sacred virgins in Ireland; all acknowledging our Saint as their mother and mistress, and the monastery of Kildare as the headquarters of their Order. Moreover, Cogitosus informs us, in his prologue to her life, that not only did she rule nuns, but also a large community of men, who lived in a separate monastery. This obliged the Saint to call to her aid out of his solitude, the holy bishop S. Conlaeth, to be the director and father to her monks; and at the same time to be the bishop of the city. The church of Kildare, to suit the requirements of the double monastery and the laity, was divided by partitions into three parts, Cogitosus says, one for the monks, one for the nuns, and the third for the lay people.

As S. Bridget was obliged to go long journeys, the bishop ordained her coachman priest, and the story is told that one day as she and a favourite nun sat in the chariot, the coachman preached to them the Word of God, turning his head over his shoulder. Then said the abbess, "Turn round, that we may hear better, and throw down the reins." So he cast the reins over the front of the chariot, and addressed his discourse to them with his back to the horses. Then one of the horses slipped its neck from the yoke, and ran free; and so engrossed were Bridget and her companion in the sermon of the priestly charioteer, that they did not observe that the horse was loose, and the carriage running all on one side. On another occasion she was being driven over a common near the Liffey, when they came to a long hedge, for a man had enclosed a portion of the common. Then the man shouted to them to go round, and Bridget bade her charioteer so do. But he, thinking that they had a right of way across the newly made field, drove straight at the hedge; then the proprietor of the field ran forward, and the horses started, and the jolt of the chariot threw S. Bridget and the coachman out of the vehicle, and severely bruised them both. Then the abbess, picking herself up said, "Better to have gone round; short cuts bring broken bones."

Once a family came to Kildare, leaving their house and cattle unguarded, that they might attend a festival in the church, and receive advice from S. Bridget. Whilst they were absent, some thieves stole their cows, and drove them away.

They had to pass the Liffey, which was much swollen, consequently the thieves stripped, and tied their clothes to the horns of the cattle, intending to drive the cows into the river, and swim after them. But the cows ran away, carrying off with them the clothes of the robbers attached to their horns, and they did not stop till they reached the gates of the convent of S. Bridget, the nude thieves racing after them. The holy abbess restored to them their garments, and severely reprimanded them for their attempted robbery.

Other strange miracles are attributed to her, of which it is impossible to relate a tithe. She is said, after a shower of rain, to have come hastily into a chamber, and cast her wet cloak over a sunbeam, mistaking it, in her hurry, for a beam of wood. And the cloak remained there, and the ray of sun did not move, till late at night one of her maidens ran to her, to tell her that the sunbeam waited its release, so she hastened, and removed her cloak, and the ray retired after the long departed sun.

Once a rustic, seeing a wolf run about in proximity to the palace, killed it; not knowing that it was the tame creature of the king; and he brought the dead beast to the king, expecting a reward. Then the prince in anger ordered the man to be cast into prison and executed. Now when Bridget heard this, her spirit was stirred within her, and mounting her chariot, she drove to the court, to intercede for the life of the poor countryman. And on the way, there came a wolf over the bog racing towards her, and it leaped into the chariot, and allowed her to caress it. Then, when she reached the palace, she went before the king, with the wolf at her side, and said, "Sire! I have brought thee a better wolf than that thou hast lost, spare therefore the life of the poor man who unwittingly slew thy beast." Then the king accepted her present with great joy, and ordered the prisoner to be released.

One evening she sat with sister Dara, a holy nun, who was blind, as the sun went down; and they talked of the love of Jesus Christ, and the joys of Paradise. Now their hearts were so full, that the night fled away whilst they spoke together, and neither knew that so many hours had sped. Then the sun came up from behind Wicklow mountains, and the pure white light made the face of earth

bright and gay. Then Bridget sighed, when she saw how lovely were earth and sky, and knew that Dara's eyes were closed to all this beauty. So she bowed her head and prayed, and extended her hand and signed the dark orbs of the gentle sister. Then the darkness passed away from them, and Dara saw the golden ball in the east, and all the trees and flowers glittering with dew in the morning light. She looked a little while, and then, turning to the abbess, said, "Close my eyes again, dear mother, for when the world is so visible to the eyes, God is seen less clearly to the soul." So Bridget prayed once more, and Dara's eyes grew dark again.

A madman, who troubled all the neighbourhood, came one day across the path of the holy abbess. Bridget arrested him, and said, "Preach to me the Word of God, and go thy way." Then he stood still and said, "O Bridget, I obey thee. Love God, and all will love thee. Honour God, and all will honour thee. Fear God, and all will fear thee." Then with a howl he ran away. Was there ever a better sermon preached in fewer words.

A very remarkable prophesy of the heresies and false doctrines of later years must not be omitted. One day Bridget fell asleep whilst a sermon was being preached by S. Patrick, and when the sermon was over, she awoke. Then the preacher asked her, "O Bridget, why didst thou sleep, when the Word of Christ was spoken?" She fell on her knees and asked pardon, saying, "Spare me, spare me, my father, for I have had a dream." Then said Patrick, "Relate thy vision to me." And Bridget said, "Thy hand-maiden saw, and behold the land was ploughed far and wide, and sowers went forth in white raiment, and sowed good seed. And it sprang up a white and goodly harvest. Then came other ploughers in black, and sowers in black, and they hacked, and tore up, and destroyed that beautiful harvest, and strewed tares far and wide. And after that, I looked, and behold, the island was full of sheep and swine, and dogs and wolves, striving with one another and rending one another." Then said S. Patrick, "Alas, my daughter! in the latter days will come false teachers having false doctrine; who shall lead away many, and the good harvest which has sprung up from the Gospel seed we have sown will be trodden under foot; and there shall be controversies in the faith between the faithful and the bringers-in of strange doctrine."

Now when the time of her departure drew nigh, Bridget called to her a dear pupil, named Darlughdach and foretold the day on which she should die. Then Darlughdach wept bitterly, and besought her mother to suffer her to die with her. But the blessed Bridget said, "Nay, my daughter, thou shalt live a whole year after my departure; and then shalt thou follow me." And so it came to pass. Having received the sacred viaticum from the hands of S. Nennidh, the bishop, the holy abbess exchanged her mortal life for a happy immortality, on February 1st, 525.⁸ Her body was interred in the church of Kildare; where her nuns for some ages, to honour her memory, kept a fire always burning; from which that convent was called the House of Fire, till Henry of London, Archbishop of Dublin, to take away all occasion of superstition, in 1220, ordered it to be extinguished.

The body of the Saint was afterwards translated to Down-Patrick, where it was found in a triple vault, together with the bodies of S. Patrick and S. Columba, in the year 1185. These bodies were, with great solemnity, translated the following year by the Pope's legate, accompanied by fifteen bishops, in presence of an immense number of the clergy, nobility, and people, to a more honourable place of the cathedral of Down; where they were kept, with due honour, till the time of Henry VIII., when the monument was destroyed by Leonard, Lord Grey, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. S. Bridget's head was saved by some of the clergy, who carried it to Neustadt, in Austria; and from thence, in 1587, it was taken to the church of the Jesuits at Lisbon, to whom the Emperor Rudolf II. gave it.

In art, S. Bridget is usually represented with her perpetual flame as a symbol; sometimes with a column of fire, said to have been seen above her head when she took the veil.

⁸ As near as can be ascertained; see Lanigan, *Eccl. Hist. of Ireland*, vol. 1, p. 455.

S. DARLUGDACH, V

(A.D. 526.)

[Authorities: – The lives of S. Bridget.]

Amongst the nuns of S. Bridget's monastery of Kildare, there was one named Darlugdach. When young, she followed S. Bridget, and being very dear to her, slept with the abbess.

Darlugdach, not guarding her eyes with sufficient strictness, saw, and fell in love with a man, who also became enamoured of her, and their ardent glances revealed their mutual passion. A plan was formed that she should elope with him, on a certain night; and she laid herself in the bosom of the sleeping abbess with beating heart, troubled by a conflict between duty and passion. At last she rose, and in an agony of uncertainty, cast herself on her knees, and besought God to give her strength to master her love, and then, in the vehemence of her resolve, she thrust her naked feet into the red coals that glowed on the hearth, and held them there till the pain had conquered the passion. After that, she softly stole into bed again, and crept into the bosom of her holy mother. When morning broke, Bridget rose, and looked at the blistered and scorched soles, and touching them, said gently, "I slept not, dear child, but was awake, and saw thy struggle, and now, because thou hast fought valiantly, and hast conquered, the flame of lust shall no more hurt thee." And she healed her feet.

Darlugdach, as has been related in the life of S. Bridget, besought her spiritual mother to let her die with her, but S. Bridget promised that she should follow on the anniversary of her departure, after the expiration of a year. And so it was.

S. SEVERUS, B. OF AVRANCHES

(6TH CENT.)

[French Martyrologies. Authority: – A life by an anonymous author of uncertain date, but apparently trustworthy.]

S. Severus was the child of very poor Christian parents, who hired him to a nobleman named Corbecan, a heathen, who employed him in tending his herd of mares. The boy loved to pasture the horses in the neighbourhood of a little church dedicated to S. Martin, on the excuse that the herbage there was richer than elsewhere, but really out of love for the House of God. Unable to bear the sight of the misery of the poor, during a cold winter, the boy gave them the clothes off his back, and returned one day through the snow to his master's castle, stripped of everything save his breeches. Corbecan, in a rage, drove him out of the house, and forbade him to shelter in it that night. The lad went to the horses, and crouched among them, taking warmth from their breath. His gentleness and piety, in the end, produced such an impression on Corbecan, that he placed himself under instruction in the faith, and was baptized, he and his whole house. Severus afterwards retired into a solitary place, and lived as an hermit, till a number of disciples gathering round him, he was ordained priest. Against his will he was dragged from his beloved retreat to be consecrated bishop of Avranches. He ruled that see for several years with great zeal and discretion, till the burden became intolerable, and he besought the people to elect a successor. Then he laid down his staff, and retired once more to his

forest cell, where he became the master of the blessed Giles. The day of his death is uncertain. His body was translated to the cathedral of Rouen.

In art he is represented with the mares of his master.

S. SIGEBERT, K. C

(A.D. 656.)

[French Martyrology. Authorities: – His life by Sigebert of Gemblours, d. 1112, and mention by Gregory of Tours, and Flodoard.]

This royal saint was the son of Dagobert I., King of France. The father for a long time refused to have his son baptized, but at length by the advice of S. Ouen and S. Eligius, then laymen in his court, he recalled S. Amand, bishop of Maestricht, whom he had banished for reproving his vices, and bade him baptize his son Sigebert. The young prince's education was entrusted to Pepin, mayor of the palace, who carried his charge into Aquitain, to his estates. But at the age of three, Sigebert was invested by his father with the kingdom of Austrasia, or Eastern France, including Provence, Switzerland, Bavaria, Swabia, Thuringia, Franconia, the Rhenish Palatinate, Alsace, Trèves, Lorraine, Champagne, Upper Picardy, and Auvergne.

Dagobert died in 638, and was succeeded by Clovis II., in the kingdom of Western France. Pepin of Landen, was mayor of the palace to Sigebert, and strove to train the young king in godliness and Christian virtues. By his justice and temperance, S. Sigebert rendered himself in his youth greatly beloved and respected by his subjects.

Pepin dying in 640, the king appointed Grimoald, mayor of the palace, in his father's room. The Thuringians revolting, Sigebert reduced them to their duty; and this is the only war in which he was engaged. His munificence in founding churches and monasteries, his justice in ruling, and the private virtues of his spotless life, made him to be regarded as a model of a saintly king. After a reign of eighteen years from the date of his father's death, he died at the age of twenty-five, and was buried in the abbey of S. Martin, near Metz, which he had built. His body was found incorrupt in 1063, and in 1170 it was enshrined in a silver case. When Charles V. laid siege to Metz, Francis of Lorraine, Duke of Guise, demolished all the monasteries and other buildings in the suburbs which could give harbour to the enemy, amongst others that of S. Martin. The relics of the saintly king were then removed to the collegiate church of Our Lady, at Nancy, where they repose in a magnificent shrine.

S. JOHN OF THE GRATE, B. C

(A.D. 1163.)

[His festival is observed as a double by the Church of S. Malo, in Brittany. His name is inserted in Saussaye's supplement to the Gallican Martyrology. Authorities: – The letters of S. Bernard and Nicolas of Clairvaux.]

The illustrious prelate S. John, commonly called "Of the Grate," because of an iron grating which surrounded his sepulchre, was a Breton, the son of parents in a middle class of life. He was born about the year 1098; and from an early age gave indications of piety. In the schools to which he was sent, in a short time he made rapid progress. Peter, abbot of Celle, speaking of him, calls him "the holy bishop, faithful servant of God, a man of courage, loving poverty, a brilliant light, dissipating the densest darkness." His life, as a bishop, was spent in a series of lawsuits with the

monks of Marmoutiers. His episcopal seat was at Aleth on the main land, but he desired to transfer it to the island of Aaron, now called S. Malo, on account of the peril to which Aleth was exposed through pirates, and the intestine wars which devastated Brittany. He claimed the island as belonging to the episcopal property of Aleth, but was opposed by the monks of Marmoutiers, who claimed the Church of S. Malo. The case was referred to the Pope, who ordered a commission of French bishops to try the case, and they decided against John. He considered that his cause had been prejudged by them, and visited Rome to carry his appeal in person to the Pope. But Lucius II. would not listen to him, and he was condemned to lose his see. He then retired under the protection of S. Bernard, to Clairvaux, till, on the decease of Lucius II., a monk of Clairvaux was elevated to the papal throne, under the title of Eugenius III. John at once appealed again, and was heard; a fresh commission was appointed, and he was restored to all his rights, and the monks of Marmoutiers were obliged to cede the Church of S. Malo to the bishop. John obtained decisions conformable to that of Eugenius III., from his successors, Anastasius IV. and Adrian IV. That the claim of John was reasonable appears certain. Only three years before he made it, the inhabitants of Aleth had been obliged to take refuge in the island of Aaron to escape the ravages of the Normans, who had already twice pillaged and burnt the city; and it is certain that several of the predecessors of John of the Grate had borne the title of bishop of S. Malo, as well as of Aleth.

During his reign a strange heresy broke out. Eon de l'Etoile, a fanatic, took to himself the title of "Judge of the quick and dead," and armed with a forked stick, shared with God the empire of the universe. When he turned upwards the two prongs of his stick, he gave to the Almighty the government of two-thirds of the world, and when he turned the prongs downwards, he assumed them as his own. This poor visionary was followed by a number of peasants who pillaged churches, and committed all sorts of disorders. They were condemned, in 1148, by the Council of Rheims, and were reduced to submission by the temporal power. John exerted himself, by persuasion and instruction, to disabuse of their heresy such of the fanatics as over-ran his diocese, and succeeded in converting many of his wandering sheep.

He died in the odour of sanctity on Feb. 1st, 1163, and was buried on the Gospel side of the altar in the Church of S. Malo. His reputation for virtue was so well established, that almost immediately he received popular reverence as a Saint. Numerous miracles augmented the devotion of the people. In 1517, one of his successors, Denis Brignonnet, ambassador of the king to Rome, obtained from Pope Leo X. permission for him to be commemorated in a solemn office, as a confessor bishop. This was the year in which began the schism of Luther.

On the 15th October, 1784, Mgr. Antoine-Joseph des Laurents, last bishop of S. Malo but one, examined the relics of the blessed one. He found the bones of S. John enveloped in his pontifical vestments, his pastoral staff at his side, and ring on his finger. During the Revolution the relics of the Saint were ordered to be cast into the sea, but the order was countermanded, and the sexton was required to bury them on the common fosse in the cemetery. The grave-digger, whose name was Jean Coquelin, being a good Catholic, disobeyed the order so far as to lay the bones apart in a portion of the new cemetery as yet occupied by no other bodies. In November, 1799, he announced the secret to M. Manet, a priest who had remained through the Reign of Terror, in S. Malo; and this venerable ecclesiastic assisted by another priest and some religious, verified the relics. A sealed box received the precious deposit, and it was restored to its ancient shrine on 7th March, 1823. Unfortunately the loss of a document which supplied one necessary link in the chain of evidence authenticating the relics was missing, consequently they could not be exposed to the veneration of the faithful. By a strange accident this document was recovered later; whereupon the bishop wrote to Rome to state the proofs which were now complete. The necessary sanction having been received, the sacred relics were enshrined on the 16th November, 1839, with great ceremony; and are now preserved in the Church of S. Malo.

In French, S. John is called S. Jean de la Grille; in Latin, S. Joannes de Craticula.

B. RAYMOND OF FITERO, AB. C

(A.D. 1163.)

[Cistercian Breviary. Authority: – Radez, *Chronic de las ordines y Cavall. de Santiago, Calatrava, y Alcantara.*]

In the year a. d. 714, the Moors, having conquered King Roderick, took possession of Andalusia, and fortified the city of Oreto, to which they gave the name of Calatrava; of which they remained masters for nearly four hundred years, till Alfonso the Warlike took possession of it, in the year 1147, and gave it to the Templars, to guard against the irruption of the infidels. But they held it for only eight years. The forces which the Moors assembled to recover Calatrava so discouraged them, that they gave up the city into the hands of Don Sancho, who had succeeded to the kingdom of Castille, on the death of Alfonso, and withdrew from it. This prince announced to his court that if any nobleman would undertake the defence of the place, he should have and hold it, in perpetuity, as his own property. But no one offered; the host of the Moors which had so alarmed the Templars, caused equal dismay in the minds of the nobles at court. A monk of the order of Citeaux alone had courage to undertake the defence of the town. This was Don Didacus Velasquez, monk of the abbey of Our Lady of Fitero, in the kingdom of Navarre. He had borne arms before he assumed the white habit of Citeaux, and was well known to King Sancho, and this perhaps was the reason why his abbot, Don Raymond, had taken him with him on a visit to the king, about some matter concerning his monastery, at this very time. He entreated the abbot to allow him to ask permission of Sancho to undertake the defence of Calatrava. Raymond, at first, rejected the proposal, but at length, gained by the zeal and confidence of Didacus, he boldly asked the city of the prince. He was regarded as mad, but Sancho was prevailed upon by the evident assurance of the two monks to give the town of Calatrava to the Cistercian Order, and especially to the abbey of Fitero, on condition that the monks held it against the infidels. This was in 1158.

The abbot Raymond and his companion Velasquez then proposed to the king to found a military Order of Calatrava, and after having obtained his consent, they communicated their design to the bishop of Toledo, who not only approved it, but gave them a large sum of money for the fortification of the town, and accorded indulgences to all such as should take arms in its defence, or contribute arms or money for the purpose. Several persons joined the two monks, and in a short while an army was raised, at the head of which they entered Calatrava, and took possession of it. The walls were repaired and completed with such expedition and strength, that the Moors abandoned their purpose of attacking it, and withdrew.

The abbot Raymond, having nothing further to fear from the infidels, applied himself to organise the new military Order, which took its name from this town. The general chapter of Citeaux prescribed the manner of life and habit of these warrior monks, but historians are not agreed as to the colour or shape of the original habit.

As the territory of Calatrava was almost devoid of inhabitants, the abbot Raymond returned to Fitero, where he left only the aged and infirm monks, bringing all who were active and young to Calatrava, together with a great number of cattle, and twenty thousand peasants, that he might settle them in the newly acquired territory. He governed the order six years, and died at Cirvelos, in the year 1163. After his death, the knights of Calatrava, although they were novices of Citeaux into whose hands he had put arms, refused to be governed by an abbot, and to have monks among them. They elected as their Grand Master one of their number, Don Garcias; and the monks, who had chosen their new abbot, Don Rudolf, retired with him to Cirvelos, where they began an action against the knights, to eject them, that they might recover possession of Calatrava, which the king

had given to their order, and especially to their house of Fitero. But a reconciliation was effected, probably through fear of the Moors, and the knights ceded to them a house at S. Petro de Gurniel, in the diocese of Osma, with all its dependencies, and there they built a monastery, leaving Calatrava in the hands of the knights.

In the year 1540, the knights were allowed to marry, and took only the vows of poverty, obedience, and conjugal fidelity; since the year 1652, they have added a fourth; to defend and maintain the Immaculate Conception of the blessed Virgin.

S. VERDIANA, V. R

(A.D. 1242.)

[Roman and Benedictine Martyrology, those of Menardus, Ferrarius, &c. Authority: – An old contemporary life, falsely attributed to Atto, B. of Pistoria.]

Verdiana was the child of poor, though well-born parents; and her knowledge of the sufferings of the poor from her own experience in early years made her ever full of pity for those in need. At twelve years old she was noted for her beautiful and modest countenance, and humble deportment. A wealthy relation, a count, took her into his house, and made her wait upon his wife. Her strict probity and scrupulous discharge of her duties so gained the confidence of her master and mistress, that they entrusted to her the entire management of their house. One day that there was a famine raging in the diocese of Florence, and the poor were in extreme distress, the girl saw some miserable wretches dying from exhaustion at the door. Her master had a vessel of beans, and she hastily emptied the box, and fed the starving wretches with them. This would have been an act of questionable morality, were it not for the extremity of the case, when, to save life, an act is justified which would have been unjust were there no such an imperious necessity. Her master had, in the meantime, sold the beans, and he shortly after returned with the money. He went to the vessel, to send it to the purchaser, but found it empty. "Then," says the contemporary writer, "he began to shout and storm against the servants, and make such a to-do as to cause great scandal in the house and among the neighbours. Now when all the house was turned topsy-turvy about these beans, and was in an uproar, the lord's hand-maiden, with great confidence, betook herself to prayer, and spent the night in supplication. And on the morrow, the vessel was found full of beans as before. Then the master was called, and she bade him abstain for the future from such violence, for Christ who had received the beans had returned them."

By the kindness of the Count, her relative, she was enabled to make a pilgrimage to S. James, of Compostella, in company with a pious lady. On her return, she resolved to adopt the life of a recluse, and after long preparation, and a visit to Rome, where she spent three years, she obtained the desire of her heart, and received the veil from the hands of a canon of the Church of Castel Fiorentino, her native place, and bearing the Cross, preceded and followed by all the clergy and people, she was conducted to her cell, and, having been admitted into it, the door was walled up. In this cell she spent many years, conversing with those who visited her, and receiving her food through a window, through which, also, the priest communicated her. Two large snakes crept in at this window, one day, and thenceforth took up their abode with her. She received these fellow-comrades with great repugnance, but overcame it, and fed them from her own store of provisions. They would glide forth when no one was near, but never failed to return for the night, and when she took her meals. On one occasion they were injured by some peasants who pursued them with sticks and stones. Verdiana healed them, nevertheless the rustics attacked them again, killed one, and drove the other away, so that it never returned to the cell of the recluse.

When the holy woman felt that the hour of her release approached, she made her last confession and received the Blessed Sacrament through her window, and then closing it opened her psalter,

and began to recite the penitential psalms. Next morning the people finding the window closed, and receiving no answer to their taps, broke into the cell, and found her dead, kneeling with eyes and hands upraised to heaven, and the psalter before her open at the psalm *Miserere mihi*, "Have mercy upon me, O God! after Thy great goodness; and according to the multitude of Thy mercies, do away mine offences."

February 2

The Purification of S. Mary

- S. Cornelius, *the Centurion, B. of Cæsarea, 1st cent.*
- S. Flosculus, *B. of Orleans, circ. a. d. 500.*
- S. Laurence, *Abp. of Canterbury, a. d. 619.*
- S. Adalbold, *C. in Belgium and Aquitaine, a. d. 652.*
- S. Adeloga, *V. Abs. at Kitzingen, 8th cent.*
- SS. Martyrs, *of Ebbecksdorf, a. d. 880.*
- B. Peter Cambian, *O. S.D., M. in Piedmont, a. d. 1365.*

THE PURIFICATION OF S. MARY, OR THE

PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

THE PURIFICATION is a double feast, partly in memory of the B. Virgin's purification, this being the fortieth day after the birth of her Son, which she observed according to the Law (Leviticus xii. 4), though there was no need for such a ceremony, she having contracted no defilement through her childbearing. Partly also in memory of Our Lord's presentation in the temple, which the Gospel for the day commemorates.

The Old Law commanded, that a woman having conceived by a man, if she brought forth a male child, should remain forty days retired in her house, as unclean; at the end of which she should go to the temple to be purified, and offer a lamb and a turtle dove; but, if she were poor, a pair of turtle doves or pigeons, desiring the priest to pray to God for her. This law the Blessed Virgin accomplished (Luke ii. 12) with the exercise of admirable virtues; especially did she exhibit her obedience, although she knew that she was not obliged to keep the law, yet, inasmuch as her Son had consented to be circumcised, though He needed it not, so did she stoop to fulfil the law, lest she should offend others. She also exhibited her humility, in being willing to be treated as one unclean, and as one that stood in need of being purified, as if she had not been immaculate. Among the Greeks, the festival goes by the name of *Hypapante*, which denotes the meeting of our Lord by Symeon and Anna, in the temple; in commemoration of which occurrence it was first made a festival in the Church by the emperor Justinian I., a. d. 542. The emperor is said to have instituted it on occasion of an earthquake, which destroyed half the city of Pompeiopolis, and of other calamities. It was considered in the Greek Church as one of the feasts belonging to her Lord (*Despotikà Heortà*). The name of the Purification was given to it in the 9th century by the Roman pontiffs. In the Greek Church the prelude of this festival, which retains its first name, *Hypapante*, is "My soul doth magnify the Lord, for He hath regarded the lowliness of his hand-maiden;" and a festival of Symeon and Anna is observed on the following day.

In the Western Church it has usually been called "Candlemas Day," from the custom of lighting up churches with tapers and lamps in remembrance of our Saviour having been this day declared by Symeon to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles." Processions were used with a similar object, of which S. Bernard gives the following description: – "We go in procession, two by two, carrying candles in our hands, which are lighted not at a common fire, but a fire first blessed in the church by a bishop.

They that go out first return last; and in the way we sing, 'Great is the glory of the Lord.' We go two by two in commendation of charity and a social life; for so our Saviour sent out his disciples. We carry light in our hands: first, to signify that our light should shine before men; secondly, this we do on this day, especially, in memory of the Wise Virgins (of whom this blessed Virgin is the chief) that went to meet their Lord with their lamps lit and burning. And from this usage and the many lights set up in the church this day, it is called Candelaria, or Candlemas. Because our works should be all done in the holy fire of charity, therefore the candles are lit with holy fire. They that go out first return last, to teach humility, 'in humility preferring one another.' Because God loveth a cheerful giver, therefore we sing in the way. The procession itself is to teach us that we should not stand idle in the way of life, but proceed from virtue to virtue, not looking back to that which is behind, but reaching forward to that which is before."

The Purification is a common subject of representation in Christian art, both Eastern and Western. From the evident unsuitableness of the mystery of the Circumcision to actual representation, it is not usually depicted in works of art, and the Presentation in the Temple has been generally selected, with better taste, for this purpose. The prophecy of Symeon, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through Thine own soul also," made to the blessed Virgin, is the first of her seven sorrows.

The Christian rite of "The Churching of Women" is a perpetuation of the ancient ceremony required by the Mosaic Law. How long a particular office has been used in the Christian Church, for the thanksgiving and benediction of woman after child-birth, it would be difficult to say; but it is probably most ancient, since we find that all the Western rituals, and those of the patriarchate of Constantinople, contain such an office. The Greeks appoint three prayers for the mother on the first day of the child's birth. On the eighth day, the nurse brings the child to church, and prayer is made for him before the entrance to the nave. On the fortieth day, the mother and the future sponsor at the child's baptism bring the child. After an introductory service of the usual kind, the mother, holding the child, bows her head; the priest crosses the child, and touching his head, says, "Let us pray unto the Lord; O Lord God Almighty, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who didst create by Thy word all creatures, rational and irrational, who didst bring into being all things out of nothing; we beseech and entreat Thee, purify from all sin and pollution this Thy handmaid, whom by Thy will, Thou hast preserved and permitted to enter into Thy holy Church; that she may be deemed worthy to partake, without condemnation, of Thy holy mysteries." (If the child has not survived, the prayer ends here; if it be alive, the priest continues), "And bless the child born of her. Increase, sanctify, direct, teach, guide him; for Thou hast brought him to the birth and hast shown him the light of this world; that so he may be deemed worthy of the mental light at the time that Thou hast ordained, and be numbered among Thy holy flock: through Thy only begotten Son, with whom Thou art blessed, together with Thy all-holy, good, life-giving Spirit, now, always, and for ever and ever."

Other prayers referring to the mother of the child follow. Allusion is made to the presentation of Christ, in the Temple. The child is taken in the priest's arms to various parts of the church as an introduction to the sanctuary. A boy is taken to the altar; a girl only to the central door of the screen. There is a separate form in case of miscarriage.

S. CORNELIUS THE CENTURION, B

(1ST CENT.)

[Roman and other Western Martyrologies. Commemorated by the Greeks on Sept. 13th. Authorities: – The Acts of the Holy Apostles, c. 10, the notices in the Martyrologies, and allusions in the Epistles of S. Jerome. The Acts given by Metaphrastes are not deserving of much attention.]

Cornelius, the centurion, was officer of the Italian band at Cæsarea. He was a devout proselyte, who feared God, with all his household, and gave much alms to the poor and prayed often and earnestly to God. He saw in a vision an angel, who told him that his prayers and alms had come up for a memorial before God, and that he was now to hear the words of Salvation, and to be instructed in the fulness of divine truth. He was to send to Joppa, to the house of one Simon, a tanner, for S. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, who would instruct and baptize him.

This he accordingly did, and S. Peter, hastening to Cæsarea, baptized him and all his house. And the Holy Ghost fell upon them.

Cornelius was afterwards, by S. Peter, ordained bishop of Cæsarea, where he strove mightily to advance the kingdom of Christ, and witnessed a good confession before the chief magistrate. He died at a ripe old age, and was buried secretly in a tomb belonging to a friend, a Christian of wealth. And, it is said, that a bramble grew over the spot and laced the entrance over with its thorny arms, so that none could enter in till S. Silvanus, bishop of Philippopolis, in Thrace, in the beginning of the 5th century, hacked away the bramble, and discovered, and translated the sacred relics.

S. LAURENCE, ABP. OF CANTERBURY

(A.D. 619.)

[Roman and other Western Martyrologies. Authorities: – Bede, Hist. Eccl. lib. ii. c. 4, 6, 7. Malmesbury lib. de Gest. Pontif. Angl.]

Laurence was one of the first missionaries to the Saxons, who came over with S. Augustine; and he succeeded the Apostle of England in the see of Canterbury, in 608, in which he sat eleven years. Bede says, "Laurence succeeded Augustine in the bishopric, having been ordained thereto by the latter, in his lifetime, lest, upon his death, the state of the Church, as yet unsettled, might begin to falter, if it were destitute of a pastor, though but for one hour. Wherein he followed the example of the first pastor of the Church, Peter, who, having founded the Church of Christ at Rome, is said to have consecrated Clement his assistant in preaching the Gospel, and at the same time, his successor. Laurence, being advanced to the degree of archbishop, laboured indefatigably, both by frequent exhortations and examples of piety, to raise to perfection the foundation of the Church, which had been so nobly laid. In short, he not only took care of the new Church formed among the English, but endeavoured also to employ his pastoral solicitude among the ancient inhabitants of Britain, as also among the Scots, who inhabited the island of Ireland. For when he understood that the course of life and profession of the Scots, as well as that of the Britons, was not truly ecclesiastical, especially that they did not celebrate Easter at the correct time, he wrote jointly with his fellow-bishops, an exhortatory epistle, entreating and conjuring them to observe unity of peace, and conformity with the Church of Christ spread throughout the world."

But soon troubles arose which obliged Archbishop Laurence to withdraw his attention from the British bishops to the condition of his own Kentish diocese. The pious King Ethelbert died, and his son Eadbald, instead of following his father's example, opposed Christianity, and caused great scandal by taking to him his step-mother to wife, his own mother, the saintly Bertha, having died some years before. The condition of Christianity became so hopeless in Kent, that Laurence resolved to desert his see, and he was confirmed in his determination by Mellitus, bishop of London, and Justus, bishop of Rochester, who fled from the violence of the sons and successors of the Christian Sebert, king of the East Saxons. Bede says, "Laurence, being about to follow Mellitus and Justus, and to quit Britain, ordered his bed to be laid, the night before, in the church of the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul; wherein, having laid himself to take some rest, after he had poured out many prayers and tears to God for the state of the Church, he fell asleep. In the dead of the night, the blessed prince of the apostles

appeared to him, and scourging him a long time with apostolic severity, asked of him, 'Why he would forsake the flock which he had committed to him? or to what shepherds he would commit Christ's sheep that were in the midst of wolves? Have you,' said he, 'forgotten my example, who, for the sake of those little ones, whom Christ recommended to me in token of His affection, underwent at the hands of the infidels and enemies of Christ, bonds, stripes, imprisonment, afflictions, and lastly, the death of the cross, that I might be crowned with Him?' Laurence being excited by these words and stripes, the very next morning repaired to the king, and taking off his garment, showed the scars of the stripes he had received. The king astonished, asked, 'Who had presumed to give such blows to so great a man?' and was much frightened when he heard that the bishop had suffered so much at the hands of the apostle of Christ for his salvation. Then, abjuring the worship of idols, and renouncing his unlawful marriage, he embraced the faith of Christ, and being baptized, promoted the affairs of the Church to the utmost of his power."

In the reign of this same king, Archbishop Laurence died, and was buried in the Church of S. Peter, close beside his predecessor Augustine, and was succeeded by Mellitus.

S. ADALBALD, C

(ABOUT A.D. 652.)

[Belgian Martyrologies, and in Saussaye's supplement to the Gallican Martyrology. Authorities: – Mention of him in the life of his wife S. Richtrudis, by Hucbald the monk, a. d. 907; and in the life of his daughter, S. Eusebia. In some Martyrologies he is styled Martyr, but generally Duke.]

Duke Adalbald was a grandson of S. Gertrude of Hamage. His mother's name was Gerberta. From his earliest youth he was a model of virtue, even in the court of the king. He married S. Richtrudis, by whom he had S. Maurontus, his eldest son, who became afterwards abbot; and three virgin saintly daughters, Clotsendis, Eusebia, and Andalsendis. S. Amandus baptized Clotsendis, and Queen Nanthild, wife of King Dagobert, was sponsor to Eusebia. On his way to Gascony for some purpose, he was waylaid and murdered, by certain persons who were displeased at his marriage with Richtrudis. It seems probable, therefore, that the crime was committed on account of some property, but nothing for certain is known of the motive actuating the murderers. Relics at S. Amand, in Flanders.

S. ADELOGA, V. ABSS

(8TH CENT.)

[Benedictine Martyrology and those of Menardus, Ferrarius, &c. Authority: – An ancient, apparently authentic, life by an anonymous writer, published by Bollandus.]

The blessed Adeloga was a daughter of Charles Martel, son of Pepin l'Heristal, by Kunehilda, whether his wife or concubine is uncertain. Adeloga was of singular beauty, so that she was greatly sought in marriage, but she constantly refused all offers, having given her heart wholly to her heavenly Spouse. Her father, greatly exasperated against her, on this account, treated her with studied brutality, subjecting her to public insult; and observing that the bruised spirit of his child sought refuge and comfort in the advice of her director, his private chaplain, he was filled with bitterness, and said, "Hearken, my daughter, you have refused kings, dukes, and peers to anger me, that you might wanton with a curate." Then calling to him one of his knights, who stood by, as he thus insulted his daughter,

he bade him "Go and tell the chaplain to be off, he and his woman here, or they shall both be driven forth with contumely, to-morrow morning."

Hearing this, the priest groaned in spirit, and said, "O God of heaven and earth, who searchest the secrets of all hearts, and every thought of man, Thou knowest my innocence in this matter. But, although my lord has exercised his anger upon me, I will not desert my lady and mistress, but for Christ's sake will wait upon her with all reverence."

Then Adeloga went forth, and the priest with her, and they journeyed till they came to a wild and desert place, and there they built a convent. The name of the place was Kitzingen.

To her came many virgins, and the priest gave her the veil, and made her abbess, enjoining her to adopt the rule of SS. Benedict and Scholastica. He, himself, attended to the temporal affairs of the convent, till he was summoned to his rest.

The story is told that after his death, a young nun, having fallen in love with a youth, resolved to fly the convent. She waited till night, and then, when all were asleep, stole to the gates, but there she saw the form of the white-haired chaplain beckoning her back, and with a gentle voice addressing her, "Go back, dear virgin! A heavenly Spouse calleth thee, and no earthly lover! Return to him, my child. I watch without over this sacred house, and the abbess keeps ward within." And not many days after, the girl sickened and died.

There was another nun who was also smitten with passion for a young noble, and harboured in her mind the thought of escaping from her monastery, and flying to his arms. But in the night, as she slept, she saw the holy abbess, Adeloga, pass before her with a lamp in her hand, who turned and looked on her and said, "Lo, Christ cometh, prepare to meet Him. Awake, the Bridegroom cometh, go forth and trim thy light." Then she started from sleep, and was moved with compunction, and never after yielded to sensual thoughts.

Now it fell out that in after years Charles Martel was reconciled to his daughter, and endowed her monastery with lands, and visited her. Then, in the night, there stood before him, in vision, the old chaplain, who said to him, "The Eternal King hath sent me unto thee, to declare to thee my innocence in that thing whereof thou didst once accuse me. And if thou believest me not now, then will I cite thee to appear, and hear me plead my cause, before the just judgment seat of God." And when Charles awoke, he called to him his daughter, and said, "Pray for me, my dearest child, that the Lord lay not this sin to my charge, that once in wrath I spoke falsely against thee and my chaplain, thy director."

It is related that among the retainers of the abbey was a noble youth very fond of dogs, and above all, he loved one hound, which was with him in the field and forest by day, and slept at the foot of his bed at night. One day that he was in the wood, a couple of ruffians fell upon him, and murdered him for the sake of his clothes and purse, and left the body naked under the trees. For three days the faithful hound kept guard, and then it sought the abbey, and whined at the door of the lady Adeloga, and when she came forth, plucked at her dress, as though to lead her into the forest. Suspecting something was amiss, she called to her some servants, and they followed the dog to where his master lay slain. The abbess was determined to discover who were the murderers. She therefore summoned before her all the retainers and serfs on the land, and questioned them closely, but could obtain no confession. Then she solemnly warned the culprits to beware how they left the matter to the judgment of God, and she bade them, for the last time, confess. When all were silent, the hound of the murdered man was introduced, and it flew at the throats of the culprits and tore them so fearfully that one died.

The historian of the life of S. Adeloga, concludes with the following prayer. "We pray thee, most holy and gentle mother, that, as thou hast encouraged us in this life with thy good example and virtuous acts, so mayest thou deign to assist us with God in life eternal; that as we rejoice in thy commemoration on earth, so may we merit to be strengthened by thy intercession in heaven; for the sake of Christ Jesus, our Lord, who of all Saints is the reward, the glory, joy, and crown, through ages of ages, Amen."

THE HOLY MARTYRS OF EBBECKSDORF

(A.D. 880.)

[Authority: – The contemporary Fulda Annals of the Franks. See also the Legend in Langebek, *Script. Rer. Danicarum* II., pp. 57-71.]

These martyrs were Duke Bruno of Saxony, Theodoric, bishop of Minden, Marquard, bishop of Hildesheim, Erlulf of Fulda, Gosbert, bishop of Osnabrück, and many others; massacred by the Northmen.

B. PETER CAMBIAN, O. S.D., M

(A.D. 1365.)

[Roman Martyrology.]

This Saint was sent by the Sovereign pontiff, into the vallies inhabited by the Waldensian heretics, as Inquisitor-general in Piedmont, in 1351, and was murdered by the heretics in the Franciscan convent of Susa. The person who did the deed stabbed him in the cloister, on the feast of the Purification of Our Lady, in 1365. His tomb was opened in 1854, and the relics were elevated to the altars of several churches to which they were given. Pius IX. confirmed the devotion of the Catholics towards this martyr.

February 3

SS. Celerinus, *D. C.*, Celerina, Ignatius, and Laurence, *MM. in Africa, 3rd cent.*

S. Fortunatus, *M. at Rome.*

S. Candidus, *M. at Volaterra.*

SS. Tigris and Remedius, *BB., MM. at Gap, 4th cent.*

S. Blaise, *B. M.*, and Companions, *at Sebaste, circ. a. d. 316.*

S. Simplicius, *B. of Vienne; beginning of 5th cent.*

S. Anatolius, *B. of Adana, in Cilicia; beginning of 5th cent.*

S. Laurence the Illuminator, *B. of Spoleto, circ. a. d. 576.*

S. Philip, *B. of Vienne, circ. a. d. 578.*

S. Evantius, *B. of Vienne, a. d. 586.*

S. Hadelin, *P. at Celles in Belgium, circ. a. d. 690.*

S. Berlinda, *V. at Meerbeeke in Belgium, circ. a. d. 698.*

S. Werburga, *V. Patroness of Chester; beginning of 8th cent.*

S. Nithard, *P. M. in Sweden, circ. a. d. 840.*

S. Anskar, *B. of Hamburg, Apostle of Sweden and Denmark, a. d. 865.*

S. Liafdag, *B. M. at Ripe in Denmark, circ. a. d. 980.*

S. Elinand, *Monk of Froidmont, near Beauvais, a. d. 1237.*

SS. CELERINUS, D. C., CELERINA, IGNATIUS,

AND LAURENTINUS, MM

(3RD CENT.)

[Roman and other Latin Martyrologies. Authorities: – The letters of S. Cyprian of Carthage, and S. Cornelius of Rome. A letter of S. Celerinus to the Confessor Lucian is inserted in some editions of the works of S. Cyprian.]

OF CELERINA, Ignatius, and Laurence nothing, except their names, is known, and even these would not have come down to us, but for their being mentioned as glorious martyrs by S. Cyprian, in a letter to their nephew, S. Celerinus. This Celerinus was first Reader, and then Deacon, in the Church of Carthage, and received orders from S. Cyprian. He was in Rome in the year 250, and confessed Christ there in the Decian persecution, spending nineteen days in chains; but to his great sorrow, his sister yielded to her fears, and was numbered among the lapsed. Afterwards Celerinus was unfortunately drawn away by Novatian into schism, but when he perceived that the schismatic sought his own advancement rather than the glory of God, he acknowledged his error, and returned to the communion of the Catholic Church.

S. FORTUNATUS, M

S. Fortunatus is mentioned, together with many other martyrs, in the Roman and other Martyrologies on Feb. 2nd, as having suffered at Rome; but their Acts have not been preserved. The

body of S. Fortunatus was found in 1606, in the cemetery of S. Callixtus, and was given by Pope Paul V. to the Rev. Jacobus Tirinus, S.J., for the new and beautiful Jesuit church he had built in Antwerp, in the year 1622. On account of Feb. 2nd being the Feast of the Purification, the commemoration of S. Fortunatus has been postponed in that church till Feb. 3rd.

S. BLAISE, B. M

(A.D.316.)

[Roman and Western Martyrologies. Commemorated by the Greeks on Feb. 11th, in some ancient Martyrologies, on Feb. 15th. The Greek Acts, of which there are four versions, are modern, and deserve little regard.]

Blasius, Blase, Blayse, Blays, or Blaise, was bishop of Sebaste, a city of Cappadocia, in the Lesser Asia. He spent a great part of his time in retirement on a hill not far from the city, whither he withdrew, after the duties of his office were finished, to be alone with God. During the persecution of the Christians in the reign of Diocletian, he lay concealed for some time in this retreat; but was at last taken and brought before Agricolaus, the governor of the province, and confessing himself a Christian, was thrown into prison. After enduring many tortures, he received the crown of martyrdom in the beginning of the fourth century. Some historians refer this event to the year 316, under the reign of Licinius. Seven holy women and two young children suffered at the same time. The Acts of his martyrdom are so untrustworthy that it is not possible to state any further particulars which are authentic. The Council of Oxford, a. d. 1222, prohibited servile labour on this day. Its observance in England was marked by several curious ceremonies. Among others a taper used to be offered at High Mass; and it was lately the custom in many parts of England to light bonfires on the hills on S. Blaise's night. Some have affirmed that these usages arose from an absurd pun on the Saint's name (sc. "blaze"); but this seems clearly erroneous, as they are not peculiar to England. In some parts of Germany, S. Blaise's Day is called "Little Candlemas Day," because of the bonfires that it was usual (for an uncertain reason) to kindle on that night. At Bradford, Yorkshire, a festival is holden every five years in memory of S. Blaise.

In the Greek paintings, S. Blaise is depicted as an old man with a pointed beard. In Western art he appears in the vestments of a bishop; his peculiar emblem is an iron comb, such as is used by wool-combers, which is said to have been an instrument of his torture. Owing, probably, to this reason, he has been esteemed the patron of manufacturers of wool, and that trade in the city of Norwich still observes his day, or did so until lately. S. Blaise is also frequently represented as surrounded by wild beasts, or birds are bringing him food; the text, Job v. 23, which occasionally accompanies these emblems, indicates that, in his case as in that of other saints, by long continuance in a solitary course of life, the denizens of the wood had become accustomed to the Saint's presence. Sometimes again, S. Blaise has a swine's head at his feet, typical of his victory over the sensual desires of the flesh. Finally, he occasionally holds in one hand, or has borne before him by a chorister, a lighted taper, typical of his being "a burning and a shining light."

S. LAURENCE THE ILLUMINATOR, B

(ABOUT A.D. 576.)

[The learned Bollandus, S.J., pithily remarks: "Magnas Umbria circa veterum suorum Sanctorum res gestas ortum ætatem, contraxit umbras, si non tenebras." Little is known of this Saint.]

S. Laurence the Illuminator, is said to have come from Syria with many other illustrious bishops and confessors, to Italy, in the reign of Diocletian. He was elected by the clergy bishop of Spoleto; and illumined his diocese with his teaching and miracles.

S. HADELIN, P. C

(ABOUT A.D. 690.)

[Martyrologies of Ado, of Wyon, Menardus, those of Liège, Cologne, &c. Authorities: – Two ancient lives, one by Notker, B. of Liège (971-1007).]

S. Hadelin was one of the disciples of S. Remacle, and when that Saint resigned his bishopric of Tongres, that he might retire from the world into the peaceful monastery of Staveloo, lately founded by S. Sigebert, King of Austrasia, he took with him the pious and humble Hadelin. On their way they rested on a bare plain, under a glaring sun, for their afternoon repose. S. Remacle remained awake, whilst his companion slept, and saw an angel bending over Hadelin, shading him with his wings from the burning heat. Remacle sent Hadelin into the neighbourhood of Dinant, on the Meuse, in 669, and finding a quiet retreat at Celles, on the Lesse, he dwelt there in a cave, and built a little chapel, on the site of which rose in after years a collegiate church. S. Hadelin is the patron of five churches in the diocese of Liège and Namur. His hermitage still exists, and from his time has never been without a pious successor. The body of the Saint was buried there, but was translated to Vise in the diocese of Liège, in 1338. His translation is commemorated on October 11th.

S. BERLINDA

(ABOUT A.D. 698.)

[Molanus in his addition to Usuardus, Wyon, Menardus, and Ferrarius. Authority: – An ancient life by an anonymous writer, published by Bollandus.]

Berlinda was the daughter of a nobleman named Odelard, who resided at Meerbeeke, near Ninove, in Brabant, in the reign of King Dagobert, and of Nona, his wife, the sister of S. Amandus. To a rare beauty, Berlinda joined all the gifts of intellect, but she had the misfortune to incur the anger of her father. After the death of his wife and only son, Odelard was attacked by leprosy, and lived a miserable languishing life, ministered to by his daughter.

One day that he asked her for something to drink, she filled a bowl with water, and took it to him, and then, being herself thirsty, she rinsed out the vessel, and filled it again. The father, highly offended at her doing this, drove off at once to Nivelles and offered all his lands to S. Gertrude, by the symbolic gift of a white glove and a reaping-hook and a branch of foliage. Before accomplishing

his donation, he supplicated the Saint to accept his offering with her own hands. Then the reliquary, in which the holy abbess reposed, opened, and the lifeless hands of S. Gertrude were extended to receive the glove, the branch, and the sickle. Then it closed upon them.

Berlinda, being disinherited, retired to the monastery of Moorsel, near Alost, where she lived in penitence and prayer. One night she heard a choir of angels singing, as they sailed across the dark starlit sky, bearing the soul of her father to Paradise. She at once besought of the superior permission to return to Meerbeeke for a while. Her request was complied with, and she flew to her father's castle. He was dead, so Berlinda buried him in the little church he had erected there to the honour of S. Peter.

Retained by force in her paternal dwelling by the servants and tenants, Berlinda remained at Meerbeeke, where she continued her life of austerities and prayer, and died about 690, on the 3rd of February.

As no stone sarcophagus could be found in which she might be laid, a large oak was cut down and scooped out to serve as a coffin, and her body was placed in it. Numerous miracles were wrought at her tomb, so that at the end of seven years the coffin was opened, and the wood was found to have become petrified. On this occasion a church was built in her honour and that of the Blessed Virgin, and thirty years later, her relics were solemnly enshrined on May 2nd, 728. S. Berlinda has remained in great honour at Meerbeeke. She is invoked against cattle diseases; and in accordance with an ancient custom, pilgrims pray before a wooden image of the saint represented beside a cow, and touch the udder of the cow, which has become black through the innumerable touchings to which it has become subjected. According to a popular saying S. Berlinda protects trees transplanted on her festival.

S. WERBURGA, V. ABSS

(BEGINNING OF 8TH CENTURY.)

[English Martyrology. Authorities: – Life of Goscelin, the monk (fl. 1100), and mention in Bede, John of Brompton, Florence of Worcester, Hyden, Langherne, Simeon of Durham.]

Werburga, patroness of Chester, was born at Stone, in Staffordshire, and was the daughter of Wulfhere, King of Mercia, or the Midland English. From the lips of her sainted mother, Ermingilde, she received those first lessons of Christian truth which afterwards produced such beautiful fruit in her life.

Being one of four children, all trained under the same godly discipline, she is said to have excelled them all in virtue and discretion. Her mind was open to receive good impressions, and she listened with earnest attention to every word of instruction and advice. Thus, she "daily grew in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: " her mind continually expanding under the influence of holy thoughts and pure desires. At an age when most persons of her exalted position would have been found joining in the giddy whirl of pleasure, she found truest joy in contemplation of heavenly things, and holiest bliss, arising from a pure conscience chastened by fasting and sanctified by prayer. She daily assisted her mother in the performance of the whole Church Offices, and spent much time on her knees in the exercise of private devotions.

Having early resolved to devote herself to a life of virginal purity, she sought every opportunity to prepare her mind for that holy state. But she was not to overcome the world without a struggle. Temptations began to gather around her. The beauty of her person attracted a crowd of admirers, who eagerly sought her hand in marriage. Foremost among these was a prince of the West Saxons, who offered her rich gifts and made flattering proposals. She refused to accept his gifts; and to his proposals answered that she had resolved to become the bride of Christ, and wished no earthly spouse.

Another, and more violent temptation soon presented itself. Werbode, a powerful knight of her father's court, backed by the influence of her father, entreated Werburga to become his wife; but to his entreaties she turned a deaf ear. Imagining that to this refusal she was influenced by her two brothers, who were then under the instruction of S. Chad, and resolving by fair or foul means to compass his designs, Werbode sought an opportunity to murder the two brothers, and thus remove them from his path. In the accomplishment of this diabolical design, he was, to a certain extent, assisted by the father, whom he had incensed against his sons. Werbode soon after died a miserable death. The king, stung by remorse, saw reflected, as in a mirror, all the deeds of his past life, and remembered how he had promised to extirpate idolatry from his dominions, but had failed to perform his vow. With earnestness he began to atone for his faults; destroyed the idols and converted their temples into churches, built the great abbey of Peterborough, founded the priory of Stone, and in every way endeavoured to propagate the true faith among his people.

Seeing this happy change in his disposition, Werburga revealed to her father the earnest desire of her heart, and earnestly entreated his permission to consecrate herself wholly to God. At first he appeared to be very grieved, but yielding at length to her passionate entreaties, Wulfhere, attended by his whole court, conducted her with great state to the convent of Ely. Here they were met at the gates by a long procession of nuns, singing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God. Werburga, falling on her knees, begged of the royal abbess, S. Etheldreda, that she might be received as a postulant. Having obtained her request, the voice of praise again ascended to heaven, the virgins chanting the *Te Deum*, as they returned to the convent. Now followed the usual trials; Werburga was first stripped of her costly apparel, her rich coronet was exchanged for a poor veil, purple and silks and gold were replaced by a rough coarse habit, and she resigned herself into the hands of her superior, henceforward to live only to Christ.

The virgin, with great fervour, now devoted herself to God. Her affections being weaned from earthly things, were fixed more firmly upon those things which are above. By prayer and fasting, by self-sacrifice and mortification, by obedience and penance, she sought to sanctify her soul and body, that she might present them, a holy and acceptable sacrifice, unto God.

After many years she was chosen, at the request of her uncle King Ethelred, to superintend all the religious houses for women in his kingdom. When she entered upon this larger sphere of duty, she laboured with earnest diligence to make all the houses under her care models of exact monastic discipline. Through the liberality of her uncle, she was enabled to found new convents at Trentham, in Gloucestershire; Hanbury, in Staffordshire; and Weedon, in Northamptonshire. These remained for several centuries as evidences of her godly zeal. The king also, at her request, founded the collegiate church of S. John the Baptist, in the suburbs of West Chester, and gave to S. Egwin the ground for the great abbey of Evesham.

S. Werburga, both by precept and example, sought to develop the religious life in those committed to her charge, and many through her influence were won from a life of dissipation and vice to a life of holiness and love.

God, in answer to continual prayers, had crowned her with many spiritual and celestial blessings. The old chroniclers say that she became the most perfect pattern of meekness, humility, patience, and purity. Her fastings and mortifications were almost incredible. She never took more than one meal during the day, and that of the coarsest food: seeking in this to emulate the lives of those fathers of the desert who shed such radiance over the Eastern and African Church. Beside the usual monastic offices, she was in the habit of reciting, upon her knees, the whole of the Psalter daily. She often remained in the church all night, bathed in tears and prostrate in prayer.

In the exercise of these holy devotions she lived to a ripe old age. Receiving at last some premonitions of her approaching departure, she made a farewell visit to all the houses under her care, and exhorted the inmates to prepare for the coming of the heavenly Bridegroom. Then retiring to the convent at Trentham, she quietly waited her departure. The messenger soon came, and found the

bride ready, and so with quiet faith and perfect trust she went to the home of her Spouse, on the 3rd of February, 699.

During the reign of Henry VIII., the shrine was desecrated, and the holy relics of S. Werburga scattered abroad. What remained of the costly shrine was afterwards converted into an episcopal throne, and may still be seen, carved with the curious images of kings of Mercia, ancestors of S. Werburga, who flourished eleven centuries ago. To this day it is used as the throne of the bishops of Chester.

S. NITHARD, P. M

(A.D. 840.)

[From the Life of S. Anskar, c. 6; Adam of Bremen, Hist. Eccl. lib. i.]

Nithard, nephew of Bishop Gauzbert, accompanied him in his mission to the Swedes; at first he was heard with patience, but the wild pagans, enraged at his denunciation of their worship of Thorr and Odin, burst into the house where he was, and killed him.

S. ANSKAR, B.; AP. OF SWEDEN

(A.D. 865.)

[German, Scandinavian, and Belgian martyrologies. Authorities: – His life by his successor, S. Rembert, who was personally acquainted with him, and had shared in his mission. The following outline of the life of this illustrious saint is from the pen of the Rev. G. F. Maclear, B.D., and is extracted from his "Apostles of Mediæval Europe," somewhat curtailed, and with some modifications.]

Charlemagne was once, we are told,⁹ at Narbonne, when, in the midst of the banquet, some swift barks were seen putting into the harbour. The company started up, while some pronounced the crew to be Jewish, others African, others British traders, the keen eye of the great emperor discerned that they were bound on no peaceful errand. "It is not with merchandise," said he, "that yonder barks are laden; they are manned by most terrible enemies." And then he advanced to the window, and stood there a long while in tears. No one dared to ask him the cause of his grief, but at length he explained it himself. "It is not for myself," said he, "that I am weeping, or for any harm that yon barks can do to me. But truly I am pained to think that even while I am yet alive they have dared to approach this shore; and still greater is my grief when I reflect on the evils they will bring on my successors."

His words were only too truly fulfilled. The sight of those piratical banners told its own tale. The fleets he had built, the strong forts and towns he had erected at the mouths of the various rivers throughout his empire, were neglected by his successors, and what he foresaw came to pass. Year after year, during the ninth century, the children of the North burst forth from their pine forests, their creeks, their fiords, and icebound lakes, and prowled along the defenceless shores of Germany, France, and England. They laughed at the fiercest storms, landed on the most inaccessible coasts, and pushed up the shallowest rivers, while Charlemagne's degenerate successors tamely beheld the fairest towns in their dominions sacked and burnt by the terrible crews of those terrible barks.

⁹ Pertz, "Mon. Germ." vol. ii. p. 757.

"Take a map," writes Sir Francis Palgrave, "and colour with vermilion the provinces, districts, and shores which the Northmen visited, as the record of each invasion. The colouring will have to be repeated more than ninety times successively before you arrive at the conclusion of the Carolingian dynasty. Furthermore, mark by the usual symbol of war, two crossed swords, the localities where battles were fought by or against the pirates; where they were defeated or triumphant, or where they pillaged, burned, destroyed; and the valleys and banks of the Elbe, Rhine, and Moselle, Scheldt, Meuse, Somme, and Seine, Loire, Garonne, and Adour, the inland Allier, and all the coasts and coastlands between estuary and estuary, and the countries between the river-streams, will appear bristling as with *cheveux-de-frise*. The strongly-fenced Roman cities, the venerated abbeys, and their dependent *bourgades*, often more flourishing and extensive than the ancient seats of government, the opulent sea-ports and trading-towns, were all equally exposed to the Danish attacks, stunned by the Northmen's approach, subjugated by their fury."¹⁰

But while the mind faintly strives to conceive the misery and desolation thus inflicted, on well-nigh every town and village of Germany and France, it finds satisfaction in the thought that even now missionary zeal did not falter; that while every estuary and river darkened under the sails of the Northmen's barks, there were not lacking those who had the Christian bravery to penetrate into the dreary regions whence they issued forth, to seek them out amidst their pine forests and icebound lakes, and to plant amongst them the first germs of Christian civilization.

The first mission in Denmark was organized in the year a. d. 826, when Harold, king of Jutland, his queen, and a large retinue of Danes, were baptized with great pomp in the vast Dom of Mayence. On this occasion, Harold solemnly did homage to Louis the Pious, and agreed to hold the Danish kingdom as a feudatory of the Carolingian crown. On this occasion also, Ebbo, the primate of France, determined to seek out a monk who would be willing to accompany the newly-baptized king on his return to Denmark, and remain at his court as a priest and teacher. But the well-known ferocity of the Northmen long deterred any one from offering himself for such a duty. At length the abbot of Corbey, near Amiens, announced that one of his monks was not unwilling to undertake the arduous task.

The intrepid volunteer was Anskar, a native of a village not far from Corbey. Born in the year a. d. 801, and early devoted by his parents to the monastic life, he had always evinced the deepest religious enthusiasm, and his ardent imagination taught him to believe that he often saw visions and heard voices from another world. When he was only five years of age, he lost his mother: and a dream, in which he saw her surrounded by a majestic choir of virgins, the fairest of whom bade him, if he would join his mother in bliss, flee the pomps and vanities of the world, exerted a profound impression upon him, and induced him to devote himself more than ever to prayer and meditation.

But when he was thirteen years of age, a. d. 814, an event occurred which exercised a still deeper influence over his susceptible mind. News reached the monastery that Charlemagne was dead. The greatest of great emperors had passed away, and now, in the sepulchre which he had made for himself, "he was sitting on his curule chair, clad in his silken robes, ponderous with broidery, pearls, and orfray, the imperial diadem on his head, his closed eyelids covered, his face swathed in the dead-clothes, girt with his baldric, the ivory horn slung in his scarf, his good sword 'Joyeuse' by his side, the Gospel-book open on his lap, musk and amber and sweet spices poured around."¹¹

Anskar at this time had relaxed somewhat of his usual austerities, and now the thought that even that mighty prince, whom he himself had seen in all the plenitude of his power could not escape the hand of death, filled him with awe, and he gave himself up more unreservedly than ever to the severest discipline. Meanwhile his talents had brought him into general notice, and when his abbot founded another monastic outpost in Westphalia, in a beautiful valley on the west bank of the Weser,

¹⁰ Palgrave's "Normandy and England," vol. i. p. 419.

¹¹ Palgrave's "Normandy and England," vol. i. p. 158.

and called it New Corbey, Anskar was removed to the new foundation, and at the age of twenty-five was elected, with the common consent of all, to superintend its conventual school, and to preach to the neighbouring population.

He was on a visit to Old Corbey, when the news arrived that a monk was much needed to accompany the Danish Harold to his native land, and that the abbot Wala had nominated him to the emperor as a fit person to be entrusted with the arduous mission. Summoned to the court, Anskar calmly but resolutely announced his willingness to go. In dreams and visions, he said, he had heard the voice of Christ himself bidding him preach the word to the heathen tribes: and nothing could induce him to shrink from the plain path of duty. In vain, therefore, on his return to the monastery, the brethren learning that he was about to resign all his hopes and prospects to preach amongst heathens and barbarians, warned, protested, and even mocked at him for his madness. Immoveable in his resolution to brave all risks, he began to prepare himself for his great enterprise by prayer and study of the Scriptures; and so deep was the impression made by his evident sincerity and self-devotion, that Autbert, steward of the monastery, and a man of noble birth, when every one else hung back, declared that he could not find it in his heart to desert his friend, and was resolved to become his companion.

A foretaste of the difficulties that awaited them was experienced at the very outset. No one could possibly be prevailed on to accompany them as an attendant. The abbot himself shrank from interposing his authority, and they were fain to set out alone. Before starting, they had an interview with Louis, and received from him everything they were likely to need for their undertaking, in the shape of church vessels, tents, and books. From Harold, however, they met with but little encouragement, and neither he nor his nobles cared much for their company.

On their arrival at Cologne, whence they were to sail up the Rhine to Holland, and so to Denmark, Bishop Hadebold bestowed upon them a ship with two cabins. The better accommodation promised in such a vessel induced Harold to share it with Anskar; and the engaging manners of the missionary gradually won his respect, and inspired him with an interest in his undertaking.

On landing, Anskar fixed his head-quarters at Schleswig, and commenced the foundation of a school, purchasing, or receiving, from Harold, Danish boys, whom he tried to train, so as to form the nucleus of a native ministry. Two years thus passed away, and some impression seemed to have been made upon the people, when Autbert sickened, and was obliged to return to Corbey, where he died. Meanwhile the baptism of Harold, and still more his destruction of the native temples, was bitterly resented by his subjects. Before long a rebellion broke out, and the king was obliged to fly for refuge to a spot within the ancient Frisian territory, while Anskar finding it necessary to leave Schleswig, was consoled by an unexpected opportunity of commencing a similar work in Sweden.

In the year a. d. 829, ambassadors from Sweden presented themselves at the court of Louis, and after arranging the political object of their mission, announced that many of their countrymen were favourably disposed towards Christianity. The commerce carried on at this period between Sweden and the port of Doerstadt, combined with the teaching of some Christian captives, whom the Swedes had carried off in their piratical excursions, had predisposed not a few towards lending a favourable ear to Christian teachers. The emperor gladly embraced the opportunity thus afforded, and summoned Anskar to the palace, who, after an interview, declared his entire willingness to undertake the enterprise.

A monk named Gislema was therefore left with Harold, and Anskar having found a new companion in Witmar, a brother monk of Corbey, set out in the year a. d. 831 with presents from Louis to the King of Sweden.

But the voyage was most disastrous. The missionaries had not proceeded far when they were attacked by pirates. A fierce battle ensued, and their crew, though first victorious, were overpowered in a second engagement, and barely escaped to land. The pirates plundered them of everything, the presents for the king, their sacred books, and all their ecclesiastical vestments. In this forlorn and destitute condition they reached Birka, a haven and village on the Mälar lake, not far from the ancient

capital Sigtuna, the residence of rich merchants, and the centre of the northern trade. Here they were hospitably welcomed by the king, Biorn "of the Hill," and received full permission to preach and baptize. The nucleus of a church was found already existing in the persons of many Christian captives, who had long been deprived of the consolation of Christian ordinances. The work, therefore, of the missionaries commenced under fair auspices, and before long Herigar, the king's counsellor, announced himself a convert, and erected a church on his estate.

A year and a half was thus employed, and then Anskar returned to the court of Louis with a letter from the King of Sweden, and an account of all that had befallen him. Thereupon Louis resolved, without delay, to give effect to the ecclesiastical plans of his father, and to make Hamburg an archiepiscopal see, and the centre of operations for the northern missions. Accordingly, Anskar was elevated to the archiepiscopal dignity, and was consecrated at Ingleheim by Drogo, Archbishop of Mayence, and other prelates. At the same time, because of the poverty of the diocese, and the dangers to which the mission would be inevitably exposed, the monastery of Thourout in Flanders, between Bruges and Ypres, was assigned to him as a place of refuge, and a source of revenue. Then he was directed to repair to Rome, where he received the pall from Gregory IV., and was regularly authorized to preach the Gospel to the nations of the North.

These arrangements made, Anskar returned from Rome. Ebbo, who had been associated with him in the commission to evangelize the northern tribes, deputed his missionary duties to his nephew Gauzbert, who was raised to the episcopal dignity, and entrusted with the special care of the Swedish mission. Thither, accordingly, Gauzbert set out, received a hearty welcome from Biorn and his people, and laid the foundation of a church at Sigtuna. Meanwhile Anskar had proceeded to Hamburg, and, in pursuance of his former plan, bought or redeemed from slavery a number of Danish youths, whom he either instructed himself, or sent for that purpose to the monastery of Thourout.

But the times were hardly ripe for successful operations. Three years had barely elapsed, when an enormous army of Northmen, led by Eric, king of Jutland, attacked Hamburg, and before relief could arrive, sacked and burnt it, together with the church and monastery which Anskar had erected with great trouble. He himself had barely time to save the sacred vessels, and, before the sun went down, every external memorial of his mission was reduced to ashes. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," was the exclamation of the archbishop, as he surveyed the scene. Driven from Hamburg, he now wandered for a long time over his devastated diocese, followed by a few of his clergy and scholars, and at length sought refuge at Bremen. But the envious Bishop Leutbert refusing to receive him, he was fain to avail himself of the hospitality of a noble lady in the district of Holstein. And, as if this was not enough, he now received intelligence that, owing to similar risings of Northmen, the hopes of the Swedish missions were utterly crushed.

The pagan party had conspired against Bishop Gauzbert, expelled him from the country, and murdered his nephew Nithard. But divine vengeance did not fail to pursue the conspirators. One of them had carried home some of the property of the missionaries. Before long he died, together with his mother and sister, and his father found his own property wasting from day to day. Alarmed at this sudden reverse of fortune, he began to consider what God he could have offended, to bring all these troubles on his house. Unable to solve the difficulty himself, he had recourse to a soothsayer. The lots were cast, and it was found that none of the native deities bore him any ill will. At length the soothsayer explained the cause. "It is the God of the Christians," said he, "who is the author of thy ruin. There is something dedicated to Him concealed in thy house, and therefore all these evils have come upon thee, nor canst thou hope to prosper till the sacred thing is restored."

After vainly trying, for some time, to comprehend what this could mean, he suddenly recollected the day when his son had brought home one of the sacred books from the spoil of the missionaries' dwellings. Stricken with alarm, he immediately called together the inhabitants of the place, told them all that had occurred, and prayed their advice in the emergency. Every one declined to receive the terrible relic, and at last, fearful of further vengeance if he retained it any longer in his

house, the man covered it carefully, and then fastened it to a stake on the public road, with a notice that any one who wished might take it down, and that for the crime he had unwittingly been guilty of against the Christians' God he was ready to offer any satisfaction that might be required. One of the native Christians took it down, and the man's terrors were appeased.

Anskar meanwhile was still wandering over his desolated diocese. Even the monastery of Thourout, which Louis had bestowed upon him for the very purpose of being a covert from such storms as these, was closed against him, having been bestowed upon a layman by Charles the Bald. Under such accumulated misfortunes most men would have sunk, but Anskar waited patiently in the hope of some change, and comforted himself with the words addressed to him by Archbishop Ebbo before his death: "Be assured, my dear brother, that what we have striven to accomplish for the glory of Christ will yet, by God's help, bring forth fruit. For it is my firm and settled belief, nay, I know of a surety, that though the work we have undertaken among these nations is for a time subject to obstacles and difficulties on account of our sins, yet it will not be lost or perish altogether, but will, by God's grace, thrive and prosper, until the Name of the Lord is made known to the uttermost ends of the earth."

Before long, events occurred which seemed to promise that the clouds would roll away, and a brighter era be initiated. Mindful of the converted chief, Anskar sent to Sigtuna an anchorite named Ardgar, with directions to see how he fared, and to strengthen him against falling back into heathenism. Thither Ardgar set out, and was rejoiced to find Herigar still remaining faithful to the faith he had embraced. The recollection of the Divine vengeance which had attended the previous outbreak, protected the missionary from injury, and the new king who had succeeded Biorn was persuaded by Herigar to permit Ardgar to preach the Gospel without fear of molestation.

That chief was no half-hearted believer, and openly confronted the malice of the pagan party. On one occasion, as they were boasting of the power of their gods, and of the many blessings they had received by remaining faithful to their worship, he bade them put the matter to an open and decisive proof. "If there be so much doubt," said he, "concerning the superior might of our respective gods, let us see whose power is greatest: whether that of the many whom ye call gods, or that of my one omnipotent Lord, Jesus Christ. Lo! the season of rain is at hand. Do ye call upon the names of your gods, that the rain may be restrained from falling upon you, and I will call upon the name of my Lord, Jesus Christ, that no drop may fall on me; and the god that answereth our prayers, let him be God."

The heathen party agreed, and repairing to a neighbouring field, took their seats in great numbers on one side, while Herigar, attended only by a little child, sat on the other. In a few moments the rain descended in torrents, drenched the heathens to the skin, and swept away their tents; while on Herigar and the little child no drop fell, and even the ground around them remained dry. "Ye see," he cried, "which is the true God; bid me not, then, desert the faith I have adopted, but rather lay aside your errors, and come to a knowledge of the truth."

On another occasion the town of Birka was attacked by a piratical expedition of Danes and Swedes, under the command of a king of Sweden, who had been expelled from his realm. The place was closely invested, and there seemed to be no prospect of a successful defence. In their alarm, the townspeople offered numerous sacrifices to their gods, and when all other means failed, collected such treasures as they possessed, together with a hundred pounds of silver, and succeeded in coming to terms with the hostile chiefs. But their followers, not satisfied with the amount, prepared to storm the town. Again the gods were consulted, the altars raised, the victims offered, but with results equally unpromising. Herigar now interposed, rebuked the people for their obstinate adherence to the worship of gods that could not give aid in trouble, and when they bade him suggest some device, and promised to follow his council, he urged them to make a solemn vow of obedience to the Lord of the Christians, assuring them that, if they turned to Him, He at any rate, would not fail them in the hour of danger. The people took his advice, went forth to an open plain, and there solemnly vowed to keep a fast in honour of the God of the Christians, if He would rescue them from their enemies.

Help came in an unexpected fashion. The Swedish king, while the army was clamouring for the signal to attack, suggested that the gods should be consulted by lot, whether it was their will that Birka should be destroyed. "There are many great and powerful deities there," said he; "there also formerly a church was built, and even now the worship of the Great Christ is observed by many, and He is more powerful than any other god. We ought, then, to inquire first whether it is the divine will that we attack the place." Accordingly the lots were cast, and it was discovered that the auspices were not favourable for the assault; and thus Birka was spared. The arrival, therefore, of Ardgar was well timed, and he was not only welcomed by Herigar, but the Christians were strengthened in their adherence to the faith by his coming.

Nor was it in Sweden only that the prospects of the missionaries brightened. In a. d. 847, Leutbert, bishop of Bremen, died. Anskar's own see of Hamburg was now reduced, by the desolating inroads of the Northmen, to four baptismal churches. It was therefore proposed that the see of Bremen should be annexed to the archbishopric of Hamburg, and, after the plan was matured, Anskar no longer found himself hampered by want of means from devoting all his energies to the wider planting of the faith. At the same time he was enabled to appoint a priest over the church at Sleswik, and from Horik, king of Jutland, he no longer experienced opposition in preaching the word amongst the people. This encouraged many who had been baptized at Hamburg and Doerstadt, but who had subsequently conformed to idolatrous practices, to publicly profess their adhesion to the Christian faith, and they rejoiced in the opportunity of joining in Christian fellowship. The trade also of Doerstadt prospered by the change; Christian merchants flocked thither in greater numbers, and with greater confidence, and thus helped forward the work of Anskar and his colleagues.

At this juncture the hermit Ardgar returned from Sweden. Anskar, more than ever unwilling that the mission there should be allowed to drop, tried to prevail on Gauzbert to revisit the scene of his former labours. But the latter, discouraged by his previous failure, declined, and Anskar finding no one else willing to undertake the work once more girded up his loins, and encouraged by Horik, who gave him letters to Olaf king of Sweden, set out for Birka. The time of his landing was unfortunate. The heathen party had been roused by the native priests, and a crusade was proclaimed against the strange doctrines. Suborning a man who pretended to have received a message from the native deities, the priest announced it to be the will of heaven that, if the people wished for new gods, they should admit into their company the late king Eric, and allow divine honours to be paid to him. This wrought up the feelings of the populace to such a pitch, that the retinue of the archbishop pronounced it absolute madness to persevere in his undertaking.

But Anskar was not thus to be thwarted. He invited Olaf to a feast, set before him the presents sent by the king of Jutland, and announced the object of his visit. Olaf, on his part, was not indisposed to make the concessions he desired, but as former missionaries had been expelled from the country, he suggested that it would be well to submit the affair, once for all, to the solemn decision of the sacred lots, and consult in an open council the feelings of the people. Anskar agreed, and a day was fixed for deciding the question.

First, the council of the chiefs was formally asked, and their opinion requested. They craved the casting of the sacred lots. The lots were accordingly cast, and the result was declared to be favourable to the admission of the archbishop and his retinue. Then the general assembly of the people of Birka was convened, and at the command of the king a herald proclaimed aloud the purport of the archbishop's visit. This was the signal for a great tumult, in the midst of which an aged chief arose, and thus addressed the assembly:

"Hear me, O king and people. The God whom we are invited to worship is not unknown to us, nor the aid He can render to those that put their trust in Him. Many of us have already proved this by experience, and have felt His assistance in many perils, and especially in the sea. Why, then, reject what we know to be useful and necessary for us? Not long ago some of us went to Doerstadt, and believing that this new religion could profit us much, willingly professed ourselves its disciples.

Now the voyage thither is beset with dangers, and pirates abound on every shore. Why, then, reject a religion thus brought to our very doors? Why not permit the servants of God, whose protecting aid we have already experienced, to abide amongst us? Listen to my counsel, then, O king and people, and reject not what is plainly for our advantage. We see our own deities failing us, and unable to aid us in time of danger. Surely it is a good thing to obtain the favour of a God who always can and will aid those that call upon Him."

His words found favour with the people, and it was unanimously resolved that the archbishop should be permitted to take up his abode in the country, and should not be hindered in disseminating the Christian faith. This resolution was announced to Anskar in person by the king, who further conceded a grant of land for building a church, and welcomed Erimbert, a colleague of the archbishop, whom he presented as the new director of the Swedish mission.

Meanwhile matters had not been so prosperous in Denmark. Eric "the Red," though not professedly a Christian, had, as we have seen, aided the archbishop materially in the introduction of Christianity. His apostasy provoked the inveterate hostility of the Northmen, and the sea-kings determined to avenge the insult offered to the national gods.

Rallying from all quarters under the banner of Guthrun, nephew of Eric, they attacked the apostate king near Flensburg, in Jutland. The battle raged for three days, and at its close Eric and Guthrun, and a host of kings and jarls lay dead upon the field; and so tremendous had been the slaughter, that the entire Viking nobility seemed to have been utterly exterminated.

The new king, Eric II., easily persuaded that the recent reverses were entirely due to the apostasy of his predecessor, ordered one of Anskar's churches to be closed, and forbade all further missionary operations. After a while, however, he was induced to change his policy, and Anskar, on his return from Sweden, was reinstated in the royal favour, and received a grant of land for the erection of a second church at Ripe, in Jutland, over which he placed Rembert, his favourite disciple, charging him to win the hearts of his barbarous flock by the sincerity and devotion of his life.

Anskar now returned to Hamburg, and devoted himself to the administration of his diocese. One of the latest acts of his life was a noble effort to check the infamous practice of kidnapping and trading in slaves. A number of native Christians had been carried off by the northern pirates, and reduced to slavery. Effecting their escape, they sought refuge in the territory of Northalbingia. Instead of sheltering the fugitives, some of the chiefs retained a portion of them as their own slaves, and sold others to heathen, and even professedly Christian tribes around. News of this reached Anskar, and at the risk of his life he sternly rebuked the chiefs and succeeded in inducing them to set the captives free, and to ransom as many as possible from the bondage into which they had sold them.

This noble act formed an appropriate conclusion to his life. He was now more than sixty-four years of age, and during more than half that period had laboured unremittingly in the mission field. His friend and biographer expatiates eloquently on his character, as exhibiting the perfect model of ascetic perfection. Even when elevated to the episcopal dignity, he never exempted himself from the rigid discipline of the cloister. He wore a haircloth shirt by night as well as by day. He measured out his food and drink by an exact rule. He chanted a fixed number of Psalms, alike when he arose in the morning and when he retired to rest at night. His charity knew no bounds. Not only did he erect a hospital at Bremen for the sick and needy, distribute a tenth of his income among the poor, and divide amongst them any presents he might receive, but every five years he tithed his income afresh, that he might be quite sure the poor had their proper share. Whenever he went on a tour of visitation through his diocese, he would never sit down to dinner, without first ordering some of the poor to be brought in, and he himself would sometimes wash their feet, and distribute amongst them bread and meat.

Such a practical exhibition of Christian love could not fail to exercise a gradual influence even over the rough pirates of the North, which was increased by the many miracles he wrought. But he was not one to seek distinction of this kind. "One miracle," he once said to a friend, "I would if worthy, ask the Lord to grant me; and that is, that by His grace, He would make me a good man."

He employed his last days in arranging the affairs of his diocese, and calmly expired on the 3rd of February, a. d. 865.

Relics. At Corbie is preserved an arm of the Saint.

February 4

- S. Veronica, *Matr. at Rome, 1st cent.*
S. Phileas, *B. of Thmuis*, S. Philoromus and Others, *MM. at Alexandria*, a. d. 304.
S. Abraham, *M. B. of Arbela, in Persia*, a. d. 348.
S. Gelasius, *C. at Piacenza, beginning of 5th cent.*
S. Isidore of Pelusium, *P. Monk in Egypt, 5th cent.*
S. Aventine, *H. of Troyes*, a. d. 538.
S. Aventine, *B. of Chateaudun*, 6th cent.
S. Theophilus the Penitent, *C. at Adana in Cilicia, circ. a. d. 538.*
S. Liephard, *B. M. at Honcourt, circ. a. d. 640.*
S. Modan, *Ab. in Scotland, 7th cent.*
S. Ulgis, *Ab. B. at Lobies, 8th cent.*
B. Hrabanus Maurus, *Abp. of Mainz*, a. d. 856.
S. Nicholas of the Studium, *Ab. C. at Constantinople*, a. d. 868.
S. Probatius, *P. at Nogent.*
S. Rembert, *B. of Hamburg and Bremen*, a. d. 888.
S. Gilbert of Sempringham, *Ab. in England*, a. d. 1189.
S. Andrew Corsini, *B. C. of Fiesoli*, a. d. 1373.
S. Jeanne de Valois, *Q. of France*, a. d. 1505.
S. Joseph of Leonissa, *C. in Italy*, a. d. 1612.
S. John de Britto, *S.J., M. at Madura*, a. d. 1693.

S. VERONICA

(1ST CENT.)

[Ferrarius in his Catalogue of the Saints. Some give March 25th as the anniversary of the Crucifixion, and as therefore the most appropriate day for the commemoration of the act, which has made Veronica famous. The festival of S. Veronica with special office, found its way into the Ambrosian Missal printed in 1555 and 1560, but it was expunged by the judicious S. Charles Borromeo.]

ON the 8th December, 1854, when the Eternal City was crowded with bishops, assembled to promulgate the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Pius IX., at the expressed and urgent desire of the prelates, allowed the sacred relics of the passion of Christ to be exhibited in the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament at S. Peter's. In the midst, over the altar, between burning tapers, loomed the veil of S. Veronica, impressed with the sacred lineaments of the Saviour. None but bishops were permitted to enter the chapel, all others looked through a grating, and to them, from the depth of the chapel, the portrait was wholly undistinguishable. One inferior ecclesiastic alone, by especial favour, was suffered to enter, accompanying a prelate. This was M. Barbier de Montault, canon of the basilica of Anagni; and he took advantage of the opportunity to scrutinize closely the miraculous portrait. He has fortunately communicated to the world the result of his examination. His words are full of interest: – "The Holy Face is enclosed in a frame of silver, partially gilt, and square, of a severe character and little adorned. The simplicity of the bordering gives prominence to the interior of the

picture, which is protected by a thin plate of crystal. Unfortunately, a sheet of metal covers the field, and only leaves apparent the figure by indicating its outline. By this outline one is led to conjecture flowing hair reaching to the shoulders, and a short beard, bifurcated, and small. The other features are so vaguely indicated, or so completely effaced, that it requires the liveliest imagination in the world to perceive traces of eyes or nose. In short, one does not see the material of the substance, because of the useless intervention of a metal plate, and the place of the impression exhibits only a blackish surface, not giving any evidence of human features."¹²

The legend of the origin of this portrait is as follows: A holy woman, named Bernice, or, as it has been Latinized, Veronica, lived on the way to Calvary. As Christ was on the road bearing the cross, He fell near her door, and she, moved with compassion, went to Him, and gently wiped the sweat from His face with her veil or napkin. Then the impression of the sacred countenance remained on the veil. Marianus Scotus, the historian (d. 1086), tells the rest of the story thus: "The emperor Tiberius was afflicted with leprosy. Hearing of the miracles of Our Lord, he sent to Jerusalem for Him. But Christ was already crucified, and had risen and was ascended into heaven. The messengers of Tiberius, however, ascertained that a certain Veronica possessed a portrait of Christ, impressed by the Saviour Himself on a linen handkerchief, and preserved by her with reverence. Veronica was persuaded by them to come to Rome, and the sight of the sacred image restored the emperor to health. Pilate was then sentenced by him to death, for having unjustly crucified our Lord." It is hardly necessary to say that there is no foundation of truth for this addition to the original story. How far the first part of the story is true it is impossible to decide. It is by no means improbable that a pious woman may have wiped the face of Christ.

Mabillon, the learned Benedictine, propounded the theory that each early portrait of Christ was called, in barbarous jargon, a mixture of Latin and Greek, *vera icon*, true image; and that later, a fable was invented to account for the introduction of these representations into Europe, and the name given to the image was transferred to the person who was supposed to have brought it to the West. This explanation has been generally adopted. "By the name of Veronica," says Baillet, "nothing more was signified than the true image — *vera icon* of the Saviour painted on a handkerchief or piece of linen called the Holy Sudarium, because, ordinarily, only the head of the Saviour from before was represented on it, that is, the face and hair. Nothing further was meant at Rome, where was to be seen, dating from the 12th century, in the Church of S. Peter, one of these Veronicas, before which lamps were kept burning day and night."¹³

But the legend itself seems to be an importation, not a fabrication, as Mabillon suggested. For Constantine Porphyrogeneta (d. 959), in whose reign the sacred Abgarus portrait of Christ was brought to Constantinople, relates the following story of *that* portrait: — "As Christ was on His way to Calvary, bearing His cross, the blood and sweat streaming from His brow obscured His eyes. Then taking from one of His disciples a piece of linen, He wiped His face, and left thereon His sacred portrait. S. Thomas preserved the towel till after the Ascension, when he gave the miraculous picture to Thaddæus, who bore it to Edessa. There he lodged with a Jew named Tobias. He began to work miracles in the name of Christ. Abgarus, king of Edessa, hearing of his works, sent for him. As Thaddæus entered the chamber of the sick king, he elevated above his head the sacred picture, and at the same time, such a blaze of light shot from his face, that Abgarus could not endure the splendour, and, forgetful of his sickness, leaped out of bed. Then he took the linen, covered his head and limbs with it, and was forthwith made whole."

How it was that this venerable picture passed into the hands of the Emperor of Constantinople we learn from the Arabic historian, El Matzin.¹⁴ He says that in the year 331 of Hegira, that is a. d.

¹² 'Annales Archeologiques,' Tom. xxiii. p. 232.

¹³ "Vie des Saints" Tom. ix. p. 22.

¹⁴ Elmasini 'Hist. Sarac.' Lugd. Batav. 1625, p. 267.

953 – which is a mistake for 944 – the Greeks besieged the city of Edessa, then in the hands of the Saracens, and demanded the surrender of the holy picture and the accompanying letters of Abgarus and the Saviour, in exchange for the captives they had made. The treasured relics were handed over to the Christians, and were brought to Byzantium, where they were placed in a befitting shrine in the church of the Eternal Wisdom. What became of the picture when Constantinople fell into the hands of the Mussulmans is uncertain. The Venetians claimed to have brought it to Rome, and to have presented it to the Church of S. Sylvester. The Genoese, on the other hand, lay claim to the possession of the sacred portrait, and say that it was brought by Leonard de Montalto, in 1384, to their city, and by him presented to the Armenian Church of S. Bartholomew, where it is still preserved and exhibited once a year.

We shall briefly notice such other portraits of Christ as claim to be authentic, whether in colour or in writing. Of the former, that said to have been painted by S. Luke is the most interesting. The Greek monk Michael, in his life of his master, Theodore of the Studium, relates that S. Luke painted a beautiful likeness of our Saviour. This assertion was readily adopted by later writers. Among others, Simeon Metaphrastes (fl. 936) repeats it, and S. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) refers to the picture as existing in the Chapel of the Santa Scala, in the Lateran, at Rome.

Another sacred painting of Christ by S. Luke is in the possession of the Benedictines of Vallombrosa. This portrait is certainly of very great antiquity, and is in tempora on a panel of cypress wood. The features are strongly emphasized, the face long, the eyes large and bright, with eyelids drooping, and arched brows.

Another sacred picture is that given by S. Peter to the Senator Pudens, which is exhibited on Easter Day, in the monastery of S. Praxedes. The story goes that it was sketched by S. Peter for the daughters of Pudens, one evening at supper, on the napkin of Praxedes.

It will be remembered that when Christ was laid in the tomb, His body was wrapped in fine linen, and a linen napkin was on his face. These relics are said to be preserved at Besançon and Turin. The Turin linen shows the bloodstained outline of the Saviour's body; that at Besançon is marked with the ointments. The features are impressed on the napkin, and are of the Byzantine type.

A crucifix, by Nicodemus, is exhibited in the cathedral of Lucca. Another portrait is the Nazaræum, which is certainly of considerable antiquity, and is probably the earliest extant copy of the famous Edessa picture. It is in the Latin convent at Nazareth. This picture is engraved in Abraham Norow's travels in Palestine. (S. Petersburg, 1844).

Let us now turn to the literary sketches of the portrait of our Lord which have descended to us.

S. Jerome, (d. 420), says that in the face and eyes of Christ there was something heavenly, so that from their glory and majesty the hidden Godhead flashed forth. S. John of Damascus, (d. about 760), in his letter to the Emperor Theophilus, says, "Christ was tall and stately, had brows uniting over the nose, beautiful eyes, a large nose, curled hair, and a black beard. His hair was a gold-brown, like wheat, resembling that of his mother, and his head was bowed somewhat forward."

The next, and more precise account is that of the apocryphal letter of Lentulus, (who is supposed to have lived at the time of Christ, and to have been about the person of Pilate, to the Roman senate,) which is said to have been extracted from the Roman annals by a certain Eutropius. This first appears in the writings of S. Anselm, (d. 1107). "He is a man of tall stature, comely, having a venerable countenance, which those beholding must love or fear. His hair is waving and curled, rolling to his shoulders, having a parting in the middle of the head, after the manner of the Nazarenes, a brow smooth and serene, a face without wrinkle or blemish of any kind, rendered beautiful by a moderate colour. There is no fault to be found with the nose and mouth; he has a full and red beard, the colour of his locks, not long, but forked, and eyes bright and changeable." Another version of this letter adds that the hair was the colour of the hazel-nut, the eyes greyish-blue, and full of light. "His hands and arms are beautiful. He is terrible in reprehension, but mild and full of love in instruction;

cheerful, but with steadfast earnestness. No one ever saw Him laugh, but often has He been seen to weep. Precise and modest in his speech, he is in all perfect, and the fairest of the sons of men."

But the most precise and complete account is that of Nicephorus Callistus, (fl. 1330). His description is as follows: – "He was beautiful in body, his height seven complete spans, his hair was yellowish, not bushy, and at the ends somewhat curled. His eyebrows were black, only a little arched, and without break; his eyes were hazel, of that description called bright-eyed, not dim, in no way misformed, not wandering. His nose was prominent, his beard reddish, not profuse, but the hair of his head was abundant, for never had razor or hand of man shorn it. His neck was somewhat bent, so that he did not walk perfectly upright; the colour of his face was a yellow-brown, like ripe wheat; his face was not round, nor pointed, but, like his mother's, a little drooping, and slightly blushing. His very countenance indicated a man of intelligence, with manners grave, calm, and removed from anger. In all things, he was like his most pure mother."

And this is the account of S. Mary given by Nicephorus: – "Mary was in everything modest and earnest; she spake little, and then only about necessities; she was very courteous, and rendered to all honour and respect. She was of middle stature, though some assert her to have been somewhat taller. She spake to all with an engaging frankness, without laughing, without embarrassment, and especially without rancour. She had a pale tint, light hair, piercing eyes, with yellowish olive-coloured pupils. Her brows were arched and black, her nose moderately long, her lips fresh, and full of amiability when speaking; her face not round or pointed, but longish; hands and fingers fairly long. Finally, she was without pride, simple, and without guile; she had no insipidity about her, but was unassuming. In her dress she was fond of the natural colour; in short, there was in all her ways divine grace."¹⁵

S. PHILEAS, B. M., AND OTHERS

(A.D.304.)

[Roman Martyrology. Authorities: – Authentic Acts by Gregory, a contemporary. Mention by S. Jerome in his Treatise on Ecclesiastical Writers, c. 78; Ruffinus Hist. Eccl. lib. viii. c. 9; Eusebius, lib. viii. c. 9, 10.]

Phileas was a wealthy nobleman of Thmuis, in Egypt, who was elected bishop of that city, but in the persecution of Dioclesian was carried to Alexandria, before the governor Culcian. In his dungeon he wrote a letter to his flock to encourage them, narrating the sufferings endured by the martyrs for the true faith. This letter has been preserved by Gregory, and in part, by Eusebius. Culcian, who had been prefect of Thebais, was then governor of all Egypt, under the tyrant Maximius, but he afterwards lost his head, in 313, by order of Licinius. The Acts of S. Phileas are scrupulously particular in detailing every question and answer in the examination of the saint. They are too long to be given in their entirety, but extracts from them deserve insertion.

Culcian, the governor, said to him, "Now, then, art thou sober?" Phileas answered, "I am always sober." Culcian said, "Sacrifice to the gods." Phileas answered, "I will not." "Why not?" enquired Culcian. "Because it is forbidden by Scripture to offer sacrifice, save to one God." "Then offer a sacrifice to Him." "God loveth not such sacrifices as you make," answered Phileas. "What sort of sacrifices then does thy God approve of?" asked the judge. Phileas replied, "I offer him a pure heart and clean senses, and true words." Culcian said, "But Paul sacrificed." "No, he did not," answered Phileas. "Well, then Moses did." "Yes," said Phileas, "the command was to the Jews only to sacrifice to God in Jerusalem; now the Jews sin in celebrating their solemn rites elsewhere." "Enough of these

¹⁵ This article is condensed from an article by the Author in the Quarterly Review for October, 1867, on "Portraits of Christ."

empty words; sacrifice," said the magistrate. "I will not do so, and stain my soul." "Why," said the governor, "Paul denied God." "He did not," answered Phileas. "Wilt thou swear that he did not?" asked Culcian. "I will not swear," answered the bishop, "for oaths are forbidden us. It is a matter of conscience." Culcian said, "Is it not a matter of conscience for thee to take care of thy wife and sons?" Phileas said, "Yes, but I have a higher duty to God." Culcian exclaimed, "Hold thy tongue, and sacrifice." "I will not sacrifice," said the bishop. Culcian asked, "Is Christ God?" And Phileas replied, "He is." Culcian said, "How could God be crucified?" "For our salvation," answered Phileas; "He suffered for our sakes."

The governor said, "I might have tortured thee in the city, but I spared thee, wishing to shew thee respect." "I thank thee," said the bishop, "Go on with thy work." "Dost thou desire to die without cause?" asked Culcian. "Not without cause; I wish to die for God and the truth." The governor said, "If thou hadst been a poor man I should soon have despatched thee, but seeing thou art rich enough to feed all the province, I have shewn patience, and endeavoured to move thee by persuasion."

Some lawyers standing by said, "Phileas sacrificed in the monastery," for they had heard something of the Eucharistic mystery, but understood it not. Phileas said, "You are right, I did sacrifice, but I did not immolate victims." Culcian said, "Thy poor wife is looking at thee." Phileas replied, "Jesus Christ calls me to glory, and He can also, if He pleases, call my wife."

The lawyers said to the judge, "Phileas asks delay." Culcian said, "I will grant it willingly, that he may think over the consequences of his persistency in this course." But Phileas cried out, "I have thought well over this, and it is my unchangeable resolution to die for Jesus Christ." Then the lawyers, the emperor's lieutenant, the other officers of justice, and his relations fell at his feet, embracing his knees, and conjuring him to have compassion on his disconsolate family, and not to abandon his children in their tender years. Philoromus, a Christian present, tribune of the soldiers, moved with indignation, cried out, "Why strive ye to make this brave man renounce his God, do ye not see that contemplating the glory of Heaven, he makes no account of earthly things?" Then with a shout, all cried that he must be condemned to die along with Phileas, and to this Culcian assented.

As they were led to execution, the brother of Phileas, who was a lawyer, exclaimed, "Phileas appeals." Culcian called Phileas back, and asked if it were so. The bishop denied that he had so done. Then the procession resumed its way to the place of execution. And when they had reached the spot, Phileas extended his arms to the east, and cried, "O my best beloved sons, whosoever worship God, watch over your hearts, for your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. We have not yet suffered, dearest ones, but we are about to suffer. Now are we becoming disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. Attend to the precepts of Christ. We invoke the immaculate, incomprehensible One, who sitteth above the Cherubim, the maker of all things, who is the beginning and the ending, to whom be glory through ages of ages. Amen." And when he had thus spoken, the executioner struck off his head, and that of his companion, Philoromus.

S. GELASIUS, BOY, C

(BEGINNING OF 5TH CENTURY.)

[Commemorated as a semi-double in the Church of Piacenza. Authority: – The Offices of the Breviary of Piacenza for this day.]

S. Gelasius was a little boy, child of pious and wealthy parents in Placentia, the modern Piacenza, in Northern Italy. His brother, older than himself, was S. Olympius, who is commemorated on October 12th. The children slept in the same room. One evening Gelasius heard his brother praying, and angels singing, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." The child died early, in the white innocence of his baptismal robe, and was laid by S.

Maurus, bishop of Placentia, in the Church of S. Savin, outside the walls. It was afterwards translated to the new Church of S. Savin within the city, in 1481, by the Bishop Fabricius, together with the bodies of SS. Peregrine and Victor.

S. ISIDORE OF PELUSIUM, MONK, P

(ABOUT A.D. 449.)

[Roman Martyrology. Same day in the Greek Church.]

S. Isidore of Pelusium, in Egypt, was a monk from his youth. Suidas asserts that he was promoted to the dignity of the priesthood. In the time when the turbulent Theophilus was patriarch of Alexandria, Isidore espoused the cause of S. Chrysostom, praised his writings and doctrine, and consequently became an object of hostility to the proud patriarch. On the death of Theophilus, S. Cyril, his nephew, succeeded him, and, as has already been related in the life of that saint, inherited his uncle's prejudices against the great Chrysostom, and after his death opposed the insertion of his name in the diptychs, or list of persons who were commemorated at the Holy Eucharist. But by the influence of S. Isidore, who earnestly strove to bring councils of peace before Cyril, the patriarch of Alexandria was induced to withdraw his objections. The letters of S. Isidore are extant.

S. AVENTINE OF TROYES, H

(ABOUT A.D. 538.)

[Roman Martyrology, and that of Usuardus, on Feb. 4th; but in the diocese of Troyes, on Feb. 6th, as a semi-double. Authorities: – A very ancient life, written in crude style; mention by S. Gregory of Tours, and in two extant lives of S. Fidolus.]

S. Aventine was much beloved and respected for his singular virtues by S. Camelian, Bishop of Troyes, who made him steward of the possessions of the church. He afterwards became the abbot of a monastery at Troyes, and spent all the money he could collect in redeeming captives. During the reign of Thierry, son of Clovis, he purchased of a band of soldiers, who were leading captives past his door, the boy Fidolus, whom for his gentleness and piety he learned greatly to love; and treating him as a son rather than as a servant, he made of him a monk, and finally, when he himself was old, and Fidolus had grown to man's estate, with the consent of the monks, he delivered over into his hands the government of the monastery, and he himself retired into a lone hermitage in the forest, and spent many years in a cave. When he opened his window, and thrust forth his hand full of crumbs, multitudes of little birds came fluttering up, and perched on his fingers, and ate the crumbs. He was ministered to by a monk, who, in bringing water from the river, sometimes caught in the pitcher very little fish. The gentle Aventine invariably returned the small fish to the river, for he would not hurt or destroy any animal, unless it were necessary. One day he trod on a snake and crushed it, so that it lay numb, and as though lifeless. Then he bent over it, and cherished it, till life returned, and it glided away. Once a stag, pursued by hunters, took refuge in his cave, and he closed the door on it, and hid it, till the hunters had passed further. One stormy night, a bear came roaring to the door of the cell, and strove to beat it in. The hermit, in terror, sang the song, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy holy one to see corruption!" and armed himself with prayer. Now

when the sky grew white with dawn, Aventine opened his cell, and there lay the bear crouched on the threshold, and it stretched out its paw to him, and licked his feet. Then the hermit perceived that there was a splinter of wood in the paw, and he said, "Poor beast, thou wast in pain, and didst seek relief, and I thought that thou wast raging for my life." And he took the paw on his lap, drew forth the piece of wood, bathed and bandaged the wound, gave the bear his blessing, and let it depart.

Relics in the parish churches of Creney and S. Aventin and in the cathedral at Troyes. In Art he is represented drawing the splinter from the bear's paw.

S. AVENTINE OF CHATEAUDUN, B. C

(6TH CENT.)

[Gallican Martyrologies. Authorities: – Mention in the life of his brother, S. Solemnis, and an ancient metrical French life.]

In the reign of Clovis there lived a Count John, at Chateaudun, who was married to Agnes, daughter of the Count of Blois. By her he had three sons, Solemnis, Aventine, and John, and a daughter Agnes, who died young.

Flavius, uncle of Agnes of Blois, was bishop of Chartres, and called thither Solemnis and Aventine for the purpose of attending to their education. As both showed signs of sanctity, he ordained both, whilst young; Solemnis was raised to the priesthood, and Aventine was appointed archdeacon.

On the death of Flavius, the clergy and people, with the king's consent, proceeded to elect Solemnis to fill the vacant see; but he, knowing their intention, fled, and hid himself in a cave outside the city. When he could not be found, the electors with one consent shouted, "Aventine is worthy!" that being the customary formulary of election. Thereupon, Aventine, much against his will, was drawn into the cathedral, and ordained priest, and consecrated bishop. Now Solemnis, from his place of retreat, heard the shout in the city, and knew that a bishop had been chosen. Yet he waited till he saw peasants returning along the road that ran by his retreat, and he overheard them speaking of the consecration of his brother Aventine. So he, deeming all further concealment unnecessary, came forth, and entered the city. Then, at once, a crowd surrounded him, and the roar of a thousand voices proclaimed, "Solemnis is worthy! Solemnis shall be bishop!" And he was drawn to the cathedral, vested in white, a mitre placed on his head, the pastoral staff put into his hands, and the bishops of the province there present, proclaimed him. And when this was done, men asked, "What shall be done with Aventine?" and he was sent to be bishop of Chateaudun, his native town. Then he went his way. And as he drew near to the city, there met him a leper, who ran towards him, and stopped, and cried out, "I am John, thy brother." He would have rejoiced to meet his brother, had he not seen that he was afflicted with leprosy; for which reason John had retired from the city, and fled from the society of men. Then the bishop ran to him, and fell on his neck, and his tears flowed over him, and he kissed him; and the flesh of John came again as the flesh of a little child, and he was made perfectly whole.

Of the works of the holy Aventine in his diocese little is known, save that he laboured in season and out of season in the ministry of God, and that he lived in a little cell outside the city gates, in the face of a rock. After the death of Solemnis, about 509, Aventine governed the whole Chartrain Church, and subscribed the council of Orleans, 511, as bishop of Chartres. Relics translated in 1853 to the parish church of S. Madeleine in Chateaudun.

S. THEOPHILUS THE PENITENT

(ABOUT A.D. 528.)

[Commemorated by the Greeks on this day. Not by the Westerns, though the story is quoted by a great number of Latin writers. Authority: – The Greek account by Eutychianus, who pretends to have been a disciple of Theophilus, and declares that he relates what he had seen with his own eyes, and heard from the mouth of Theophilus himself. Metaphrastes embodied the narrative of Eutychianus in his great collection of the Lives of the Saints. For a full account of this strange story, see my "Myths of the Middle Ages."]

The following story must be received with caution. It has not received the sanction of the Western Church, and is probably a mere religious romance. It was very popular in the middle ages, and was frequently represented in sculpture and stained glass.

A few years before the Persian invasion, in 538, there lived, in the town of Adana in Cilicia, a priest named Theophilus, treasurer and archdeacon. He lived in strict observance of all his religious duties, was famous for his liberality to the poor, his sympathy with the afflicted, his eloquence in the pulpit, his private devotion, and severe asceticism. On the decease of the bishop, by popular acclamation he was summoned to the episcopal oversight of the diocese, but his deep humility urged him to refuse the office, even when it was pressed upon him by the metropolitan. A stranger was raised to the vacant seat, and the treasurer resumed the course of life he had pursued for so many years with credit to himself and advantage to the diocese, content in his own mind with having refused the office, which might have aroused his pride, and which certainly would have diminished his opportunities of self-sacrifice. Virtue invariably arouses the spirit of detraction, and Theophilus, by his refusal of the bishopric, was thrust into public notice, and attracted public attention. The consequence was, that the evil-minded originated slanders, which circulated widely, produced a revulsion of feeling towards Theophilus, and, what was generally reported, was accepted as substantially true. These stories reached the ears of the new bishop, he sent for the archdeacon, and, without properly investigating the charges, concluded he was guilty, and deprived him of his offices.

One would have supposed that the humility which had required the holy man to refuse a mitre, would have rendered him callous to the voice of slander, and have sustained him under deprivation. But the trial was too great for his virtue. He brooded over the accusations raised against him, and the wrongs inflicted upon him, till the whole object of his desire became the clearing of his character. He sought every available means of unmasking the calumnies of his malingers, and exposing the falsity of the charges raised against him. But he found himself unable to effect his object; one man is powerless against a multitude, and slander is a hydra which, when maimed in one head, produces others in the place of that struck off. Baffled, despairing, and without a friend to sustain his cause, the poor clerk sought redress in a manner which, a month before, would have filled him with horror. He visited a necromancer, who led him at midnight to a place where four cross-roads met, and there conjured up Satan, who promised to reinstate Theophilus in all his offices, and, what he valued more, to completely clear his character. The priest, to obtain these boons, signed away his soul with a pen dipped in his own blood, and abjured for ever Jesus Christ and His spotless Mother.

On the morrow, the bishop, discovering his error, how we know not, sent for Theophilus, and acknowledged publicly that he had been misled by false reports, the utter valuelessness of which he was ready frankly to acknowledge; and he asked pardon of the priest, for having unjustly deprived him of his office. The populace enthusiastically reversed their late opinion of the treasurer, and greeted him as a Saint and confessor.

For some days all went well, and in the excitement of a return to his former occupations, the compact he had made was forgotten. But after a while, as reason and quietness resumed their sway, the conscience of Theophilus gave him no rest. His face lost its colour, his brow was seamed with wrinkles, an unutterable horror gleamed out of his deep-set eyes. Hour by hour he prayed, but found no relief. At length he resolved on a solemn fast of forty days. This he accomplished, praying nightly in the Church of the Blessed Virgin, till the grey of morning stole in at the little window of the dome, and obscured the lamps. On the fortieth night, the Blessed Virgin appeared to him, and rebuked him for his sin. He implored her pardon and all-prevailing intercession, and this she promised him. The following night she re-appeared, and assured him that Christ had forgiven him at her prayer. With a cry of joy he awoke; and on his breast lay the deed which had made over his soul to Satan, obtained from the evil one by the mercy of the holy Mother of God.

The next day was Sunday. He rose, spent some time in acts of thanksgiving, and then went to church, where the divine liturgy was being celebrated. After the reading of the Gospel, he flung himself at the bishop's feet, and requested permission to make his confession in public. Then he related the circumstances of his fall, and showed the contract signed with his blood to the assembled multitude. Having finished his confession, he prostrated himself before the bishop, and asked for absolution. The deed was torn and burned before the people. He was reconciled, and received the blessed Sacrament; after which he returned to his house in a fever, and died at the expiration of three days. The story is probably a mere religious romance.

S. MODAN, AB

(7TH CENT.)

[Aberdeen Breviary: – from which almost all that is known of his life is gathered.]

S. Modan was first monk, and then abbot of Mailros, in Scotland, and preached the faith in Stirling and at Falkirk. When old he retired among the mountains of Dumbarton, and there died. His body was kept till the change of religion, with honour, in the church of Rosneath.

B. HRABANUS MAURUS, B. C

(A.D. 856.)

[From his life by Rodolph the priest, monk of Fulda, d. 865; and various writers of a later period.]

Rabanus, or Hrabanus Maurus, was one of the most illustrious writers of the 9th century. He was born at Mainz, in the year 788. When very young he was sent to the monastery of Fulda, where he was brought up. From thence he was sent to Tours, where he studied for some time under the famous Alcuin. He returned afterwards to Germany, into his monastery, where he was entrusted with the government of the novices, was afterwards ordained priest in the year 814, and at last chosen abbot of Fulda, in 822. After he had managed this charge twenty years, he voluntarily quitted it, to satisfy the monks, who complained that his studies so engrossed his time that the affairs of the monastery were neglected. He retired to Mount S. Peter, and was shortly after chosen archbishop of Mainz or Mayence, in the year 847. He held a council in the same year for the reformation of discipline; and died in 856.

As a mystical interpreter to Holy Scripture, his commentaries will ever be read. He was a voluminous writer on various subjects, sacred and profane, and was certainly one of the most learned men of his day.

S. NICOLAS OF THE STUDIUM, C

(A.D. 868.)

[Greek Menæa for this day. Authorities: – Life by a contemporary monk in his monastery.]

This glorious confessor was born in Crete, and was the son of pious parents, who educated him from earliest infancy in the fear of God. At the age of ten he was sent to Constantinople, to see his kinsman Theophanes. He found him a monk of the order of the Sleepless Ones,¹⁶ in the monastery called the Studium. He entered the same order, and fulfilled his monastic duties with regularity and devotion. Having set a brilliant example, he was deemed worthy to be invested with the priesthood. Then broke out the furious persecution of the Iconoclasts, about which a few words must be said in this place.¹⁷

When God was made Man, He was put at once into the most intimate relation with men; and just as it is lawful for any son to have a portrait of his father or mother, so did it become lawful and reasonable that he should have a picture of that God-Man, who is dearer to him than father or mother. The picture served as a constant reminder, an evidence for the Incarnation. It is a sermon declaring God to be made Man. But the Arians, who denied the divinity of our Lord, were most hostile to sacred representations of Christ, and with reason, for these pictures were a testimony against them. At first the Arian attack on the foundation doctrine of the Incarnation was open. But, when the theological statement of that mystery was made so plain that there was no opposing it by counter statement, Arianism adopted other tactics, and appeared as Iconoclasm, or war against sacred pictures. He who disbelieved, or only coldly acquiesced in the Incarnation of God, saw that this chief corner-stone of Christianity could only be uprooted by chilling the ardour of Christian affection. And no better method of chilling that affection could be devised, than the obliteration of representations of Christ, His acts, His passion, and of His mother, and His Saints; then there was some prospect of religious acceptance of this dogma sinking into cold intellectual apprehension, and thence it could be dislodged without difficulty. After the reconciliation of large congregations of Gnostics and Arians with the Catholic Church, they maintained that icy worship which had preceded their separation, they adored God as a Spirit, but actually, though they had ceased to do so formally, overlooked His manhood. These reconciled bodies afforded a fund of passive prejudice and aversion of small account so long as Catholic princes were on the throne, but which, in the fortune of a soldier, might produce serious results to the Church.

Of such adventurers, the most fortunate was the Emperor Leo III., who, from the mountains of Isauria, ascended to the throne of the East. He was ignorant of sacred and profane letters; but his education, his reason, perhaps his intercourse with Jews and Arabs, had inspired the martial peasant with a hatred of images; and he held it to be the duty of a prince to impose on his subjects the dictates of his own conscience. In the reformation of religion, his first steps were moderate and cautious; he assembled a great council of senators and bishops, and enacted, with their consent, that all the images should be removed from the sanctuary and altar to a proper height in the churches, where they might be visible to the eyes, and inaccessible to the devotion of the people. But it was impossible on

¹⁶ For information on this Order, see Jan. 15, S. Alexander.

¹⁷ See for more information on the Iconoclastic heresy the life of S. Tarasius, Feb. 25th.

either side to check the rapid though adverse impulses of veneration and abhorrence: in their lofty position, the sacred images still edified their votaries, and exasperated their enemies. He was himself provoked by resistance and invective; and his own party accused him of an imperfect discharge of his duty, and urged for his imitation the example of the Jewish king, who had broken without scruple the brazen serpent of the temple. By a second edict, he proscribed the existence, as well as the use of sacred pictures; images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints, were demolished, or a smooth surface of plaster was spread over the walls of the edifice. The sect of the Iconoclasts was supported by the zeal and despotism of six emperors, and this topic involved the East and West in an angry conflict of one hundred and twenty years. It was the design of Leo the Isaurian to pronounce the condemnation of images as an article of faith, and by the authority of a General Council; but the convocation of such an assembly was reserved for his son Constantine Copronymus. This council was attended by three hundred and thirty-eight bishops of Europe and Anatolia, but not by those of the Western Church, African Church, or that of Palestine. It was, in fact, an assembly of those prelates who were weak enough to assist, fearing condemnation and exile if they did not submit, ambitious enough to follow the caprice of the reigning emperor, in hopes of emolument, and also of those who heartily concurred with his semi-Arianism. After a serious deliberation of six months, the prelates subscribed such a decree as the emperor desired, condemning all visible symbols of Christ,¹⁸ except the Eucharist, as blasphemous and heretical; and denouncing veneration for images as the idolatry of Paganism. "As if," says a Catholic writer of the time, "there were not this great difference between the Christian image and the heathen idol, that the latter is the thing worshipped, whereas the former is the representation of the person adored."

The first hostilities of Leo had been directed against a lofty Christ on the vestibule, and above the gate, of the palace, placed there to exhibit to all men that the emperors had bowed before the King of kings. A ladder had been placed for the assault, but it was shaken by a crowd of women and zealots, and for their opposing the execution of the mandate, severe and savage reprisals were taken. The execution of the imperial mandates were resisted by frequent tumults in Constantinople and the provinces, which were quelled by the military, and much blood flowed.

In the cruel persecution that ensued, the monks, ever the champions of the Incarnate God, suffered most severely. Nicolas of the Studium, together with S. Theodore, the abbot, or archimandite, of the monastery were called to suffer. Nicolas was scourged with leather thongs on the back and limbs, and his arms extended, so that they became for a time paralysed. His back, which was lashed and bleeding, was tenderly bathed with warm water and healing lotions by S. Theodore, his superior, till it was healed. Both were driven into exile, and kept for three years in nakedness, and without sufficient food and drink, in a wretched prison. They were beaten again at Smyrna, and further imprisoned for twenty-two months, with their feet in the stocks. On the death of Leo, the confessors were released, and visited S. Nicephorus at Chalcedon. This took place during the absence of Constantine Copronymus, who had undertaken an expedition against the Saracens. During this absence, his kinsman, Artavasdus, assumed the purple, and everywhere the sacred images were triumphantly restored. Constantine fled for refuge to his paternal mountains; but he descended at the head of the bold Isaurians, and his final victory placed the unfortunate Catholics once more at the mercy of a brutal tyrant. This monster of crime derived his name Copronymus from having defiled his baptismal font. This incident of his infancy was accepted as an augury of his maturity, and he did not belie it. His reign was one long butchery of whatever was most noble, or holy, or innocent, in his empire. In person the emperor assisted at the execution of his victims, surveyed their agonies, listened to their groans, and indulged, without satiating, his appetite for blood: a plate of noses was accepted as a grateful offering, and his domestics were often scourged or mutilated by his royal hand. His long reign was distracted with clamour, sedition, conspiracy, mutual hatred, and sanguinary revenge. The

¹⁸ This very term "Symbol of Christ," as applied to the Holy Eucharist, is indication of heretical views on the Presence.

hatred borne by this ruffian against monks and images was implacable. Images were torn down and defaced with wanton malice throughout the empire by an officer called the Dragon, sent round for that purpose; all religious communities were dissolved, their buildings were converted into magazines or barracks; the lands, moveables, and cattle, were confiscated, and the monks were mutilated in eyes and ears and limbs, with refined cruelty.

Under this emperor, Theophilus (829), Nicolas and Theodore again suffered persecution. Theodore, and the abbot Theophanes, kinsman of Nicolas, were mutilated by certain verses being cut upon their brows. During the persecution, S. Nicolas remained concealed; on the accession of the indifferent emperor, Michael III., (842), he emerged from his hiding place, and was elected archimandite of the Studium, the abbot Theodore being dead. After exercising the government for three years, he resigned it to Sophronius, and retired to Firmopolis, that he might pass the remainder of his days in peace; but it was not so to be; after four years he was recalled to the abbacy of the Studium, on the death of Sophronius, and was at once involved in conflict. For the patriarch Ignatius, having rebuked the Cæsar Bardas for incest, and then excommunicated him, the emperor Michael III., his nephew, was persuaded to exile Ignatius, and to intrude Photius into the Patriarchal see. The abbot Nicolas refused to communicate with the intruder, and was consequently driven from his monastery, and a monk, Achilles, was appointed in his room. Nicolas was pursued from one retreat to another by the hostility of the intruded patriarch, and after many wanderings, rested in the Crimea. Upon the death of Bardas and Michael, Bardas having been murdered by his nephew Michael, and Michael by his successor, Basil I., (867), the patriarch Ignatius was recalled, and the patriarch persuaded Nicolas to return to his government of the Studium, where he died the following year.

S. REMBERT, B. C

(A.D. 888.)

[Roman Martyrology; this being the day of his consecration to the Archbishopric of Bremen and Hamburg. But in some German Martyrologies, on June 11th, the day of his death. Authority: – his life written by a coeval author or authors].

This saint was born at Thourout, in Flanders, where was a monastic cell, that had been given by King Louis the Pious to S. Anskar. As Anskar was at Thourout one day, he noticed some boys going to church, and amongst them was one who, by his gravity, pleased him; and when the boy entered the church, he crossed himself, and behaved with so great reverence, that the archbishop went to him, and asked his name. He told him that he was called Rembert. Then S. Anskar took him and placed him in the little monastery, and bade that he should be well instructed. In after years, the apostle of Sweden called Rembert to assist him in his mission; and he loved his young friend greatly, and prayed to God for three days incessantly that He would grant to Rembert to accomplish the work that he, Anskar, had begun, and to make them companions together in the Heavenly Zion. After Anskar died, in 865, S. Rembert was unanimously chosen Archbishop of Hamburg and Bremen, and he superintended all the churches of Sweden, Denmark, and Lower Germany. He also began a mission to the Wends and Sclavonic race of Mecklenburg and Brandenburg, which was attended with considerable success. He sold the sacred ornaments of the Church to redeem captives from the Northmen. On one occasion he saw a party of these marauders pass, dragging after them a poor girl, who raised her shackled hands towards the bishop, and began to chant one of David's psalms. Then S. Rembert leaped off his horse, and ran to the chief, and offered him the horse if he would release the captive Christian maiden. And this he did, well pleased to obtain so valuable a horse. S. Rembert died on June 11th, in the year 888.

S. GILBERT OF SEMPRINGHAM, AB

(A.D. 1189.)

[Roman, Anglican, Belgian, Benedictine, and Cistercian Martyrologies. Authority: – his life, by a contemporary, published by Bollandus.]

This S. Gilbert, of whom Henricus Chrysostomus, a Cistercian chronicler, speaks as "a disciple of Bernard the mellifluous, a man of apostolical zeal, of most severe and rigid life, in purity conspicuous, illustrious for his gift of prophecy, and the mirific performer of stupendous miracles," was born about the year a. d. 1083, near the close of the reign of William the Conqueror. From an apparently contemporary pedigree he seems to have been related on the mother's side to that monarch, who may have rewarded the services of his father, "a bold and skilful warrior," with the hand of one of his relations, in addition to the manor of Sempringham, where Gilbert first saw the light. His mother is said to have received, shortly before his birth, a miraculous presage of the future greatness of her child, a greatness, however, of which few external tokens would seem to have manifested themselves during his childhood; since one of his biographers relates that as a child he was so dull and spiritless as to provoke the contempt and ill-usage of even the servants of his father's household. Driven by this maltreatment from his home and country, or more probably sent from home by the care of his parents, who discerned in him a greater aptitude for the cloister than for the camp, he passed some years in Gaul in the peaceful study of letters and philosophy. His childish education completed, he returned to England, and took up his abode with one of his father's dependents. Here he fell in love with the daughter of his host, and gave the first proof of his vocation to the counsels of perfection; for finding his passion increase daily in strength, and fearing lest he should be overcome by it, he fortified his soul by prayer and fasting; and then seeking the company of his beloved, he so wrought upon her by his exhortations and entreaties, that he prevailed upon her to join him in a vow of perpetual chastity, and she was one of the first who afterwards became nuns under his rule.

He now took to keeping a school, and gathered together a number of children of both sexes, to be instructed in the rudiments of religion, and especially taught them to live an orderly and pious life in the world, without as yet leading them forward to the higher life of the cloister; and these afterwards became the nucleus (*primitiæ plantæ*) of his order.

During this time he seems to have lived in the family of the then Bishop of Lincoln, and to have been admitted by him to the minor orders of the ministry; for the next thing related of him is that being presented by his father to the united benefices of Sempringham and Torrington he most willingly accepted the charge, and devoted the whole revenue of his livings to charitable purposes. Such was the fervour of his devotion at this time, that it is related that having one day invited one of his companions to join him in his prayers, the youth was so fatigued by the length of the office, and the punctilious care with which Gilbert genuflected whenever the holy names of God and of Christ occurred, that he swore he would never pray with him again.

After a while he was ordained priest by Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, who held him in such high esteem that he made him his confessor, and would have appointed him Archdeacon; but this Gilbert resolutely declined saying, "that he knew not of a shorter road to perdition."

Persevering in his resolve to give his all to the poor, he now for the first time formally constituted his religious order, by assembling a number of poor girls, amongst them the object of his youthful attachment, whom he made cloistered nuns at Sempringham, and maintained them at his own cost. He next founded a monastery for male religious, to whom he entrusted all the more responsible affairs of the order, providing both nuns and monks with a habit "expressive of humility."

To this time of his life we must probably refer his miraculous escape from death by fire. The story is that a great fire having broken out either in his own house, or in the buildings immediately contiguous, Gilbert remained sitting abstractedly in his window seat, praying and singing psalms; the fire devoured all before it until it reached the spot in which he sat; there its progress was arrested, and the flames died away on every side, leaving the saint and his seat unharmed.

His order continued to expand, many religious flocked to him, and gifts of manors and farms pouring in from all quarters, many monasteries arose under his rule.

The charge of his Order now became so onerous that he is said to have attended the general chapter of the order at Citeaux, in the year 1140, for the purpose of formally resigning his authority. To this, however, his brother abbots refused their consent, and Gilbert returned to his labours, which he was to relinquish only with his life.

A peculiar interest attaches to this chapter, from the circumstance related by the same writer,¹⁹ who tells us of Gilbert's presence there, that the Pope Eugenius²⁰ was present and took part in the proceedings, "not, however, presiding as with apostolical authority, but in brotherly love taking his seat among the assembled abbots, as one of themselves."

Returned to Sempringham, Gilbert resumed his life of prayer and mortification, observing the fasts of the Church with such rigidity that from Septuagesima to Easter, and throughout Advent, he not only abstained from flesh-meat, but even a morsel of fish never passed his lips. He practised also great austerity with regard to sleep, hardly allowing himself to lie down for months together.

His unwearied devotion and severe asceticism so forwarded his growth in grace that his influence over the religious under his authority became almost unbounded; with such prudence and persuasiveness was he endued, that he allayed without difficulty a serious disturbance which arose in the order from a spirit of insubordination that had crept in among the lay brethren. Overcome by his skilful reasonings and loving exhortations, the greater number returned to their obedience, "whereas," the chronicler adds, "those who held out and refused to do so, all perished miserably." His holiness and his acceptance with God were also attested by many miracles and wonders. Being at one time afflicted with a very severe fever, a friend came to condole with him; the saint enquired whether he had ever experienced the sensations of a fever; finding that he had not, Gilbert asked him whether he would be willing to take the fever from which he himself was suffering, if he might be thereby cured. The friend assented, and returning home, was the next morning seized with the fever, whereas the saint arose entirely free from it. Another time, a man suffering from gout was cured by simply wearing Gilbert's list slippers; and another man, sick of a fever, was healed by drinking out of his cup.

Overcome at length by the infirmities of advancing age, he resigned the charge of Sempringham to one of his disciples, Roger by name; but he seems still to have retained his authority, as it is mentioned that some time after this, he gave shelter to S. Thomas à Becket in one of his houses when that prelate, worsted in his contest with Henry II., was wandering about the kingdom in search of means to escape to the continent. He also supplied the archbishop with money during his exile, thereby drawing upon himself the displeasure of Henry, who, however, – such was Gilbert's popularity in the kingdom, – found it expedient to refrain from any proceedings against him.

At last, in the year 1189, and the 106th of Gilbert's age, his death drew near, and the man of God, full of years, and not less full of grace, prepared to render up his account with joy. He announced to his disciples his approaching departure, and on the evening of Christmas Day he was fortified with the last sacraments of the Church. The remaining time which God vouchsafed him on earth he devoted to the edification of others, and during this time many prelates, and men of various degrees, resorted to him in order to be consoled by his blessing, and instructed by his discourse. The night before the day on which he died "an immense globe of fire, and an appearance as of many candles"

¹⁹ Gofredus in Vita S. Bernardi.

²⁰ Eugenius III.

were seen to hover in the air over the church of Sempringham, in which his tomb was prepared. Three times the appearance descended from above, rising again twice towards heaven; the third time it penetrated the roof of the church, and descended to the floor. Then the brethren and the nuns knew that the time was at hand when their abbot must indeed leave them.

And so, on the next day, the 3rd of February, he departed this life, amid the sighs and lamentations of all, leaving behind him of religious men about 700, and of sisters in religion 1500; all serving God night and day without ceasing.

He was interred within the church at Sempringham, his tomb being placed between the two choirs, the monks on the one side, and the nuns at the other, so that the religious might offer their prayers at his sepulchre, and continually bearing in mind his holy life and happy death, might both be incited to diligence in prayer and good works, and also might profit by his intercessions for them.

Not long after his death, a certain canon of that order saw in a vision a brother not long since deceased, who, among other things, told him of S. Gilbert: "he is not amongst us, a different place possesses him; for from that place to which he departed (from the world) he has been translated to the choir of the virgins."

The veneration in which he was held may be seen in the eulogium of William of Newbury: —

"Nor must we in silence pass over the venerable Gilbert, a man altogether admirable, and of singular skill in the guardianship of women; from whom also the order of Sempringham took its beginning, and its rapid advancement. He, as it is said, from his very youth, by no means contented with being in the way of salvation himself, but kindled with a zeal for gaining souls for Christ, began eagerly to rival the weaker sex in the imitating of God, deriving his pious boldness from the consciousness of his own chastity, and his confidence in heavenly grace.

"Yet, fearing lest he should fail in his enterprise, he first sought the advice of the holy Bernard, and being instructed and encouraged by him, he commenced his work, and proceeding with great prudence and caution, he was mightily carried forward, both in the abundant multitude of persons gathered together for the service of Almighty God, and in the acquisition of temporal things; 'seeking first,' as it is written, 'the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all necessary things were added to him.'

"At last he organized a not ignoble monastery of two servants and eight handmaids of God, which also he replenished with numerous societies, and, according to the wisdom given him, furnished it with regular rules. And truly the gift of instructing the servants of God, divinely imparted to him, abounded especially in the care of women; indeed, in my judgment, he bears the palm in this respect amongst all whom we know to have devoted themselves to the instruction of female religious; moreover, having some years before been loaded with spiritual gains, the worn-out bridesman of the heavenly Bridegroom now departed to the Lord. Further, the multitude of his sons and daughters in religion still remains, and his seed is mighty upon earth, and his generation shall be blessed for ever."

The Order was peculiarly constituted, the men being Augustinian Canons, and the women following the rule of S. Benedict.

S. ANDREW CORSINI, B. C

(A.D. 1373.)

[S. Andrew died Jan. 6th; he was formally canonized by Urban VIII., in 1629, and his festival was transferred to Feb. 4th. Authorities: — Two lives, one by a disciple, the other by Friar Peter Andrew Castagna, written a hundred years after his death.]

Nicolas, a member of the illustrious Florentine house of Corsini, lived with his pious wife, Peregrina, for some time without children, which was to them a great grief, and they besought God

to give them that blessing which He had hitherto withheld. Their prayer was heard, and on November 30th, 1302, a son was born to them, who received at the font the name of Andrew, because he was born on the festival of that apostle. His parents, who regarded him as the child of prayer, had already, before his birth, dedicated him to the Lord, and sought, in his childhood, to inspire him with devotion and morality. But Andrew was possessed of a vehement, independent spirit, which brooked no restraint, and he grew up to cause them bitter sorrow by his disorderly life. Nevertheless father and mother prayed on, hoping against hope. The wild youth passed for being one among the most dissolute young men of the city, and was acknowledged as the worst of a bad set, utterly godless and abandoned. But his parents prayed on. The mother cast herself before a figure of the Queen of Heaven, and, in the bitterness of her anguish of soul, cried, "Oh, Mother of my Saviour! Thou knowest how the soul of my child, for whom thy Son bled, is sinking to destruction. Thou knowest, Holy One! how, in his earliest youth, I dedicated my child to thee, and trusted him to thy protection, how I have done all that earthly mother can do to keep him clean and unspotted from the world! And now, pity me, weeping over my guilty son, thou, whose tears flowed for thy innocent Son! Thou, who art so mighty, entreat thy divine Son, that mine may be moved to true and broken-hearted repentance."

Thus praying, and with streaming eyes, Andrew lit upon her one day, as he was going forth to the commission of some new work of evil. He stood still and looked at her, and a feeling of compunction stirred his heart. Then, turning her reddened eyes towards him, she said, "I cannot doubt it; thou art the wolf whom I saw in a dream."

"What mean you, mother?" asked the young man.

She answered: "Before thou wast born, my child, I dreamt that I brought forth a wolf which rushed into a church, and was there transformed into a lamb. Thy father and I, on account of this dream, placed thee under the protection of the Mother of God. My son, thou art not ours, thou belongest not to the world, but only to the service of God. Oh, would to heaven, that as the first part of my dream has been fulfilled, the second part might find its accomplishment also!"

Andrew covered his face, and fell at his mother's feet, and sobbed forth: "Oh, good, pious mother! the wolf shall indeed become a lamb. Thou didst dedicate me to God, and to Him will I, also, devote myself. Pray, pray for me, mother, that I may obtain pardon for all my grievous offences."

Next day Andrew sought the Church of the Carmelites, and kneeling before an image of the Holy Virgin, wept bitterly over his past life, which now appeared to him in all its bare deformity. And he felt so powerfully called by the grace of God, that he resolved at once to take refuge from his evil companions and associations, in the cloister. He, therefore, sought the convent door that same hour, and asked to be admitted as a novice. He was received, and spent his novitiate in constant battle with his passions, and in trampling out the memory of the past, by not suffering his mind for a moment to repose on the thoughts of the evil he had done, save only for the purpose of stirring up compunction, and abasing himself in profound humility. After having been received into the Order, he became a model of self-restraint and earnestness, so that in the year 1328, at the age of twenty-six, he was ordained priest. He was shortly after appointed to preach in Florence; and his fervour and love for sinners produced very astonishing fruit, in moving many who had lived in sin to turn in sorrow to the cross, and renounce their evil ways. Andrew was next sent to Paris, there to prosecute his studies, and was there invested with the degree of doctor; and after he had completed his studies with Cardinal Corsini, his uncle, at Avignon, he returned to Florence, where he was elected prior of his cloister. His renown as a preacher of righteousness prevailed again, and his sermons produced such an effect, that he was regarded as the apostle of the land.

After the death of the bishop of Fiesole, the chapter elected Andrew Corsini to be his successor. But when the news of his election reached him, he fled away, and hid himself in a Carthusian monastery. He was sought for long in every direction, without result, and the chapter, despairing of finding him, were proceeding with the election of another, in his room, when a child cried out "He

who is to be our bishop is praying in the Carthusian monastery." He was there sought, and Andrew recognising in this the will of God, yielded, and, in 1360, was consecrated bishop of Fiesole.

As prelate, he maintained the same discipline over himself, and never abandoned the penance he had imposed on himself for his youthful sins, of reciting daily the Seven Penitential Psalms, of sleeping on a faggot of vine twigs, and of never speaking without necessity. But however severe he was in his dealing with himself, nothing could exceed the tenderness and love with which he sought out and dealt with the greatest sinners in his diocese. And this love which overflowed from his heart rendered him peculiarly successful in reconciling enemies. Knowing this, Urban V. sent him to Bologna to appease a disturbance which had broken out between the nobles and the people, and he achieved this mission with signal success. In his 71st year, as he was singing midnight mass on Christmas Eve he felt great exhaustion, which was followed by a fever, from which he died on Jan. 6th, 1373.

Relics, in the Carmelite Church at Florence.

In Art he appears between a wolf and a lamb.

S. JOAN OF VALOIS, Q

(A.D. 1505.)

[French Martyrology. The process of her canonization began under Clement XII., and was completed by Pius VI. in 1775; but she was venerated at Bourges from the time of her death.]

Before Louis the son of Charles VII, ascended the throne of France, his wife, Charlotte of Savoy, bore him a daughter, called Anne of France. When he succeeded his father, with the title of Louis XI., he desired greatly to become the father of a son, and when his wife became pregnant in the third year after his coronation, his hopes were at the highest. When, however, she gave birth to a daughter, his disgust manifested itself in bitter antipathy towards the child, who was baptized Jeanne, or Joan. When she was eight days old, she was betrothed, May 19th, 1464, according to the custom of the time, to Louis, son of the Duke of Orleans and Mary of Cleaves, and sent to the house of her father and mother-in-law. At the expiration of four years, she was ordered to appear before her father at Plessis-le-Tours, where she was received by her mother with love, but when she was brought before her father, Louis turned from her with contempt, saying, "Bah! I did not think she was so ugly;" and he thrust her away. She was in fact somewhat deformed, and plain in face. It will be remembered that Sir Walter Scott has introduced her into his novel of *Quentin Durward*, taking, however, considerable liberties with her history. To such an extent did the spite of the king manifest itself, that when he saw how devout his daughter was, and that in her loneliness, she found comfort in the House of God, he forbade her frequenting churches and even the castle chapel.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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