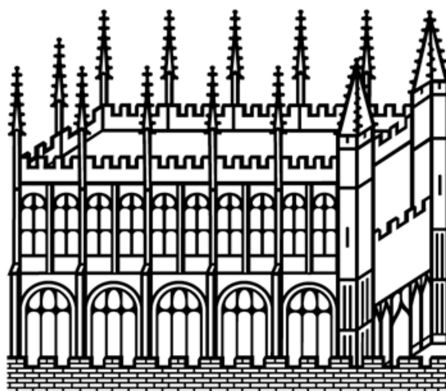

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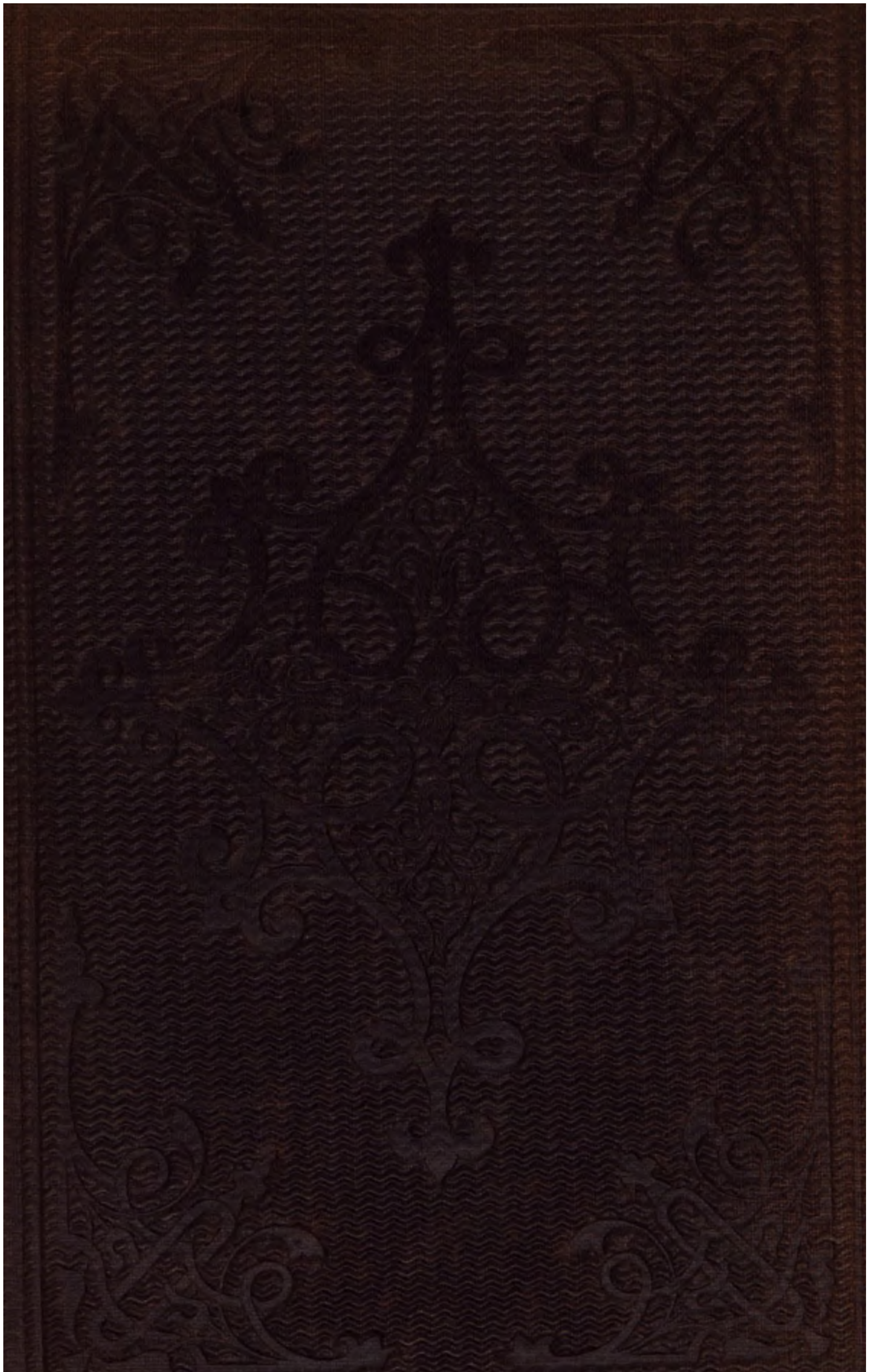

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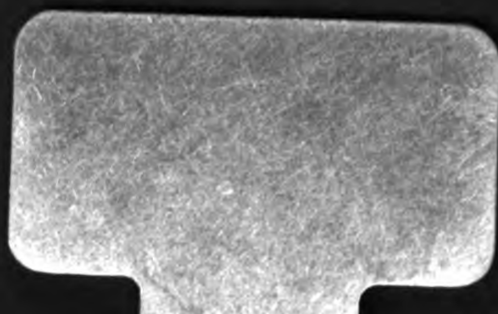
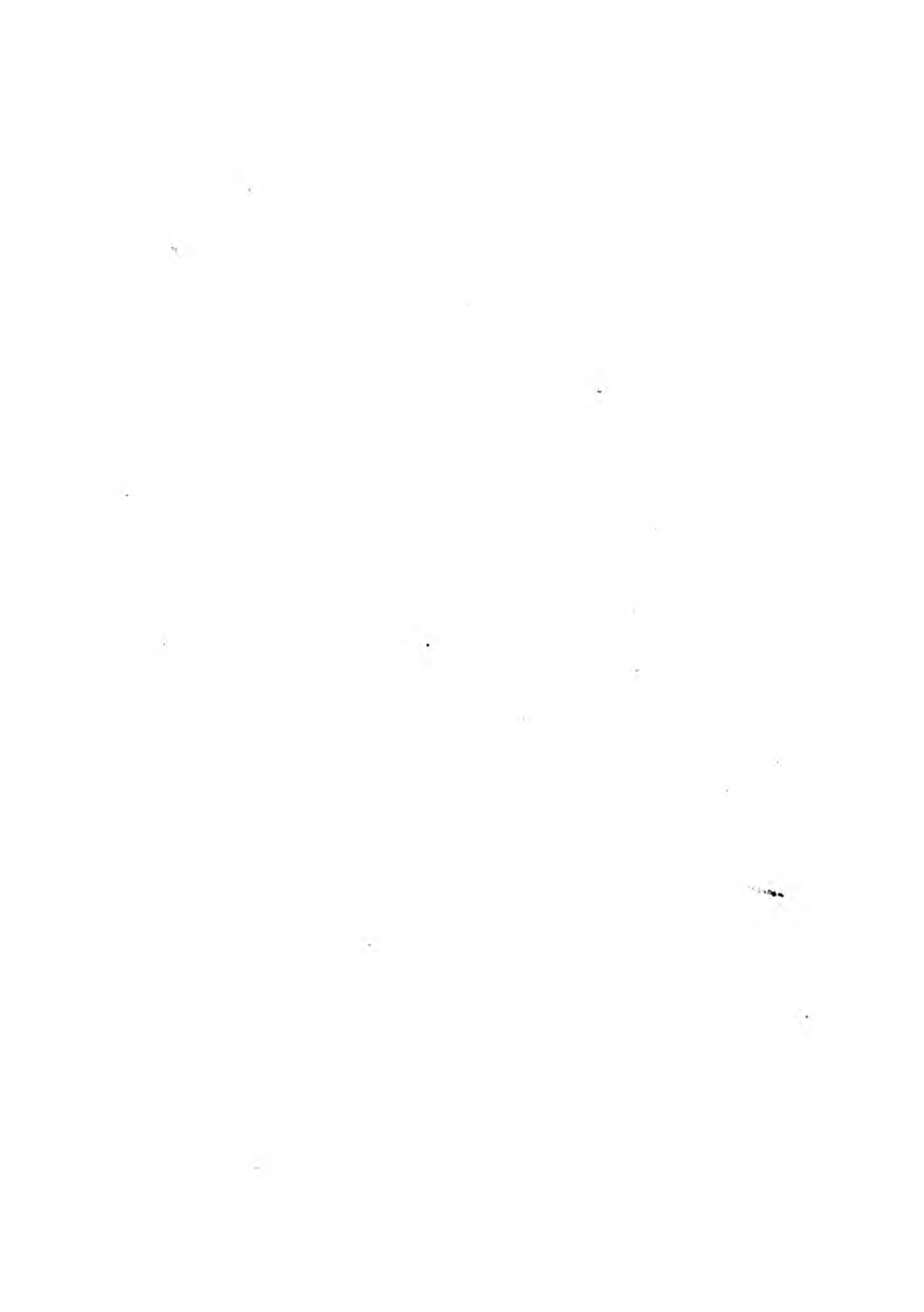
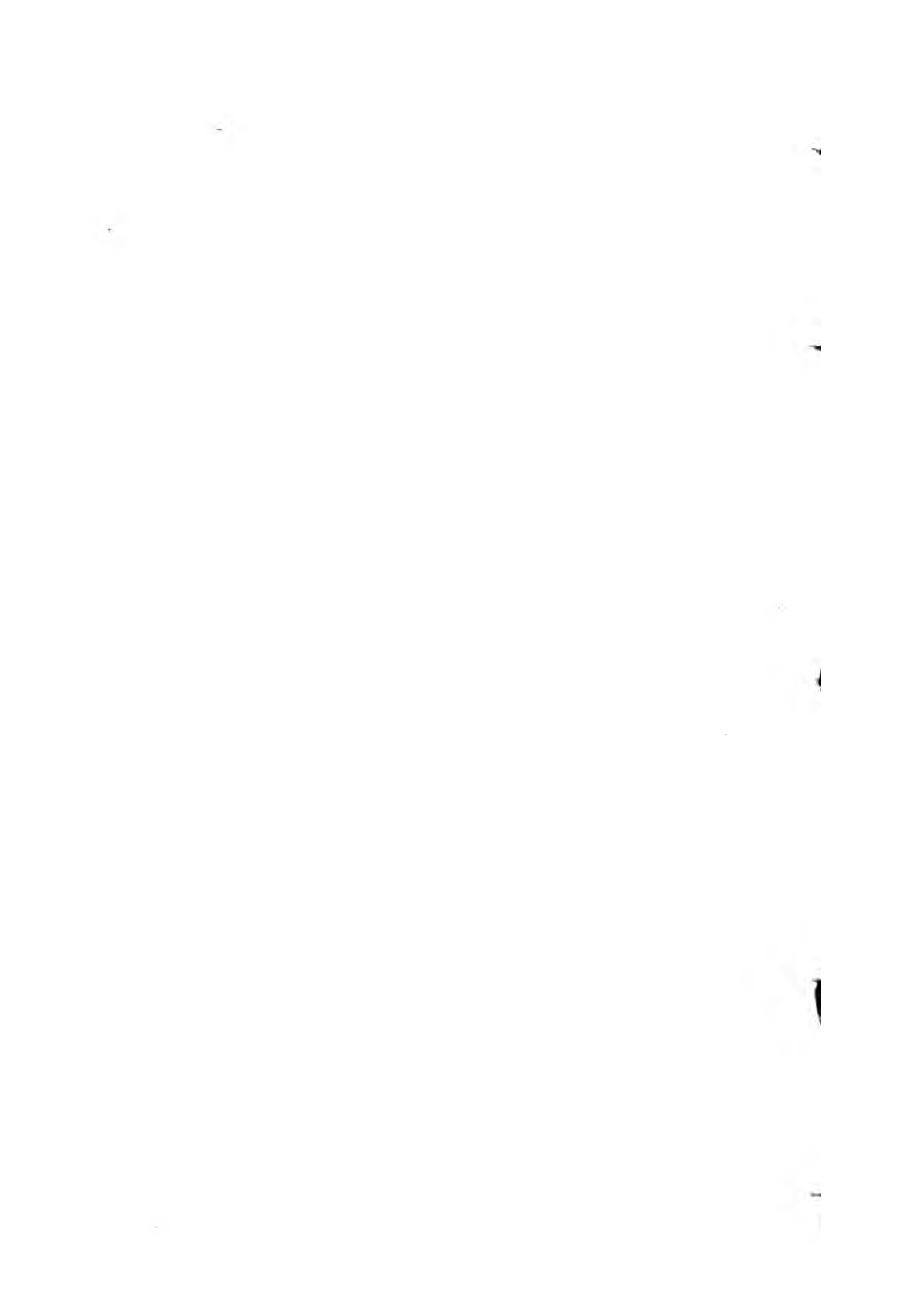




THE WEARMOUTH ABBOTS.



THE

WEARMOUTH ABBOTS:

A Tale

ILLUSTRATIVE OF SAXON CHRISTIANITY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE RATIONALE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH;" "THE PHILOSOPHY OF EVANGELICISM;" "THE SOCIAL UNITY OF HUMANITY;" ETC.

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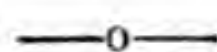
INTRODUCTION.



If, in narrating our Tale, we have adhered strictly to testimony, and have permitted the fancy to roam only where authority is silent, it must not be therefore concluded that our *sole* aim is to supply on conjecture the lost links of history, reunite by probabilities truth's broken fragments, and thus clothe with interest an unattractive record. Not that such an achievement would be altogether valueless. The dry details of chronology are much more easily remembered when they are interwoven with biographical incidents; and as the ready recollection of important dates is no despicable accomplishment, it could not be said that we had written in vain if we failed to do more than assist our readers to remember a few of the leading events in their country's early annals.

But our purpose is higher than this; higher even than to portray the manners of the times of which we write, their style of dress, their modes of thought, their usages and employments.

Although a "Tale," if taken up to while away an hour of *ennui* we predict disappointment; it is fitted only for grave and thoughtful readers. Nor among them are we free from peril. To discern excellence in celibates may offend Protestant prejudice; the proposal to elevate orthodoxy into a philosophy may be dissonant to modern habits of thinking; and the abstruse discussions of learned monks, however congenial to the recluse ecclesiastical mind, will, we fear, be scarcely appreciated by those who, in order to accomplish their herculean task of reading much, must necessarily read rapidly, and cannot, therefore, read well.

And yet there is a large class of the reading public to whom we venture to address ourselves, not without some hope of success. It includes those who are interested in the history, doctrines, and character

of the Anglo-Saxon Church. It includes those also who, instead of adopting without inquiry the conventional theological systems of later days, are disposed, after patristic example, to examine into the reasons of things. Nor does it less include those who love to contemplate the varied—the higher—developments of the Christian life. As the golden eagle, leaving its eyry in the rock, built far above the pathway of the most adventurous mountain climber, starts thence on its heavenward flight, ascending higher and higher, until the mighty bird seems like a speck on the azure vault; so there have been solitaries who, as they were unlike ordinary Christians in the sublime retirement of their earthly dwelling, have risen also high above them in the loftiness of their contemplations, the ardour of their devo tions, and the purity and usefulness of their lives. Seclusion was not always had recourse to for its own sake; but oft as an alternative or a refuge. The times were troublous, and the monastery was a covert from the storm. And as troublous times proverbially rock the cradle of greatness, it will only be in accordance with the usual operations of Divine Providence

if we find that the monastery and the convent have occasionally nurtured eminent Christians—some of the Church's most devoted sons and daughters.

Hence, besides that monachism illustrates the principles we seek to unfold, we prefer a tale of the seventh century to one of the nineteenth, as furnishing examples of moral and religious growth less mixed with extraneous elements, fresher, and more easily capable of critical analysis; our design involving not only the exposure of a scientific theory of Christian doctrine, but also—which is of still greater importance—the practical indication of those progressive steps in Christian experience and practice whereby characters are formed which live, if not in name, in power,—indelibly stamped, through the silent influence of a holy life, upon all humanity's future story.

THE WEARMOUTH ABBOTS.

CHAPTER I.

At what precise period and by what instrumentality Christianity was first introduced into Britain is not certainly known. There were, beyond doubt, many Christians in Britain in the second century; and the struggles of the new faith against the Druidism of the aborigines on the one hand, and against the classic mythology of their Roman conquerors on the other, would, if recorded, have added a few brightly illuminated pages to the world's history.

Scarcely, however, had Christianity triumphed over those two formidable opponents, before it was met in fierce conflict by a third. When, in the middle of the fifth century, the Saxons landed on the shores of this kingdom, first as allies and then as lords of

the soil, they introduced the religion of Woden, before whose terrible superstitions the oppressed Christian Britons retired in dismay. Finding refuge in Ireland, and in the fastnesses of Scotland, Wales, and Cumberland, their successors became afterwards known in ecclesiastical history under the name of Culdees, between whom and the Roman missionaries of the sixth century differences arose of sufficient magnitude to keep alive a continuous separation, and to identify the spirit of early British Christianity with the tone and tendency of modern Protestantism.*

In the days of the Heptarchy, that part of Saxon Britain which lay north of the river Humber—called thence North-humber-land—obeyed one sceptre, except only when domestic feuds temporarily severed its two provinces, Bernicia and Deira. Bernicia embraced so much of Northumbria as was north of the Tyne, although the Tees is sometimes said to have been its southern boundary; Deira comprised what is now Yorkshire, and also laid claim to Durham; but whether Durham was properly included in Bernicia or Deira appears on the page of history so uncertain, that the boundary line varied probably under dif-

* Note A (1).

ferent sovereigns, as did also the northern boundary of Bernicia, which was now limited by the Tweed, and then extended to the Frith of Forth.

At the commencement of the seventh century, Northumbria owned the sway of Ethelfrid, described by Bede as "a most worthy king," whose reign was eminently successful and glorious, but lacking in this—"that he was ignorant of the true religion." Ethelfrid was the grandson of Ida, the primitive ancestor of the royal race of Bernicia, by whom the dynasty was founded in 547. On the death of Ethelfrid, his sons took refuge in Scotland from the avenging sword of Edwin, who asserted his right to the regal dignity in Deira, as the heir of the house of Alla, which had contested the title of the house of Ida in that province; and Edwin having succeeded in establishing his claims by the aid of Redwald, king of East Anglia, he became, like his predecessor, Ethelfrid, a powerful Northumbrian monarch; holding also, in succession to Redwald, the office of Bretwalda, or paramount sovereign of the Heptarchy. It was during the reign of Edwin, and that of his successor, Oswald, son of Ethelfrid, that Saxon Northumbria received the Gospel; first, from Kent, and next from Iona—the light from these two sources commingling: for when, in 596, Pope Gregory the

Great sent Augustine and his companions to Kent, there already existed in Hii, Icolmkill, or Iona—one of the western isles of Scotland—a Culdee monastery, established by Columba in 565; and thence, in preference to more Catholic schools, the ecclesiastics were selected who chiefly contributed to the settlement of the Episcopal Anglican Church in Northumbria, as a permanent institute.

In a village on the southern bank of the Tyne stood the residence of the aged Eric, a Saxon patrician of pure blood, but limited wealth, whose forefathers had been among the earlier invaders of Northumbria, and had ever since held possessions on its coast. Stone-built houses having, after the departure of the Romans, gone into temporary desuetude, Eric's dwelling was built of wood. The principal room was a spacious hall, with an ample hearthstone in the centre, whereon in winter a blazing log fire diffused its genial warmth. To this room or hall the dependent villagers had free access, and here the usual hospitalities were liberally dispensed; other smaller apartments being reserved for sleeping, study, and domestic retirement. An open space in front of the house was flanked by rows of the lime and elm, and within the view from it, a few miles distant,

rolled the German Ocean. Behind, were the huts of the peasantry.

Here Eric had been wont to entertain the Princes of Northumbria, as they passed between the regal palace of Bamburgh and the southern portion of their dominions; it being one of their ordinary routes to travel from Bamburgh to the Tyne by sea, and thence by land along the Wreckendike, a military road leading into the great southern thoroughfare of Deore Street. Thus had Eric received frequent visits from three great monarchs, Ethelfrid, Edwin, and Oswald, during whose reigns he had taken an active part in public affairs; and oft around the hall fire in winter, or under a favourite sycamore tree in the long evenings of summer, he would assemble the villagers, and narrate, for their instruction and amusement, the scenes of his early life.

Eric had been present in 625, when Ethelberga was brought from Kent to Northumbria, as Edwin's queen, accompanied by the Bishop Paulinus, through whom the Gospel was then first introduced into Saxon Northumbria.

Eric had again been present at the Witenagemote, convened by Edwin two years afterwards, at Godmundingham, to determine whether Christianity should be accepted as the established religion, and

when Coifi, the Pagan high priest, applied the torch of destruction to his own temple.

Eric was not a soldier, and he was not, therefore, at the battle of Hatfield Chase,* where, in 633, Edwin was slain; but he accompanied to the shore Ethelberga and Paulinus, when, after Edwin's death, they took their final leave of Northumbria, and returned by sea to Kent; Eric himself shortly afterwards retiring to Iona.

But the event in which Eric evinced the deepest interest, and which he narrated in his old age with an eye and voice kindled as by the fire of youth, was the return of Oswald and his adherents from Iona, and the never-to-be-forgotten Battle of Denisesburn,† near Hexham; where, with a small but brave and resolute force, the Christian King Oswald defeated the enemies of his faith and kingdom, and secured for Northumbria some years of rest and active Christian effort; which happily gave birth to an advanced civilization, and the more deeply rooted dissemination of evangelical truth.

The Battle of Denisesburn had been fought in 635; and after an eminently Christian reign of seven years,

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* In the West Riding of Yorkshire, about seven miles to the north-east of Doncaster.

† Supposed to be the modern Dilston.

Oswald was, in 642, slain at Maserfield,* while defending his kingdom against its ancient foe, Penda. He left a name embalmed in the memory of his loving subjects.

Two years had since transpired, and another of Eric's early associates had passed away, coincident with the opening of our tale.

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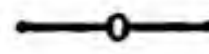
* Oswestry, in Shropshire; but some say, Winwick, in Lancashire.

CHAPTER II.



"Good morning, friend Eric!" was the cheerful salutation of a benign ecclesiastic, as he crossed the threshold where he was accustomed, on his travels, to take up his temporary dwelling.

"Welcome, my lord bishop! nor less so your youthful companion. Benedict will not make the worse soldier for having been made to share your pedestrian toils. When last from Lindisfarne?"

"Already a fortnight on our present journey; instructing, baptizing—publicly and from house to house—daily."

"Have you heard of the death of Paulinus?"

Aidan started at this sudden announcement, and was for some time deeply affected. His episcopal functions, and the baptism of such of the villagers as desired the rite, subsequently engaged his attention; but in the evening the conversation about Paulinus was renewed. . . . .

Eric.—"In person he was tall, thin, with a slight stoop, a long aquiline nose, and a visage pale and wan; from beneath an expansive forehead there shot the glance of a keen, penetrating eye; his voice was deep, his elocution slow and impressive, and his whole appearance and manner eminently awe-inspiring. He was somewhat impatient of contradiction; and when his plans were formed, nothing could divert him from executing them, however opposed to the views of others, and however serious their results."

Aidan.—"These are attributes that tend to greatness."

Eric.—"But not always to safety. It is seldom that one mind, unaided by consultation with others, can strike out spontaneously the course which the public interest demands. The chief error of Paulinus was this: after the Witenagemote had accepted Christianity as the religion of the state, Paulinus prevailed on Edwin to require all his subjects to be baptized; enforcing the observance of the rite by legal penalties. Accordingly, thousands attended at appointed intervals, and were baptized in the Glen, in Bernicia, or in the Swale, in Deira. Then, assuming that all who were thus baptized had become Christians, Paulinus enjoined high moral and disciplinary rules upon a people in no way prepared for them."

Aidan.—Yet, if they became baptized Christians, was it not right in Paulinus to subject them to Christian discipline?"

Eric.—"It was right to give them Christian instruction; but to subject them to a severe penitential discipline, when wholly uninfluenced by religious conviction, was, unquestionably, bad statesmanship."

Aidan.—"The Church cannot condescend to such worldly notions of statesmanship."

Eric.—"And that is the reason why no ecclesiastic ought ever to be permitted to fill the office of a statesman. The legislation which seeks to enforce Divine laws by human sanctions is apt, by fixing the standard of obedience too high, to breed disaffection and, perhaps, rebellion: the bow drawn too tight, snaps."

Aidan.—"If that be so, human governors can no longer be said to govern by virtue of a Divine commission. He who derives his authority to govern from Heaven must enact and execute Heaven's laws, whatever the consequence."

Eric.—"So said Paulinus; so he acted; and what *was* the consequence? Rebellion! Paulinus's policy operated like Circe's potions, on all not fortified against the enchantment by Christian culture; it turned men into brutes, good subjects into rebels."

Aidan.—"But was it really a rebellion? Was it not, rather, an invasion? an invasion, too, very singular and unnatural—the Christian Cadwalla in alliance with the Pagan Penda, to invade the dominions of the Christian Edwin?"

Eric.—"Unnatural, truly! and unlikely to succeed had Edwin's subjects been thoroughly loyal; but they were not. Edwin had several classes of disaffected subjects: first, Pagans, who were oppressed with laws too rigorous, except for a people of higher moral culture; secondly, Christians of the Culdee creed, who were compelled to observe rites in accordance with the practice of Rome, but which, as you know, many of them abhor almost as much as Paganism itself; and thirdly, vast numbers devoted to the house of Ida, who, although indifferent on the question of religion, entertained a warm affection for Ethelfrid's banished sons."

Aidan.—"And these the invasion combined?"

Eric.—"Like separate sticks bound into one faggot: weak while separate, but strong enough when united to overturn any throne. The Mercian Penda became the hero of the Pagans; the Welsh Cadwalla, the hero of the Christian celts; and Eanfrid, the eldest son of Ethelfrid, having seized the occasion to raise the standard of rebellion in

Bernicia, while Osric, Edwin's cousin, did the same in Deira, Edwin's supporters were scattered like chaff before the storm. Then, after his death, a year of such confusion and misery intervened that we have been fain to strike it out of the royal calendar, and reckon it as the first year of the reign of Oswald, who was at length called from his retreat in Iona by the unanimous voice of the nation, to become their king."

Aidan.—"A happy conclusion of a wretched tale: the rainbow after the storm!"

Eric.—"Would that the succeeding sunshine had been of longer continuance! On me, however, the storm conferred one boon of priceless worth,—*a friend.*"

Aidan.—"Nor have I less cause to bless your adverse lot. Oh, my Eric! never shall I forget those happy hours of holy fellowship, when we were wont to climb together Hii's mountain heights to watch the descending sun as he lighted up the western deep, and to talk of the Christian tossed by life's billows, but illumined by Heaven's glory; or when we sat for hours under Staffa's diamond canopy, as it sparkled in the moonbeam reflected from the troubled wave! How the noise of the ocean seemed, to our kindled fancy, the far off voices of wor-

shiping myriads! How we anticipated the time when humility should be enthroned, and adversity triumph! Happy Iona! permitted to become the refuge of Northumbria's greatness in the hour of her calamity! and grateful Northumbria! in that after you had returned to your own land in triumph—a Christian king, accompanied by a host of Christian adherents—you so far remembered the Providence that had protected you, as to invite a monk of Iona to become your bishop!"

Eric.—"And yet, my lord, that scheme was nearly wrecked; for you sent us, in the first instance, a monk so thoroughly wedded to his own opinion that he would not tolerate the slightest deviation. Not content with asserting his own views as to the proper time of the year for celebrating Easter, he launched forth the most fearful anathemas against all who differed from him. 'The Easter,' said Corman, 'which the monks of Iona keep, we received by tradition from our fathers. It is the same which St. John the Evangelist kept, the disciple beloved of our Lord, with all the churches over which he presided. He who departs from the apostolic example is an unbeliever, an infidel, and must either repent or be excommunicated—perish for ever.'"

"Oh, Iona, Iona!" exclaimed Aidan, "and has thy

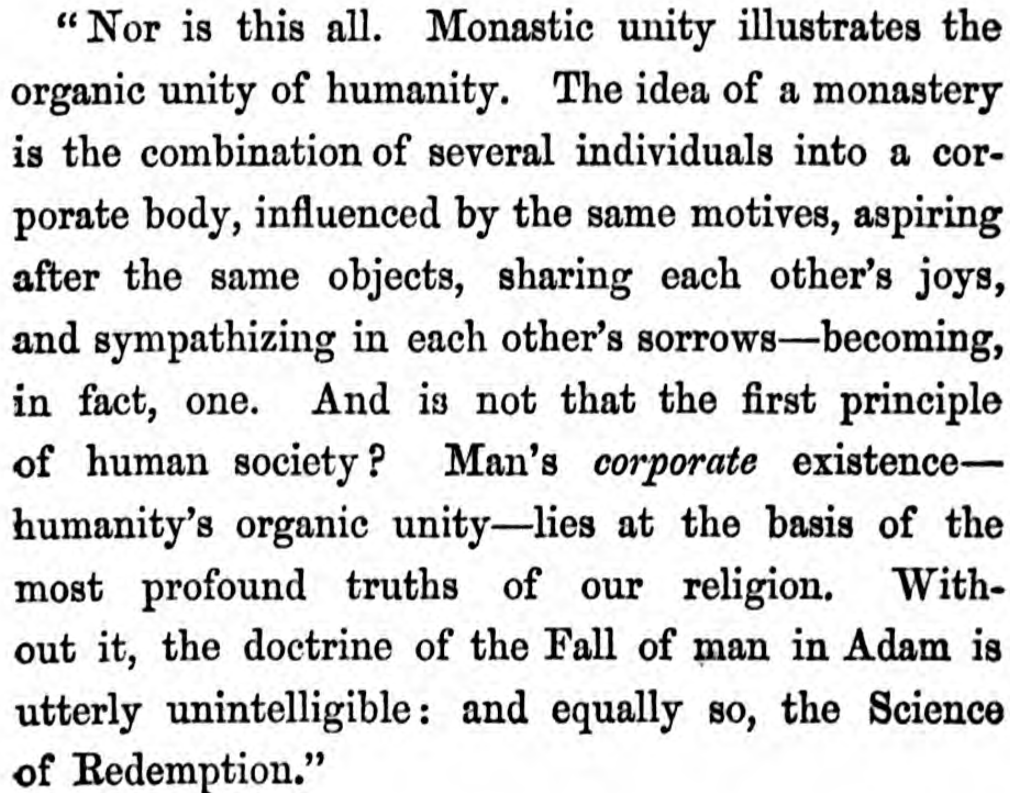
name, significant, like the cross of thy Master, of peace, love, and freedom, been thus prostituted in the cause of bigotry and discord?

"And yet, Eric," he added,—"returning to the point from which my Iona had nearly tempted me to wander,—neither do I conform fully to the practice of your southern teachers in my observance of Easter; but I do not, as you are aware, celebrate it on the fourteenth moon, whatever the day is, as is the manner of the Jews: for having regard to the design of the day's observance, which is to commemorate the resurrection of our Lord, I observe it always on the Lord's Day, thus agreeing with you in substance, although we differ in form."

While the two aged friends were thus earnestly engaged in conversation, there stole into the room Eric's two grandchildren, who advanced to the bishop to receive his kiss and blessing, and then nestled beside him: the elder, Sigfrid, a pale and sickly boy; his sister, Bertha, ruddy and vigorous, with golden hair, and blue eyes joyous and expressive. Aidan put an arm round each as he continued the conversation, passing often his hands over their heads and patting them with a smile of affectionate recognition.

"And will Bertha go to Melrose," said the bishop, "to the beautiful Melrose?" lifting the child upon

his knee, and shading her hair off her forehead; "or will she go and see the abbess and the sisters at Coldingham? My scheme for converting Northumbria," continued Aidan, now addressing himself to Eric, "differs widely from the schemes of both Paulinus and Corman. I would not enforce religion by positive law, as Paulinus did; and as little would I, like Corman, depend upon mere dogma—upon the assumed force of authoritative appeals to the intellect. My scheme is to leaven the whole country with monasteries and convents. Besides Melrose and Coldingham, Wearmouth, Hartlepool, and Whitby have been marked out as fitting places for religious houses; and two or three noble ladies have already offered their services. By the union of many minds—celibates of both sexes—you add stimulus to exertion. Some devote themselves to the cultivation of the soil, others to study, others to teaching, all to prayer; these again interchange and react on each other, and thus both worlds are cared for. If in this way we most effectually develop man's moral nature, I doubt not that we thereby most effectually prepare the way for the reception of religion. Women, too, who are the readiest recipients of religious truth, are oft its best teachers: they commune more directly with the heart.



"Nor is this all. Monastic unity illustrates the organic unity of humanity. The idea of a monastery is the combination of several individuals into a corporate body, influenced by the same motives, aspiring after the same objects, sharing each other's joys, and sympathizing in each other's sorrows—becoming, in fact, one. And is not that the first principle of human society? Man's *corporate* existence—humanity's organic unity—lies at the basis of the most profound truths of our religion. Without it, the doctrine of the Fall of man in Adam is utterly unintelligible: and equally so, the Science of Redemption."

CHAPTER III.

THE sun wanted an hour of rising when Aidan and Benedict, next morning, set forth on their journey. The seed had been sown and was beginning to germinate; youth is moulded by its companionship. Great enterprizes fascinate, whether designed to advance a principle or conquer a foe. Man's constructive genius can as readily find an object on which to spend itself in the systematic application of religious zeal, as in military enthusiasm. Why, then, should not the destined soldier become a priest?

The course of our two travellers lay along the line of the famous Roman Wall, which had in bygone ages protected southern Britain from the ravages of the northern tribes, and exhibited at the period of our tale, as it does still, vast material for the most interesting study.

Crossing the Tyne at Wallsend, the site of the ancient Segedunum, a Roman station which formed

the eastern terminus of the wall, they proceeded westward, following the straightforward tendency of the rampart through all the irregularities of a road which, by the pilgrims who have since tracked their steps, is well known to interweave toil and pleasure; minutely examining every relic, and contrasting, not without humility and shame, the massive masonry of the wall and its towers with the miserable wooden hovels of the Saxon peasantry. Thus had they advanced a few miles, when they overtook a party travelling in the same direction, consisting of a Mercian nobleman, with his son and daughter, accompanied by a numerous band of retainers; and in this agreeable society Aidan and Benedict continued their journey as far westward as the Watling Street.

Thence the whole of them made a short diversion, to visit the site of the Battle of Denisesburn and the wooden cross, then held in much veneration, which Oswald had set up at Heavenfield, on the spot where he and his army had knelt in prayer on the eve of the battle.

Returning to the line of the wall, the Mercian party proceeded upon their onward pilgrimage, while our two travellers struck off, by the Watling Street, southward.

With the exception of the cultivated valleys in the

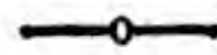
immediate neighbourhood of the wall, the landscape presented to them, for many miles, a succession of heath-clad hills; after which the road entered the forest, where the boar, the wolf, and the deer roamed undisturbed, save only when the hunters at intervals pressed them in the chase. Arrived on the banks of the Derwent, the pedestrians spent two days with a hermit, who had fixed there his secluded, but beautiful and picturesque dwelling. Then, following the course of the Watling and Deore Streets through the whole of the present county of Durham, and crossing the Tees, they bent their steps towards Catterick, near which town was the episcopal residence of James, who had on Paulinus's return to Kent succeeded him in the See of York; and where, also, was a royal palace, occupied at this time by Oswin, king of Deira, who, as son of Osric, of the house of Alla, had, after Oswald's death, succeeded to the throne of Deira, and for seven years reigned there, while Oswy, the brother of Oswald, of the house of Ida, reigned in Bernicia.

Oswin was a Christian, and Aidan's much-loved friend. After spending a few days with this amiable and excellent prince, Aidan and his companion, accompanied by James, visited York. The new church of stone which Paulinus had built there, and which

enclosed the original wooden structure of Edwin—both subsequently absorbed in the magnificent Minster—formed to Aidan and Benedict objects of great interest; as did also the ruins of Coifi's Pagan Temple, and the place of assembly of the Witenagemote at Godmundingham, whither they afterwards proceeded. Thence going on to the Humber, they embarked for Whitby, and after finishing there sailed for Hartlepool and Wearmouth, at which three towns Aidan had to make arrangements relating to his contemplated convents.

The tour of episcopal visitation being thus completed, Aidan and Benedict pursued their homeward voyage to Lindisfarne, where Benedict, who was of noble birth, had for educational purposes a temporary residence, and where Aidan had his permanent abode; arriving there in time to celebrate the festival of Christmas among the brethren, to whom they, at intervals, as opportunity served, detailed the incidents and news of their journey, with a minuteness of oral narration to which modern times, fraught with appliances for newspaper intelligence, afford neither motive nor example.

CHAPTER IV.



It was a bright morning in the month of September, about nine years after the tour mentioned in the preceding chapter,—the intervening period having been filled up with events of no extraordinary interest, except only that the imagination of our youthful pedestrian was ever recurring to the scenes he had then witnessed, and that an image had grasped his affections, which even his thorough devotion to his studies had been unable to efface,—and the royal residence of Bamburgh was now occupied by numerous visitors, including Sigebert, king of the East Saxons, with his suite, and several noble families from Northumbria and Mercia, whom Oswy had invited to meet his august guest.

Mingling with the brilliant crowd that had gathered, to enjoy the sea breeze, on Bebba's beetling heights, Benedict soon found himself engaged in a conversation too brief for his wishes, and

which had a bearing upon his destiny far beyond its apparent import.

"May I hope," asked Benedict, with a falter of the voice, slight but suggestive, "that the Lady Constance was gratified with her visit to the proudest monument of Roman skill and prowess our island can boast?"

"I can give you," replied Constance, "no better proof of our intense interest, than that we have twice since repeated our visit, examining carefully every inscription, and availing ourselves of the assistance of the learned, both native and foreign, by many of whom we were on both occasions accompanied. It is truly a magnificent monument, not only of power and policy, but of earnest piety also, and domestic affection."

"'Earnest,' it may have been," sharply interposed Benedict, "but you will permit me to add 'mistaken' piety."

"No!" rejoined Constance, firmly; "you Christians will say so—I do not."

Benedict's countenance showed how he winced under this startling discovery of a moral dissonance. Suppressing, however, his emotion, he continued:—"The Roman veterans have no doubt left on the page of this imperishable record abundant evidence that

they prized and cherished the domestic virtues. The altar erected by the tribune Fabius Honoratius and his wife to the memory of their beloved daughter attracted the revered Aidan's special attention. It reminded him of home scenes in the glens of his native Scottish mountains, over the recital of which he fondly lingered."

"Scotia's glens and mountains!" exclaimed Constance, "O, how I long to wander freely amid your solitudes! Accustomed to dell and woodland, and the lovely quietude of pastoral life in southern lands, the majesty of mountain, fortress, rock, and ocean in the bleak north, fills my mind with images of rugged grandeur. Those hills,"—pointing to the neighbouring Cheviots—"how lone they oft seem to me in the grey twilight; like a noble woman retiring into herself in her lonely sorrow! How massive Ida's towers! How grim these rocks, and how awful that ocean when raging, as I have seen it, under the lash of the tempest! How grandly it foams, how terrible its roar!"

"But how changeful!" interposed Benedict, breathing a silent prayer for a holier change; "what can be less irate, what more lovely than the scene we now witness!"

As he uttered these words, his eyes ranged over

the vast expanse of waters, on whose peaceful bosom Heaven's image was faithfully mirrored. Above the outermost verge of the well-defined horizon, the top-sails of far-off vessels rose in pearly white. Within a short distance to the south-east lay the Farne Islands, the selected abodes of isolated hermits. To the north, the Isle of Lindisfarne, with its magnificent monastery, where learned priests wrote, and from whose cloistered walls the swelling chant was borne on the breeze; and streaming from a peaked, castle-crowned hill was the signal that guided the mariners who sought entrance into its well-frequented port. Between these various islands and the mainland, boats were constantly plying, while immense flocks of different kinds of sea-birds, many of which had just arrived there from their summer retreat, dived, swam, and flew around with confiding familiarity. A vessel of the largest size accustomed at that period to traverse the German Ocean, coming from the southward, crossed the line of vision in full sail, apparently bound for Lindisfarne; and pulling off from Bamburgh to meet her was the royal yacht, having on board Oswy and Sigebert, with Queen Eanfleda and her youthful protegé, Wilfred, York's future prelate. O'er all these objects of beauty the autumnal sun flung his rich and glorious light,

glistening on the rippled surface, flashing and sparkling from the crested wave.

"And yet," added Benedict, "gladly should I wish even this scene to vanish, if in its stead I might gaze on those peaceful pastoral glades which form the mind—have formed *one* mind, at least, to so just an appreciation of domestic love."

"No wonder," rejoined Constance, without permitting it to appear that she had heard Benedict's last remark—"no wonder that your warriors are brave, your priests learned, your sailors adventurous, and your people moral and industrious. Your inspiration is in that ocean. It brings into harmony with itself the generous natures that hold converse with it, and imparts to them its own nobility. I reject the religion that deprives nature of life. Nature is man's companion; and companionship without life enervates, destroys. My religion peoples the universe with forms of loveliness. I seek them in the groves, and, although unseen, I commune with them with harp and song, and hear their response in the warbling of the lark, the whistle of the ouzel, the rapturous trill of the nightingale, or the melancholy sighing of the breeze. On the mountain, I meet the spirit of silence and mystery. In the flowery valley, the spirit of chastity and moral beauty. The voice of the

thunder, the glare of the lightning, and the howl of the hurricane, tell me that the gods are angry; and I tremble. But, do the forest leaves rustle?—do the full heads of mellow grain bend reverently?—there passes on the zephyr the spirit of love. I have gazed upon the moon and her twinkling attendants, and tracked the path of light over those billows, when the plash of the oar and the rough voice of the fisherman alone brake the deep silence of midnight: methought the Divinity sat enthroned on yonder silvered islet, with snowy wreaths of fretted silver for His footstool: then I knelt, and—worshipped."

At this juncture, Benedict and Constance were joined by two others of the visitors,—Flavius, a Florentine, one of the learned foreigners who had accompanied the party of Constance on their more recent tour; and Adamnan, a monk from Coldingham. To these Constance appealed, and required them to inform her what could be said in favour of this new religion, more than of the time-honoured religion of her forefathers.

Flavius, in reply to Constance, suggested that religion was a mere matter of national law and custom, and was valuable so far only as it gave public honour to virtue.

Adamnan.—"Religion is not the offspring of

changing custom, but of eternal, immutable truth. Christianity is the revealed truth of God, and before it all other forms of religion must necessarily wane, like the stars in presence of the orb of day."

Flavius.—"How do you prove that Christianity is, as you assert, the *only* true religion, and that all others are false? Has not philosophy striven for centuries after the acquisition of truth? But even yet nothing is certain. One system has succeeded another—the last always condemning its predecessors as systems of error, and setting up itself as being alone the truth; and thus you, Adamnan, after the example of all preceding ages, claim superiority for your own creed: but I want better evidence than mere assertion. What proofs do you urge in favour of your creed that have not already been urged in favour of others.?"

Adamnan.—"We urge miracles and inspiration, and fulfilled prophecy."

Flavius.—"And what religion is without its miracles, and without its inspiration, and without its fulfilled prophecy? All religions put forward the like pretensions; and whether the pretensions of the one are better founded than the pretensions of another, is a question of great difficulty, requiring, in order to its solution, a nice discrimination of

the relative values of different kinds of evidence, with an exact weighing of conflicting arguments and contentious testimony. How is it possible for men's minds to be brought into agreement where there are so many causes for difference, unless the State interfere, and, aided by the learned, decide for the vulgar what they ought to believe, compelling their belief by positive law?"

Constance.—"Yet positive law, Flavius, cannot compel belief. Here, at the court of Oswy, all authority is on the side of Christianity, but I see no superiority of moral culture, and instead, therefore, of being disposed to yield to authority, my pride of ancestry provokes resistance."

Benedict.—"I do not agree with Flavius in thinking that the popular mind is incompetent to deal with the evidences of religion; nor is he correct in the notion that its evidences consist wholly of external appeals to the intellect. The *force* of argument on moral questions does not depend so much upon its logical weight, as upon the condition of the heart: hence, that religion will ever appear to us the best and truest which is most in accordance with the demands and dictates of the conscience—conscience, I mean, not in that state to which it is reduced when passion rules, but as it asserts itself when listened to and

obeyed, and when it becomes, by cultivation, elevated and refined. It was thus, we are told, that Cynewolf reasoned at the Witenagemote, in the time of Edwin. 'The life of man on earth,' said Cynewolf, 'is like to a sparrow flitting in at one door of the festive chamber and out at the other: it comes from the darkness and returns to the darkness. Can the new religion solve this mystery? If it disclose to us the immortality for which the practice of virtue awakes our longing, then ought we unhesitatingly to embrace it.' But the answer which Christianity gives to the longing of virtue after immortality, is only one—and that a comparatively feeble—evidence of the adaptation I speak of. Let man's moral nature be fully developed—or rather let me say, develop the conscience of humanity—and it will suggest weighty moral problems which no system of religion, except that of the Cross, ever attempted to solve."

Within ten days after these occurrences, Constance stood by the dying bed of her favourite maid. Younger than her mistress, and her constant attendant, Agatha had imbibed from her those high principles of duty and rectitude which lent even to her heathen worship of nature an indescribable moral charm. In the eyes of Agatha, Constance was a goddess; nor were the beauty of her person and the

dignity of her carriage unbefitting such homage. But that which prostrated before her the minds of her dependents was, interwoven with a watchful reprehension of their faults, her courteous recognition of their obedience, her implicit confidence in their tried integrity, and her affectionate solicitude for their health and welfare. The maid's devoted attachment to her mistress, and her prompt and conscientious discharge of every relative obligation, begat, on the part of Constance, a reciprocal regard; and when sickness blanched the cheek which had been so recently radiant with enjoyment, the uneasy forebodings of the mistress anticipated even the patient's alarm, and every means was used that medical skill and assiduous nursing could devise, to ward off the apprehended danger.

But as when the bright hues of the landscape have faded, the cold grey of evening tells that the day is gone, so the chill dullness of the eye, once so kindling, the pallor of the lips, and the shrunk visage, told but too plainly that life's hey-day was fast departing. And then the care which had hitherto been expended upon the body began instinctively to be directed to the interests of the soul.

Agatha's future was a point, however, upon which Constance could not entertain the slightest misgiving.

"If ever a lovely virgin, snatched away cruelly in the spring of youth, deserved a Heaven hereafter, by way of compensation for this world's blighted hopes, such a demand might now be urged without fear. Was not the Supreme—be he Woden or Jehovah—too just to allow a life so good as Agatha's to pass unrewarded?" But not thus did *she* think and feel who was the most deeply interested in this momentous inquiry. The very facts on which Constance had based her kindly, and by no means eccentric, conclusions, had led the mind of the sufferer to conclusions directly opposite; not through the medium of an adverse logical process, but by the influence which submission to the dictates of conscience exerts in enlarging its area, refining its perceptions, and adding weight to its authority.

The conscience of Agatha, instead of being *appeased* by past recollections, was *alarmed*,—much more alarmed than it would have been had her moral nature been hitherto less active. A blaze of sunlight had broken in upon her heart's chamber, and exposed to a severe self-scrutiny the nooks and crevices of accumulated pollution; memory dragged to judgment culprits long concealed; acts never before regarded as sins now stood forth in their real deformity, and the pleasure they had once yielded became matter

of wonder as well as reproach. As this process of moral development advanced, Agatha trembled. She felt herself as if already unclothed in the presence of outraged holiness; justice, unrelenting; flight, impossible. Constance had no skill to expatiate on a mercy that was independent of justice, and which could forgive and receive to favour despite justice's stern rebuke. Nor would the effort thus to sooth the wounded spirit have proved availing, if made. Constance's aim was rather to suggest adequate grounds for a righteous confidence, and it was her honest conviction that Agatha, if she could only be made to see them, *had* such grounds, and that no government of righteousness could possibly condemn her.

This collision of sentiment between two minds equally solicitous for the truth, but looking at it from different points of view—one with the favouring judgment of affection and charity, the other applying the strict rule by which she anticipated being speedily judged—ended at length in a step which no slight motive could possibly have induced. One of the Christian priests at Lindisfarne had long been celebrated for his success in administering the consolations of the Gospel to anxious consciences: less learned than many of his brethren, and unequal to

them in dialectics, there was none of them superior to him in knowledge of the human heart; and his eminent piety and habits of constant devotion gave to his counsels a point and tenderness never otherwise attainable. Albeit brusque in his address, he never wounded, never except when he perceived, like a skilful physician, that a deeper probe was essential to an effectual cure.

There was, however, no need for much probing in the present case, and no time to be wasted. Although within sight of the well of salvation, the thirsty traveller may die in the wilderness unless the cup be borne at once to her parched lips. Already, indeed, a ray of hope has been kindled by some unseen teacher; the light has touched the mountain top before day has even dawned; beautiful in the distance have been the feet of the messenger, and now his voice is heard: —"Was not God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself? Had not our Redeemer suffered for us,—borne *our* sins in his own body on the tree? Had he not become *sin* for us—entered, in the agony of the garden, into the full consciousness of our guilt? And did he not thus enter into our circumstances, and become commingled with us in our guilty anguish, in order that he might draw us into communion with himself, in his *conscious righteousness?* Agatha was

right in condemning herself for her sins; she could not condemn herself too severely: but she was wrong in forgetting that the redeemed world, entering with Christ into the anguish of penitential sorrow, becomes identified with him also in his righteous acceptableness before God."

Thus, again and again, the good priest reasoned; simplifying his thoughts by apt illustrations, and repeating them until Agatha's earnest mind began to grasp his meaning. Then he left her for awhile, and returned day by day.

And now was witnessed one of those phenomena which prove the truth of Christianity more conclusively than all its external evidences—the demonstrated adaptation of the Gospel to man's moral nature in its higher cravings and requirements. As the bridge tempts onward the eager traveller whose progress has been arrested by the otherwise impassable stream, so the work of Christ educes from the earnest, contrite heart a joyous trust. How rapid the change! How striking the contrast! The voice of mourning changed into the song of triumph; the hurricane into a calm!

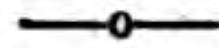
To the mind of Constance, who had intently watched the whole process, the matter was yet wrapped in mystery. The result was undeniable;

but how such a result could have been accomplished by means which appeared to her so inadequate, baffled her conception. Still, whether genuine or illusive, the happy effects upon the mind of the sufferer were quite sufficient to reconcile the mind of Constance to, at least, an approving acquiescence. She tendered to the priest her gratitude, and received with respectful attention his faithful admonitions. There she sat, day after day, by the sufferer's bed, wondering to see how, as Agatha's physical life waned, her moral nature developed to a maturity which seemed to the imagination of Constance approximate to the life of the gods.

As death drew near, Agatha aroused herself for the final struggle. Only an hour before her departure, one of the attendants remarked that she looked more like what she had been in health than had occurred since her illness. Her fine dark eye threw its upward glances to the home of her love; her rich, mellow voice sang, with singular precision and sweetness, a hymn exulting in hope; she lay her head on the bosom of Constance, thanked her for her care, hoped it might be given her to become a guardian angel to the mistress she so devotedly loved, foretold, undoubtingly, a joyous re-union in brighter realms; and as Constance wiped the cold sweat from the

marble brow, and bent to catch the last words which her Agatha now struggled to utter—slowly and distinctly the sounds were breathed amid the deep stillness of that chamber of death—" Jesus—Christ—is—*my*—Redeemer,—in *Him*—I put—*my* trust."

CHAPTER V.



THE action of our tale is now to be transferred to the heart of Mercia; where, until subdued by Oswy, Penda had exercised the powers of government, and the ancient Saxon idolatry had been sustained, to the almost utter exclusion of the Christian faith.

Here the warrior chief Guthred owned extensive territory. His castle—a Roman structure—crowned the summit of a hill which rose up in the midst of a vast basin of rich pasturage, where extensive flocks of sheep and cattle grazed in peaceful seclusion, hemmed in on all sides by a dense forest. A wide, deep, and rapid stream, entering the basin from a higher level, swept half round the hill on which the castle stood; and on that side the ascent from the river's brink to the castle was a long gentle slope. On the other side the rock was precipitous, and at the foot of the precipice stood the large village in which dwelt Guthred's numerous retainers. When

not engaged in war, the inhabitants of this apparently happy valley had little commerce with the world. The river yielded abundance of fish; the boar, the stag, the hare, and other kinds of game, existed around in great plenty; part of the lands were in tillage; the flocks on the pasture lands were eminently productive; and thus all the wants of the population received a varied and unfailing supply.

Nor were the aspects of nature less gratifying to the eye and ear. Numerous song-birds sought here their retreat, each in its season; the meadows and pastures were richly carpeted with wild flowers; in the garden were flowers from other lands, carefully cultivated; and the orchard, white in Spring with blossom, groaned in Autumn beneath its heavily-laden branches. To a spectator from the castle terrace the scene was one of extraordinary enchantment. Field beyond field of ripening grain clothed the sides of the surrounding uplands; and beyond all, like the framework of a picture, was the dense foliage of the forest.

Guthred kept a Pagan priest at the castle; and a rude temple had been constructed out of a cavern in the rock, where the rites of Saxon heathenism were regularly performed. Each day of the week was dedicated to a specific deity, whose names are still

preserved in our weekly calendar; but the principal days were Wednesday, on which homage was paid to Woden, the father of the nation and god of war; and Friday, when service was offered to Friga, the goddess of love. The commencement of the New Year was observed then as at present, with similar customs and festivities. In April there was a religious feast in honour of Eostre, a name retained in our Christian festival of Easter. September, too, was a holy month, for reasons not unlike those which induce our statesmen, lawyers, and literary men to look forward to that period of the year as affording many incentives to recreation and enjoyment. And the ceremonials of Yule, towards the end of December, have left their relics in the yule-log and yule-cakes with which, after our forefathers were Christian, the festival of Christmas became associated.

On these great occasions, the castle of Guthred and the homes of the villagers were crowded with all classes of visitors; and the gathering of flowers and the dance round the May-pole on the first of May peculiarly signalized itself as one of those opportunities when the chieftain and his family mingled familiarly with their dependents, and entered with unrestrained enjoyment into their rustic games. But—as always when the debased passions of human

nature conjure up objects of religious homage—the rites of Saxon worship partook of the gross and lascivious character of the imaginary beings before whose rudely-sculptured images they ignorantly bowed. Their merry-makings terminated always in brutal intemperance; and Friga's feast days were avowedly seasons of licensed indulgence.

The mind of Constance had, at an early period of her life, revolted against the vulgar and sensuous form of her national religion, and she had sought to veil its defects by transforming it into the worship of nature. Habitually absenting herself from the services of the temple, she would recline for hours on the sunny bank of a murmuring stream, investing its motion and music with life, and holding converse with the spirit of the waters; and oft, as she sat with harp in hand, the rocks and hills echoed her rapturous song of praise to that unknown Being whose goodness and power were, as she intuitively felt, in constant operation around her. Obedience to parental command was a prominent feature of her Saxon faith, and the events of her hitherto untroubled life had indicated to her mind no superior obligation. Guthred's slightest word had ever been her law. But ripening circumstances were about to inculcate a new lesson, and give a fresh development to that moral nature

which, though vigorous in its germ, had been as yet but feebly unfolded.

The season had again returned which, by ancient Saxon custom, was devoted to hunting, hawking, and their accompanying festivities; and a numerous party had assembled at Guthred's castle, among whom was Kenwalch, the youthful heir of a neighbouring chieftain. Arrangements had been made for a boar-hunt, and early in the morning the whole male population, with dogs, horses, and weapons, were assembled in the greatest excitement. Constance had often joined in the hazardous chase of the forest, and the circumstances around her kindled her ancient spirit, predisposing her to accept the invitation urged on her by many of the party to accompany them; but some recollections of Agatha crossed like the shadow of a cloud upon her path, and she at the last moment declined, in favour of a day's hawking.

About midday Constance and her female visitors, with others to whom the hazards of the chase had not been sufficiently attractive, were accordingly assembled in front of the castle in eager enjoyment of the royal sport. The bay of the dogs and shouts of the huntsmen had been heard at intervals far away in the forest, but had at length seemed lost in the distance; and the hawking party, having crossed

the draw-bridge, had ascended the uplands, in ignorance that danger was nigh, when suddenly the noise of the chase again arose, and became momentarily more and more distinct. Before they could retreat, the infuriated animal, emerging from the forest, rushed towards them, making directly for Constance; but happily, at the same instant, Kenwalch, seeing at a glance the impending danger, spurred his well-bred courser to the rescue, in a direction diagonal to that of the pursued boar. The moment was critical, and any want of self-possession on the part of Constance would certainly have proved fatal, by diverting the weapon whose effect was her only chance of safety; but, as she looked at the approaching foe with that calm confidence with which she had ever been accustomed to face danger, Kenwalch, launching his spear, pierced it through the heart, and laid it crouching at her feet. The next moment, Kenwalch was dismounted and at her side; and the crowd of assembling sportsmen soon dissipating all alarm, the excitement of extreme peril was speedily turned into an occasion for a wild uproar of vociferous triumph.

Although Constance gave frequent and fervent expression to her gratitude, she eluded all conversation with Kenwalch in the absence of others. Her manner became less cheerful, her countenance more

anxious; and it was evident that her mind had become the prey of conflicting emotions. Guthred marked the peculiarities of his daughter's demeanour, and considering the time opportune for announcing his wishes, he summoned her to his presence.

Guthred had been for some years a widower; Constance had no sister; and at this interview, on which the earthly happiness of each so much depended, neither of them had a friend with whom to take counsel, or blunt the sharpness of the onset: they were alone. For several minutes, the conversation was wholly on the part of Guthred. He stated his wishes, assigned his reasons, and expected a prompt and obedient compliance. Never before had this been denied him; and never before had he made a request which seemed to him not only so reasonable, but so thoroughly conducive to his daughter's happiness, and so likely to be identical with her own inclinations. Now, for the first time, however, his purposes respecting her future life were to be decisively opposed. Although fixed in her resolve, Constance delayed to speak as long as she could, and until her answer had been repeatedly demanded; at length she replied, calmly but firmly,—"I cannot, father; Kenwalch is a heathen; I am a Christian."

"A Christian!" shouted Guthred, starting to his feet, and instinctively laying his hand upon the hilt of his weapon,—"A Christian! Sooner than any daughter of mine should disgrace her blood by becoming a Christian, I would pierce my sword through her heart."

"I court not death, father!" meekly answered Constance. "But have you not taught me, both by precept and example, rather to sacrifice life than honour?"

Guthred.—"Honour! honour! to talk of honour, and become a Christian! Is it honourable to apostatize, to forsake the religion of your ancestors, to profane your mother's memory, to disobey your father? Am I to be told that I love falsehood and believe a lie? And when so bearded by my own child, does she justify herself under a plea of honour?"

Constance (timidly).—"I mean, that what I believe I ought to avow: and that to be a Christian, and not confess it, would be an act of dishonour."

Guthred.—"What sort of a religion must that be which teaches daughters to disobey their fathers?"

Constance.—"Oh, father! Christianity inculcates obedience to parents; but it teaches us, also, that we are to obey God rather than man."

Guthred.—"And how are you to know what the gods require, except through my lips?"

Constance.—"My conscience teaches me otherwise, father. It teaches me to love and revere you, which I do most sincerely; and in anything not affecting my higher duties I am most anxious to do your pleasure. It teaches me, also, to revere the memory of my mother; and although she died in the religion of Woden, I remember many beautiful lessons she taught me, that seem much more like the religion of Jesus. But my conscience teaches me, also, that parents may err in their precepts, and then I must not obey."

"Constance," said Guthred, under an excitement restrained and subdued, but with a voice significantly determined,—"It is my will that you should not be a Christian; and further, that you become Kenwalch's wife,—a man in every respect worthy of Mercia's noblest daughter."

Constance.—"Father! God has made me a Christian, and I cannot alter his decree. The falsehood of the religion of Woden compels me to disown it: it is not true to the instincts of my heart. In Christianity I see a system to which my whole moral nature gives a cordial response; and I believe it, because I cannot help but believe that which my soul and conscience

recognize, any more than I can help believing what my eyes see, or my ears hear."

Guthred.—"Constance, my child, deny me not this one thing. Christian or no Christian, you must become Kenwalch's wife. My honour is at stake. I have promised it."

Constance (weeping).—"Father, spare me! My heart is engaged as well as my conscience. Benedict is a Christian, and I love him. And were it otherwise, how could I, being a Christian, deliberately give my whole heart to one who differs from me in matters of the highest interest, and with whom, therefore, I could have no companionship!"

While Constance, in the retirement of her chamber, spent successive days and nights in weeping and prayer, a scene was being enacted in the village, in striking contrast. A stage had been erected, on which two Gleemen, dressed in parti-coloured costume, were rivalling each other in songs and tales, riddles and banter; concealing beneath this disguise their true character of political emissaries, sent by the Mercian chiefs to arouse Guthred and his retainers against Northumbria, to which state Mercia had been recently—*i.e.* in 655—brought into temporary subjection.

"Why," asked the first Gleeman, "is the boar

that attacked the Lady Constance, like the hunter that speared him?"

Second Gleeman.—"The answer to that may be easily divined; but the hunter has had his heart doubly transfixed, and lies bleeding at the feet of two mistresses."

1st Gl.—"Two: and which loves he best?"

2nd Gl.—"Which ought he, but the one that loves him best?"

1st Gl.—"Wiser, if so, than some men I know."

2nd Gl.—"Speakest thou from experience, friend?"

1st Gl.—"Sirrah! experience is wisdom after the fact—shutting the stable door after the steed is stolen: whereas, I speak wisdom before the fact. Why, then, ask if I speak from experience?"

2nd Gl.—"I did not heed that thou speakest wisdom before the fact."

1st Gl.—"Then heed it now, comrade! Wisdom foresees danger and——"

2nd Gl.—"—— flees from it."

1st Gl.—"Kenwalch flee from danger? Never! never!"

2nd Gl.—"Thou overtakest me too sharply, friend; thy tongue running faster than thy wits! He who sues a mistress, and that mistress not his country——"

1st Gl.—"Nay now, comrade! if he love her most that loves him most, who can that be but his country?"

Upon this there arose from the crowd, which had gathered, a murmur of approval: and Kenwalch, who was seen at that moment approaching, was greeted with loud and long-continued plaudits.

1st Gl.—"I once knew a noble oak, green to its topmost bough; but I passed it the day after a storm, and its trunk was riven, its branches drooped, its leaves withered."

2nd Gl.—"And I once knew a magnificent eagle; but the cruel archer winged his shaft, and the eagle lies in his eyrie wounded and bleeding."

1st Gl.—"Yet around that blighted oak the ivy clung——"

2nd Gl.—"—— like the hearts of true Saxons to their fatherland."

1st Gl.—"Alas! thou speakest only of what once was: once Saxons loved their religion and their country, but now their gods are overthrown and——

A tumultuous burst of disapprobation checked the speaker, who, with ready tact, changed his course, and exclaimed passionately,—"Yes, Guthred, I know, like the wounded eagle, loves as his own

heart's blood his gory nestlings! Guthred! Guthred! Mercia calls for her Guthred!"

As the last words were being uttered by the first Gleeman, the second joined in the cry, both looking up to the chamber window where Guthred had been observed; and, as he again approached to acknowledge the appeal, an enthusiastic shout from the whole assembly welcomed the old warrior. Not very long after, he was seen, with Kenwalch and his other visitors, mingling freely in the throng.

1st Gl. (addressing his fellow).—"I will propound to thee a riddle. Religion is peace. Our priests are forbidden to handle hostile weapons; they ride no quadruped except a mare, because the stallion is warlike; and if a lance be thrown into the temple, the temple is desecrated. Why, then, are all true followers of Woden men of war?"

2nd Gl.—"I will propound to thee another. The followers of Christ fight as fiercely as those of Woden; yet they say Christ is the King of Peace. Why do these two religions, that both say they are born of peace, fight with each other—yea, fight for the mastery?"

Both Gl.—"Strange! strange! passing strange! but true as strange: out of religion comes strife; out of successful strife, greatness. Nothing is great

without a struggle: men of peace are but swaddled babes; the world's heroes are its gods."

1*st Gl.*—"And now tell us, comrade, a tale of the olden times, such as I have heard thee tell afore in the pale moonlight to many a wondering crowd; a tale of some white ghost wandering on the hill, or of fairies dancing by the stream, or of witches murdering by their spells. Hark, good people, how the owls moan—how the wolves howl! Gather close around. Let the women and the children come inside, the men without; and if a wolf, or witch, or ghost be seen, shout an alarm!"

Thus appealed to, the hearers marshalled themselves as directed, and waited for the promised tale. Meanwhile, the gleemen sang a wild, plaintive air, about a peasant having been, once on a time, surrounded on a common by terrible elves, who threw him into a bog, beat him with sharp-thorned switches, rolled him over rough stones, and so punished and terrified him that he was found lying at his cottage-door early next morning half dead. The piteous cries of the persecuted peasant were imitated in song so successfully, and the scenes he had passed through were described with such graphic freshness, that it awoke in the crowd all their vivid apprehensions of the supernatural, and prepared

them to see beings other than human in the objects around them. The moon had risen high in the heavens, and was shedding her strange fascination over the landscape. Spectral forms sported in the river, skimmed over the fields, lay hid in the copse, and seemed waiting everywhere for nothing but a talismanic stroke of pictorial eloquence to make them distinctly visible. The Gleeman added to the effect by a prolonged wail from his lyre, and then began his tale:—

"Far back in the history of our nation, the famous warrior Vigmund had a beautiful daughter, named Brynhilda, who was sought in marriage by the brave Redulf. But Redulf wooed in vain. A man of nobler birth and mien was rarely to be met with. And he was young as well as handsome, and rich as he was noble. Yet, with all these accomplishments, Redulf was an unsuccessful lover.

"Vigmund lamented the obstinacy of his daughter, and used all the threats and entreaties he could think of to conquer her. Sometimes he would tell her of Tilphosa, her mother, who had gone to the Valhalla, and, in the halls and gardens of the gods and goddesses of the great Saxon people, was now reaping the reward of her virtue. Tilphosa had obeyed her father when Vigmund asked her hand. Tilphosa

had loved her husband, and been a faithful and kind wife and mother. Tilphosa had had many sons, some of whom had died in battle, fighting for their hearths and homes. They had gone to the feast of Valhalla; and Vigmund's home was now desolate. There was none but Brynhilda to welcome the old hero and his remaining son when they returned from the toils of war. But Brynhilda was not like her mother—more beautiful, but not so good.

"After much sorrow and vexation, Vigmund consulted Eanbald, the principal priest of his tribe. And on examining the entrails of the sacrifice, Eanbald pronounced Brynhilda bewitched—led captive by a strange and terrible spell. 'Watch,' said Eanbald, 'till the midnight hour; and if Brynhilda then leave her chamber, follow her!'

"Follow her they did, over hill and dale, as fast as the fleetest horses could carry them; and after a hot pursuit of several hours, they saw her descend into a glen where the fairies were used to meet. Here they paused, afraid to go further. The night was dark, but starlight, and the northern streamers, that gleam when the star dust is swept from Valhalla after an assembly of the gods, were that night extremely brilliant: so that, standing on the verge of the dell, they could distinctly see the lawn

below. There a thousand fairy forms danced round the queenly Brynhilda, who, standing in the midst of the enchanted circle, held mysterious converse with the Witch Zulma. While busy with their horrid incantations, the cock crew, and in an instant the whole scene vanished; and although the messengers galloped their horses back to the castle at their utmost speed, Brynhilda was found by them, on their arrival, already in her chamber.

"Eanbald now advised that the spell could only be broken by Redulf doing some great and daring actions; and that Brynhilda must be consecrated by her father and her lover to the God Thor. To the mighty Thunderer she was accordingly devoted, with solemn vows and offerings; and thenceforward it was the business of Redulf's life to win for Brynhilda the favour of the god.

"Far away in the north, in the ice regions, lived the evil Giant Faul. Faul had shut up in his ice cave a nation once free; and almost frozen to death in their galling slavery, they longed for a deliverer. Thither Redulf directed his steps. Fifty days Redulf travelled due north, until the sweat from his brow froze as it fell, and hung in icicles upon his beard and whiskers. Arrived at the end of his journey, he found the giant thrusting his prisoners deeper into

their dungeon. Redulf demanded of them to arise, and strike a blow for their freedom. Feebly and slowly they arose, but waxing warm in fight, a terrible battle ensued. Unable to reach the giant's trunk with his sword, Redulf sought a vantage ground, whence, hurling his spear, it pierced the giant's heart, Redulf exclaiming, as Faul fell, 'Thus let all the tyrants of the earth perish!' "

As the Gleeman uttered the last sentence with a significant and impassioned emphasis, his hearers long and loudly clapped and vociferated their approval, showing that they had caught his meaning,—that it was not of far-off fabulous tyrants he spake, but of oppressors nearer home. The Gleeman continued:—

"The next enemy that Redulf attacked was a serpent. At night it had its abode on a hill, around which it wrapped itself in numerous folds, and slept. But every morning it laid waste the country, drinking all the milk out of the dairies, and devouring the poultry and sheep. Redulf put on a coat studded with knives, and thus armed, gave battle to the beast. Thinking to crush him to death, it wrapped itself around him, and in the act of attempting to destroy Redulf, destroyed itself.

"Redulf had still another work to perform, ere he earned his promised reward; and this was the greatest

work of all. To accomplish it, he had to go down a deep pit to the castle of the famous Giantess Hel, the mother of mischief and misery. All the way as he went he was assailed by witches and wicked elves, and that dreadful dog Cerberus growled fearfully as he passed. Reaching the gate at last, Redulf knocked and demanded admission, whereupon Hel, looking down from the top of the castle, scoffingly asked his business. Redulf replied, 'To set your captives free.' 'They want no freedom,' retorted Hel; 'they love their chains: begone!' Redulf, however, knocked again, and, as he continued knocking, the door was suddenly thrown open, and out rushed several of the captives; but instead of helping Redulf to secure their liberation, they rated him roundly for disturbing them, and threatened to knock him down with their chains. One only, more miserable than the rest, held out his chained arms and begged Redulf to free him, which was done; thereupon others, observing their fellow captive free, wished to be free too. Hel, seeing what was about to happen, came then swiftly down upon them, and made a desperate effort to reclose the door. But such as had got rid of their chains now helped the rest; and Redulf, calling aloud to all that were ready to follow him, waved his triumphant banner, and led their escape.

"Having accomplished three great actions, Redulf claimed from Thor the fulfilment of his promise.

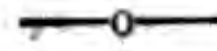
"Again Brynhilda was seen to leave her chamber at the midnight hour. But Redulf, on this occasion, followed her alone. Slowly she tracked her way over the fields and through the forest, clothed in white, bridal white, as if arrayed for her bridal hour. All around, spectres were walking, in the same direction, to the appointed place of meeting. Redulf, brave as he was, trembled. Beings of flesh and blood he never feared; but these unearthly wanderers, with pallid looks and piercing eyes . . .! this felt nearness of the spirit-world filled him with awe. On, on, Brynhilda went, and on he followed, but instead this time of descending into a glen, the witches held their revels in the open field. Redulf's blood chilled when he beheld the scene. Witches, spectres, fairies, elves, all orders of the supernatural world from all nations were gathered—a grand festival. Then came the giddy dance, the rapid whirl, the wild laugh, the unworld-like shriek: Redulf's heart beat tumultuously, and in his fear he instinctively raised his prayer to the mighty Thor, that he would come and claim his own. Hitherto the horned moon had shone brightly on the landscape, and the stars twinkling added to the night's

witchery; but on a sudden the heavens lowered, the gathering clouds became foreboding and angry, and Thor, the mighty, lifting up his voice in the thunder, spoke as only a god can speak. The flames darted. He spoke again and again, more and more terribly. Brynhilda looked up alarmed and inquiringly. The presence of the god flashed upon her. Instantly the spell was broken,—and seeing Redulf, she rushed to him with all the ardour of a reciprocated holy passion. But, just as Redulf and Brynhilda became locked in each other's arms and pressed each other's lips, Thor claimed his own. His voice pealing with more terrific power, the bolt descended on the very spot where Redulf and Brynhilda stood, and the mark on the forehead of each—the print of the celestial fire—showed that Thor had, at that instant, sealed them both as his own.

"The moon had set ere the storm ceased, and the clouds swiftly vanished; then the stars came forth in unwonted splendour; and that night there was seen, for the first time, yon starry way across the heavens, along which our slain warriors are conveyed to Valhalla. Thor made it,—Thor, the god of fire and thunder and light,—to be Redulf and Brynhilda's bridal pathway, when he led them along it, through the host of gazing stars, to the seat of the gods."

1st Gl.—"Thanks, comrade! I hear on the night breeze the din of coming battle. When Guthred shall call you again to arms, arise ye, ye men of Mercia! Why does Mercia bear the yoke of Northumbria? Where is Wulfhere, the son of Penda? Grasp your spears! to arms! to arms! and throw off the yoke of the oppressor! Remember Redulf! Social evils are by exposure made to cure themselves, and the tyranny of bad passions is to be evaded and fled from; but he who would deliver a nation from thrall, must remember Redulf and the Giant Faul!"

CHAPTER VI.



At an early age Benedict had attained to a distinguished position in the court of Oswy; and Oswy's two sons, Ecgfrid and Alcfrid, had been entrusted to his charge. Unable, however, to control, or silently to witness, the deeds of cruelty and perfidy perpetrated by his sovereign, and especially in ordering the death of Oswin, he had retired from court under Oswy's displeasure; and disappointed also in his hope of a union with Constance, he now, with a stricken heart, devoted himself to study and religion.

After two journeys to Rome and frequent visits to foreign seats of learning, he took up his residence at Lerines, a small island on the coast of Provence, in a celebrated monastery which had been founded in the fourth century by St. Honoratus. Here he took the clerical tonsure, and, in accordance with his vows, practised the austere exercises of the cloister; preparing himself, by his own obedience to rule, for the

sphere of construction and government which his aspirations already indicated to be his future destiny.

It was after Constans II had paid his unwelcome visit to the forsaken capital of a divided empire that Benedict, for the third time, hastened to proffer to Rome his undiminished devotion. Sympathizing with Vitalian in the profound sense of degradation felt by the head of the church when his seat of ecclesiastical government was robbed of its principal ornaments to deck the emperor's residence at Syracuse, the result was only to inspire our heroic monk with a more ardent veneration.

Vitalian also about this time had had a controversy with Maurus, archbishop of Ravenna, who refused to acknowledge the pontiff's supremacy. On an appeal to Constans, Maurus's contumacy was justified, and Vitalian was smarting under the defeat when Benedict was admitted to his first interview.

Casting himself at the feet of his Holiness, "Most reverend father," exclaimed this obedient son of the Church, "Britain recognizes in Christian Rome, however barbarously dismantled, a glory greater than that which distinguished her proudest days of Paganism. The unity which Ravenna repels, Britain seeks. Sent by Egbert, king of Kent, and Oswy, king of Northumberland—who in age seeks to repair

the errors of his youth,—Wighard is now on his voyage hither, to ask that your Holiness will be pleased to confirm him in the archiepiscopal chair to which he has been nominated."

"It is well, my son," was the bland reply; "we will converse with Wighard on his arrival. Gladly have we learnt the attempts made in Britain towards the healing of her ecclesiastical differences. Our faithful presbyter, Wilfred, sent us a full report of his public dispute with the Scottish Colman, before King Oswy and his noble son Alcfrid. We rejoice in the movement, but great prudence is necessary. One free from local prejudice, and well acquainted with the customs of both the eastern and western churches, might have been able to hold with a juster equilibrium the scales of difference. Yet Wighard may, we hope, possess these qualities."

Whatever the cause, Wighard was detained longer in Rome than, if already fitted for his office, would have been necessary; and during this interval of detention, the plague having visited the city, England's intended primate became one of its numerous victims. Thereupon, the dignity was conferred on Theodore.

Theodore, the first and confessedly one of the greatest of England's primates, was a native of

Tarsus, the city illustrious as the birth-place of St. Paul. Of Greek parentage and great learning, he was well acquainted with the ancient systems of philosophy, as well as with the sacred scriptures and the Church's dogmas.* Besides Benedict, Theodore had for his fellow voyagers to England the Abbot Adrian and, during the first part of the journey, an ecclesiastic destined for the court of France, named Ulric.

Ulric had imbibed the sentiments of the British heretic Pelagius, and his controversies with Theodore in the course of the voyage were frequent and passionate.

"How," said he, "can it be possible that the guilt of Adam should be imputed to his posterity? Such a notion is an impious impugning of the Divine justice. Injustice cannot make itself more palpable than when it punishes one for the crime of another."

"And yet," replied Theodore, "we see in daily life numerous instances in which the events of Providence develop the very thing you denounce as palpably unjust. Do not children suffer for the vices of their parents, bringing with them into the world a diseased constitution, as to the parental origin of which there

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* Note A (3).

can be no room for dispute? And in wars provoked by rapine and wrong, the avenging sword, as it spreads desolation through the land, never stays to distinguish between the innocent and the guilty. Nay, oft, as all history testifies, the guilty escape while the innocent perish."

Ulric.—"That may be; but in the instances you put, the guilty and innocent are bound up in inseparable relationships. It is as when the hand of the thief steals and his back suffers for the crime which his hand alone committed. Here the back and the hand are but two parts of the same person; they have no separate, individual, and independent existence."

Theodore.—"The members of the same body are not more truly united in one than are the members of the same family or of the same body politic. Is not this clearly indicated by that mutual sympathy which unites each to all, if not in the precise sense in which the members of the body sympathize, in a sense strictly analogous? A limb suffers, and the whole frame suffers with it; so a child is in an agony of pain—do not the parents and all the other members of the family share its agony? and so through all the more distant relations of life, though in a less acute degree. Wherever there is mutual sympathy there

is union, and wherever there is union there is ideal oneness."

"But there is no sympathy in the human mind with sin," growled Ulric. "Why talk of sympathy with suffering when the question is one of partnership in guilt?"

"Yet the questions," said Theodore, softly, "which you thus attempt to sever are, in my mind, but one question. Suffering is the punishment of guilt; consequently, wherever suffering is, guilt is. We all know, by painful experience, to what extent we are mixed up with the sufferings of the world; but the manner in which we are mixed up with the guilt of the world is apparent to those only whose consciences are well educated.

"Who will venture to deny that a great portion of the crime we witness is the natural—I had almost said inevitable—growth of social circumstances? If, then, we contribute to the creation of those circumstances, do we not share in the guilt that grows out of them? If I starve my servant until he is compelled to steal, to quiet the ravages of hunger, am I not a partner in his theft; and if by my avarice and exorbitant wealth thousands are impoverished, and through the temptations of poverty become criminal, am I not—remotely it may be, but, nevertheless,

inextricably—inculpated in their acts? In fact, if we will but be honest with our own consciences, public criminals do no more than give form and expression to the public depravity: they are the blossoms of a bad tree, the flash from a cloud charged with the accretions of general wickedness."

The ship had passed to the north of the island of Corsica, and, with a strong breeze from the north-west, she could barely lay her course for Marseilles. Theodore and Ulric were still in earnest conversation, when one of the crew on the look out reported, "A pirate! a pirate!"

"Helm a starboard!" shouted the captain.

No sooner was the command given than it was promptly obeyed. Within a few minutes afterwards the sails were trimmed to suit the altered course of the vessel; and before the passengers were thoroughly aware of the occasion for the manœuvre, she was bearing away before the wind, with all sails set, like the flight of the albatross. But, notwithstanding her utmost efforts, the pirate gained upon her. Unfortunately, the moon was at the full, so that they were deprived of the hope of eluding their pursuer in the darkness; and after a chase of ten hours the vessel was boarded and taken. When, however, all on board were prepared for instant

death, or, at best, perpetual slavery, an incident occurred which dissipated their alarm, and of which the motive, then hid in inscrutable mystery, will hereafter appear.

Approaching his captives, Cearl, for that was the name of the pirate commander, perceived by their costume that they were ecclesiastics. Muttering a curse against them and all others of the same profession, he demanded to know their names, destination, and business. Learning that Theodore was destined for Britain, and that he had been appointed to be Britain's primate, Cearl made various inquiries evincing great interest in the appointment; and then, without assigning any reason, or suggesting more than that all on board owed their lives and liberty to Theodore, he gruffly bid them a sullen adieu and retired, like a tiger robbed of his prey.

On resuming their colloquial intercourse, Theodore, whose mind was quick in evolving principles out of their concrete wrappings, adverted to the incident as embodying truths of high import. "Hitherto," said he, "we have discoursed of man's fall, and my design has been to show that mankind are so mixed up one with the other, and so entangled in their relationships, that what appears to be exclusively the guilt of one is but the formal expression of the guilt of all. But

this topic has its counterpart.. What is true of human guilt is equally true of human redemption. Why does Ulric say that to impute one man's righteousness to others is absurd? Have you not just witnessed an instance in which, for some mysterious reason unknown to us, you all owe your lives and liberties to your fortuitous association with my mission? The pirate has dealt with us not as many persons, but as one. He saw in this vessel and its captain, passengers and crew, only England's primate. Let this ship represent the world, and its crew and passengers the world's population; if the one be redeemed from slavery and death through its union with me, why not the other through its union with Christ?" *

The voyagers, landing at Marseilles, travelled through France to St. Quentin, where Theodore and Benedict again embarked, accompanied by Redfrid, King Egbert's prefect, whom Egbert had sent to meet and conduct them to England.

"The stars, though numberless in their separate glory, form one galaxy of beauty, and shed a common light on this dark waste of waters."

Thus discoursed Theodore, as he and his two com-

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* Note A (4).

panions walked the deck of their vessel on a clear, cloudless, starlight night. The sea was calm, the breeze favourable; all sails were set, and the bark was gliding swiftly on her course. It was one of those deeply-tranquil hours, those moments of intense stillness, which can never be realized except upon the mountain or the ocean.

"This ship," continued Theodore, "has unity—oneness.* Although consisting of a great many parts—timbers, planks, bolts, masts, rigging, sails, ropes—all these form the materials and appurtenances of but one ship. A damaged plank may sink her, just as every sin of every separate sinner is quite mischief enough to sink a world. And of all this ship's passengers and crew, there is one only—the captain—that can manage and direct her movements amid the storms and intricacies of the voyage."

The vessel was now approaching the Isle of Thanet. The pilot was already on board, and boats lay to, near the shore, filled with priests and laymen, waiting to give their long-expected primate a hearty Saxon welcome. King Egbert, awaiting his arrival, saluted him on landing, and fervently wished him and his great mission "God speed!"

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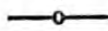
* Note A (5).

CHAPTER VII.



In a bower, in the garden of the Abbey of Coldingham, sat a female, arrayed in the costume of the order, reading a letter which had just been handed to her. To a mouth, nose, chin, and contour of features in the highest style of classic beauty, were added a complexion of rich and delicate hue, dark hazel eyes, black hair and eyebrows, long and finely fringed black eyelashes, and a countenance thoughtful, intelligent, and strongly expressive of a noble frankness and of great warmth of affection. Her fulness of form indicated that her age was that of ripe womanhood, and her movements and style of conversation showed that her earlier life had been spent in intercourse with the world, and in circles of courtly elegance.

After finishing her reading, she rested her head upon her hand in an attitude of earnest thoughtful-

ness, and, despite her efforts at self-restraint, a few tears trickled along her fingers.

Another female now moved across the lawn, of more advanced age. This was St. Ebba, the foundress of the convent, and a princess of the royal house of Northumbria. As she approached, the nun rose and presented to her the letter, which Ebba sat down to read, the nun also seating herself beside her.

"And why those tears, my daughter?" asked Ebba, having read, and returning the document. "The project is noble, and the prospect of success most flattering."

"But I am not present with him, to assist in his toils and share his joy."

"Nor would your presence be valuable. The cares of domestic life ill accord with the prosecution of such self-denying schemes."

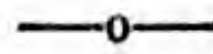
"I could fancy otherwise. True, you say marriage is not the ultimate design of life, nor of love. A love that denies to itself the society of its object, in order that loftier aims may be accomplished, is, as you have taught me, the highest form of this heaven-born passion."

"And yet," observed Ebba, "these views, however just, are seldom practically adopted, except through necessity. Providence controls our wishes.

You sought refuge here, because your father refused his consent to the only marriage which your heart and conscience approved. My choice of a conventual life arose from a marriage being urged upon me, with the Scottish King Edan, which, although deemed politic and splendid, my heart and conscience wholly disapproved. In my case, it was the quenching of earthly love: in yours, it is its purification."

"Yes!" mused the nun, "its purification! Our only converse is epistolary and mental. We meet at the same footstool in our hours of devotion. We read the same books; consult with each other on our plans and purposes; seek to provoke each other to works of piety and benevolence; aspire after a complete victory over self, and a perfect union with God; and in this union to find our highest felicity and the consummate blending of our souls on earth, preparatory to our translation to that heaven where kindred spirits live in love for ever."

CHAPTER VIII.



SIGFRID and his sister Bertha had been strictly educated in the principles of Bishop Aidan. They were accustomed to narrate the oft-repeated tales of Eric, their grandsire, about the laborious bishop and the mighty King Oswald, who oft accompanied Aidan in his pedestrian excursions through the country, and stood by him as his interpreter, when, under the shade of some venerable oak, the Celtic Christian bishop proclaimed to his Saxon Pagan hearers the message of salvation.

A wood-built house, on an elevated site near the Tyne, had, as we have said, been the abode of their ancestry—a fabric such as were then the usual dwellings of persons of gentle blood; and here, after the death of Eric, and the premature departure of beings whom they had adored with more than filial reverence, Sigfrid and Bertha employed themselves in the prudent husbanding of

their resources and the management of their small heritage, practising the virtues of the religion they professed with an unwearying diligence that, by the multifariousness of little acts, rather than by the striking few, secured to them a graceful renown. Huntsmen, as they tracked the hare, the hart, the wolf, or the boar, through the fens and forests of Northumbria, would oft turn aside to enjoy the hospitality of the beauteous Saxon maid. The pilgrim, ever a welcome guest, travelling from monastery to monastery, was wont to strike out his route so that he might pass by the far-famed home of Sigfrid and Bertha, and reach it by nightfall. Even the marauding bands that set religion and law at defiance respected the persons and property of those who were everywhere known as the friends of the needy. And yet, although in all cases of real distress their charities were unfailing, every attempt at imposition was rigorously investigated and sternly repulsed. "I had rather travel six long Saxon miles," was Bertha's common remark, "to examine into the truth of a tale of woe, than give one farthing to deception and falsehood. The evil is not so much in the wasting of money, as in the encouragement which a thoughtless beneficence gives to vile hypocrisy."

The arrival of Benedict Biscop, his interview with Ecgfrid, and the news of his intention to refound and enlarge good Bishop Aidan's old monastery, had spread with extraordinary rapidity, not only throughout Northumbria, but throughout the neighbouring kingdoms also of Mercia and East Anglia. Already had upwards of two hundred persons asked to be received as inmates. The existing erections, however, being incapable of accommodating more than a very small fraction of that number, their urgent applications were necessarily delayed. Among if not the earliest, certainly not the least important of those applications was one from Sigfrid. He had entertained the thought for some time; but it was not until Benedict and his architectural adviser had been Sigfrid's frequent guests, that Sigfrid saw enough to satisfy him that the last link might now be broken which, as he began to feel, enslaved him to earth.

It was in an afternoon of the month of May, when the chill easterly breezes had ceased, that give so pernicious an inequality to the climate of the district during the earlier months of spring. The lambs were in the pastures; the northern song-birds warbled competitively their distinctive notes; the declining sun had begun to redden the fleecy clouds;

and on a bright western horizon were seen, some miles distant, the hills beneath which Pons Ælii hid its glorious Roman memories. Towards the east, the German Ocean spread out its dark blue waters in sullen grandeur, a tiny bark here and there gliding with elfin stealth and silvery sails. Around the window the honey-suckle and jessamine shed their sweet perfume; beneath the open trellis was a bed of roses and sweetbriar; the fruit-trees were rich in blossom, the hawthorn gay, and among clumps of shrubs, tastefully arranged and carefully trimmed, the heavily-laden flower-branches of the laburnum and lilac blended their well associated beauties.

Sigfrid and Bertha sat at opposite ends of an elevated bench or settle, placed in front of the window, and ornamented at each extremity with carved heads of the griffin, the Saxon national emblem. Bertha had laid aside her harp, but both still felt the witchery of its heavenly tones. They had, with its accompaniment, sung together a metrical version, by Cœdmon, of the Apocalyptic vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, and some minutes elapsed after the psalm had ceased before either felt disposed to break the silence. At length, Sigfrid broached the theme on which he had long been pondering.

"A monastic life," said he, "would enable me to throw aside all secular cares, and apply myself wholly to devotion and study.

Bertha.—"True! yet the characters that have exerted most influence on the world have not been formed in seclusion."

Sigfrid.—"Say, rather, the characters most famous in the world. They are not always the most influential who attract the most attention. The noiseless, gentle rain descending continuously penetrates the parched soil better than the short pattering shower."

Bertha.—"But how can you discharge your duty to society when shut up in a monastery?"

Sigfrid.—"Why not? In the combinations of ecclesiastical life, individual energy gathers accumulated strength."

Bertha.—"That is, if they agree and work together harmoniously. But how, if they disagree? how, if brought into daily collision with the vain, the unspiritual, the ambitious, and worldly?"

Sigfrid was silent, and, after a pause, Bertha continued—"Much no doubt depends upon constitutional temperament. For my part, having been ever accustomed to the bustling activities of domestic life, I should find no proper sphere in a convent.

Yet, it does not surprise me, Sigfrid, that you feel otherwise disposed. Your delicate health has fostered in you a recluse tendency."

Sigfrid.—"Possibly, Bertha, there is another reason why I should take the step I contemplate, that has not much to do with my delicate health."

"And what is that?" replied Bertha, the deep blush colouring her fair cheeks, and her mild blue eyes fixing their eager gaze on her laughing brother, as if trying to divine the extent to which the secret feelings of her heart had been explored.

"If," she added, "there is anything relating to me, Sigfrid, which could make you leave the home of our childhood, abandon, I pray you, the thought for ever. The sisters of Bethany had not a brother more deserving of sisterly care."

Sigfrid.—"Nor could Lazarus boast of a sister more anxiously considerate than mine. And yet, Bertha, nothing in this world would give me greater pleasure than the event to which, if you will permit me, I will more plainly refer."

Bertha.—"Not to-night, Sigfrid:" adding half jocularly, "it is too serious a matter for so joyous an hour."

Twilight shed its departing rays upon two kindred hearts, which the associations of early days of un-

mingled bliss had knit together in irrefragable union. The stars listened to them as they spake of those who were in heaven, far away, whence the stars borrow their brightness. The gloom had deepened thick by the time they returned from their walk, emblematic of the gravity now mantling their thoughts. Assembling the household for their evening devotions, their hymn of praise was heard afar. The passing traveller stayed to listen; for Bertha's harp, like an angel on the wing, swept rapture through the balmy air. Their prayers ascended. And Sigfrid and Bertha, retiring to their chambers, on their straw platted pillows sought repose.

A few months afterwards, towards the close of an extremely hot day, in the beginning of the ensuing autumn, Bassano was seen wending his way in the direction of the home of Sigfrid and Bertha.

The sickles of the harvest field were in active operation. Whatever changes time has made in the more complicated mechanisms by which modern science has sought to accumulate power, the sickle, the scythe, the spade, and other simple instruments used then and still by the hand in direct application of individual strength and dexterity have

retained their primitive shapes with surprising exactness. Except that oxen were employed in the field instead of horses, and hereditary bondsmen instead of free labour, the harvest of the seventh century presented in Northumbria an aspect in no material respects different from that with which we are ourselves familiar.

According to Anglo-Saxon custom, Bassano on entering the house was conducted to a suitable apartment, and tepid water supplied in which to bathe and wash his feet and hands. The continental practice of salutation was observed. And in contrast with the manners of Eastern life, the sexes then as now mingled at the festive board. Bertha was arrayed in a silk tunic with embroidered cuffs, and her head wrapped in a silk hood. Her hand, as well as that of their guest, was ornamented with a ring.

Around the banquet-room were stretched beautiful specimens of domestic tapestry; and in the middle was an oval table, at which were placed three chairs resembling in form the modern camp-stool. The table was covered with a cloth, which Bertha's diligent needle had richly embroidered. It extended nearly down to the floor, and was designed to be used both for table-cloth and nap-

kin. Forks were absent, but there were knives, spoons, bowls, and dishes, the common drinking-horn, and on this festive occasion a silver wine-cup. For the evening meal, as well as for that of the morning, it was usual to provide plentifully of animal food, fish, and game; but, instead of being placed upon the table in a dish, they were presented by the attendants to each guest upon a long fork or spit. With regard to condiments, there was salt in abundance from the neighbouring salt-pans. Pepper, too, was served, but as a rare and expensive product.

The cup was passed round, and after the meal was finished the hands were laved: then the harp was introduced, on which Bertha, Sigfrid, and their guest played alternately, the music being accompanied with a psalm or song. The hours had glided swiftly in pleasing converse. Night had darkened the landscape; and the pendant lamp was lighted. Gradually, the controversial spirit kindled; and Bertha sat, with her embroidery before her, a silent but deeply interested listener, as the theological fencers crossed their weapons.

"And so," began Bassano, "this great and good Bishop Aidan of yours, Sigfrid, of whom you oft speak in terms so laudatory, was in truth a schismatic."

"Not so," replied Sigfrid, with evident chagrin, "if by a schismatic you mean one who is separated from the *true* Church."

Bassano.—"And what mean you by the *true* Church? I know of only one true Church—our holy mother of Rome."

Sigfrid.—"We agree that Rome is, at least, a part of the true Church. But the difference between us is not merely one of nomenclature. It is not Rome or Iona, the Eastern Church or the Western. The question is, who are the individuals that make up the common life of the Church—those who are combined conventionally, or those who are combined morally?"

Bassano.—"The Catholic Church consists of baptized Christians, united together by their common observance of the Church's rites."

Sigfrid.—"I grant you that the Catholic Church is an union of Christians, and that they are or ought to be baptized, and should observe the Church's rites. But I deny that the observance of aught conventional is the principle of their union. The principle of their union is moral sympathy and resemblance."

Bassano.—"And do not the ordinances of the Church induce the moral resemblance you speak

of ? Men can be made virtuous in no other way than by the Church putting virtue into them."

Sigfrid.—"Say, rather, that they are to be made virtuous by evoking virtue out of them."

Bassano.—"But unless the regenerating principle be first put into human nature, virtue cannot come out of it."

Sigfrid.—"Is not the regenerating principle indigenous to humanity ?"

Bassano.—"Nay ! As the great Augustin teaches, there is nothing in man by nature but sin."

Sigfrid.—"True ! sin predominates. Yet if we had nothing in us but sin, how should we know that it was sin ? There can be no knowledge except by the perception of differences. Unless every man have within him a standard, by a comparison with which sin may be detected, there could be no self-condemnation, and consequently no struggle for self-mastery.

"The love of the beautiful," continued Sigfrid, "is not kindled by putting into the mind something that was theretofore external to it, as happens when we add to the treasures of memory. The power to cut life out of marble, and to dash the moving stream and glowing landscape upon the canvass, is not the mere result of empirical teaching. No amount of

instruction can create an artist, unless he first have natural genius—that innate faculty which awakes resistless to the outward call. So no sacerdotal efforts can create a Christian, otherwise than by evoking to action the self-redeeming power of conscience."

Bertha's heart taught her more, as she sat silently intent upon her needlework, than did her companions' dialectics. She *felt* that Sigfrid was right. Yet, despite that conviction, whenever Bassano succeeded in dexterously evading the weapons of his opponent, or in skilfully wielding his own, Bertha's eye twinkled in triumphant satisfaction. On more than one occasion the controversialists mutually appealed to her. But she would give no opinion other than that "the practice of religion is its best teacher."

Sigfrid.—"Bertha is no friend of the clergy. We should have no need of churches, Bassano, if Bertha had her way. Then your craft would be in danger."

Bassano.—"I am not so sure of that. If the practice of religion make it better understood and appreciated, we shall want more churches."

Bertha.—"Certainly! and more clergy too. The arts of embroidery and music are acquired less by

teaching than by practice; yet, that does not diminish the number of their teachers."

Sigfrid.—"And how does their teaching operate? Does it not simply elicit a taste or genius, which already struggles for expression?"

Bassano.—"But if there be in man, by nature, a principle of goodness which struggles for expression, and which, when [appropriately evoked, develops itself in virtue, what becomes of the dogma that man of himself can do nothing good? yet this all the learned and pious fathers of the Church emphatically teach."

Sigfrid.—"And what they so teach is true. The principle of virtue indigenous to humanity is, in fact, the life of God *in* man. Man, when born into the world, is not detached from God, in the same way as the product of the mechanic's skill is detached from the mind that devised and the hands that constructed it. Is not conscience the throbbing of the life universal? a ray from the Holy Spirit's light? the welling up of an exhaustless spring?"

Bertha.—"It may well be that we do not receive virtue into us from others, as we do a science; but that we work it out of ourselves by practice, as we do an art; and that there is no heresy in this view of the matter, provided that when we speak of working

virtue out of ourselves, we fall back upon the wholesome truth, that man's moral nature is a fountain whose source is in God."

Sigfrid.—"That is well said, Bertha! In training, I see, for an abbess! A worthy successor of St. Hilda!"

Bassano.—"In training for something more lovely than an abbess—something less coldly beautiful!"

Bertha (slightly colouring).—"Were I an abbess, I should rule my convent more severely than I seem capable of ruling here."

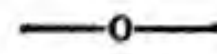
Bassano.—"How glad should I be to submit to the infliction!"

Sigfrid.—"Alas! of all tyrannies that of a woman's sovereign will . . . And yet, I know not why I should say so. Obedience is no task when love governs."

Bertha.—"Virtue is severe, Sigfrid! She demands exclusive love and perfect obedience; and the more obsequious your submission, the more rigorous her claims."

"Then permit me," said Bassano, rising and presenting to Bertha his parting salutation, "to tender to virtue and to Bertha my undivided and quenchless homage."

CHAPTER IX.



THE beams of the morning sun shone resplendently upon the ocean, and into the window of an oratory in Coldingham's stately pile, where, since the first streak of light had dawned upon the horizon, one of the sisters had knelt at her devotions. On a table lay open before her a Latin Bible, beautifully written and illuminated, and near it an outspread letter bearing the signature of Benedict. This letter she perused repeatedly, as if to refresh her mind with its suggestions, and then anew she pleaded, with impassioned earnestness, that Heaven would vouchsafe to her the blessings of which it spake. "To enter into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings! To die with Him, rise with Him, ascend with Him; sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus; have our conversation in heaven! What means Benedict, what meant Paul, by language like this?"

"I have long wondered," the former had written,

"what the idea was that animated the soul of St. Paul, when he longed so eagerly to attain unto the resurrection of the dead. He speaks as if it were something to be enjoyed in this life—'Not as though I had already attained.' Was it some mystic sympathy with Christ's resurrection that he sought, as the counterpart of 'fellowship with his sufferings'? And what is implied in such 'fellowship'?

"Do we suffer with Christ when we endure physical pain; when we are compelled to submit to life's hardships and privations; when our friends deceive us and our foes oppress us; when we are persecuted for Christ's sake, imprisoned, despoiled, tortured, martyred? In one sense we do, in each of these cases, enter into fellowship with Christ's sufferings; but this leaves us far below the full import of the apostle's meaning.

"Was not the distinguishing element in the agony of the Man of Sorrows, his conscientious apprehension of humanity's guiltiness—that humanity with which he had become, by his incarnation, identified in 'brotherhood?' He became 'sin' for us, the world's sin being reckoned to him both *in foro divino* and *in foro conscientiæ*. Hence his otherwise inexplicable prayer, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me!' What cup? Not death as pain, but death

as sin's penalty. As pain, death becomes less terrible in proportion to our growth in holiness: but as sin's penalty, it becomes more terrible. To the same cause are we to ascribe the words he uttered upon the cross, 'My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?' Human guilt gathered over his conscience at that dread moment in so dense a cloud, that it concealed the light of his Father's love.

"Now, it is in this sense Paul asks to be permitted to suffer with Christ. He desires a conscience so tender and in such sympathetic union with humanity, that he may feel its guilt, if not in the same degree, for that was impossible, yet in the same way as Christ felt it.

"So soon, Constance, as you have divined the import of the apostle's wish, when he sought to participate in his Saviour's sufferings, you will be able to perceive what he intended when he prayed that he might become a partaker also in his resurrection. The one is in antithesis to the other. As the darkness of night ushers in the glories of the dawn, as the noise of the battle precedes the triumph of victory, so the Saviour's anguish at man's sin was followed by the joy of his redemption. 'Let me,' says Paul, 'share my Lord's joy! Having died with Him, let me also

rise with Him, be enthroned with Him, dwell with Him in the divine bosom, hid in God!'

"To transcend earth, and at the same time feel identified with its guilt; to rise to ineffable converse with Heaven, yet be clothed in sackcloth, weeping for sin; to lie in the bosom of Deity, yet be low in the dust, with hearts bowed down and contrite;—such, Constance, is the goal to which we are called to urge forward; thus are we to suffer with Christ, and thus to rise."

Constance could meet with but one of the sisterhood in her convent prepared to enter with her thoroughly into these views; and with this one friend of her bosom she had thenceforth daily communion. They read together; they prayed together; they mutually narrated the events of their outward history, and the hitherto untold experiences of their inner life; they exchanged their aspirations—kindling in each other thoughts and desires ever more glowing and elevating. Unable to find a home for their hearts in the frivolities of a hollow formalism, they devoted themselves to the physical, intellectual, and moral improvement of the neigbouring villagers; and in these exercises of divine charity they soon became very extensively engaged.

Bound on one of these embassies of benevolence,

the road of our pedestrian sisters lay over a country rugged, like its population; but, like them also, deeply interesting. Three miles from the convent stood the village where they had been visiting the abodes of sickness and poverty, high on the wild hills then adorned with the heather's purple bloom. Thence the path descended abruptly to the margin of a stream which tumbled down the heights, from rock to rock, with a confused dash and roar, foaming at the bottom of the ravine; whence, like a timid child caught romping, it stole swiftly away under the overhanging foliage. Save only when a gliding cloud obscured his rays, the sun shone in mid-day splendour; and the murmur of the waters, mingling with a loud insect hum, gave to the scene the air of a subdued joyousness, a cheerful repose. Amid so much external quiet, it might have been pronounced almost impossible to be otherwise than in a state of mental ease; yet there were gloomy thoughts saddening both hearts, so that for some time Constance and her friend Agnes walked on in silence.

At length Agnes exclaimed, "Oh, sister Constance! how is it that while we both are using our utmost efforts to conquer sin, please God, and do good to our fellow-creatures, so many things occur to vex and

harass us? I had thought religion made people happy, but those among us are seemingly most happy who forget their religious vows and yield to soft indulgence. Our sincerity affords us no safeguard against reproach, and neither in our own feelings nor in the esteem of others does our self-sacrifice bring us any reward."

Constance.—"My dear Agnes, 'if in this life only we have hope in Christ,' says Paul, 'we are of all men most miserable.' It is a mistake to say that virtue brings its own reward. The happiness that religion promises is a future happiness; not to be enjoyed now, but striven for and enjoyed in the strife only, as vigorous exercise exhilarates: it is in a resurrection from this state of sin and death that religion fixes our hopes."

Agnes.—"And yet, Constance, although virtue without Christ may be unable to give us inward joy, surely there is in the work of the Redeemer enough to do this, when brought home to the conscience and trusted in with the whole heart. How is it that our souls, united by Christ to Heaven, do not always breathe its atmosphere and share its rapture?"

Constance.—"Methinks you would wear your crown, Agnes, before you have won it."

Agnes.—"But our crowns, you know, are not to be won by us; they have been won for us."

Constance.—"Doubtless! Not by our own works do we merit the favour of God, or purchase Heaven; nevertheless, in order to enjoyment, there must be a previous capacity for it. If by present toil and suffering you acquire a higher capacity for future joys, are you not content to endure the one for the sake of the other? See how the husbandman toils in seed-time that he may reap at harvest; and the mariner, how he encounters the tempest for the gains of the voyage!"

Agnes.—"But to welcome pain for the sake of the luxury of relief is hardly to be expected from us. Health is never more valued than after we have suffered its loss, yet I would not for that reason desire ill heath."

Constance.—"So far we agree. Heaven is naturally looked forward to by the homeless as a home, by the weary traveller as a place of rest; but homelessness and weariness are, as you truly say, not *thereby* made desirable. But if temporary homelessness and weariness afford us higher incentives to moral cultivation, what then?"

Agnes.—"It is difficult to see how those things can tend to our moral cultivation which convict us of no

past error; and neither teach caution nor kindle zeal, but only annoy and discourage."

Constance.—"Suppose their only lesson be to enforce more cheerful submission to the Divine will, or arouse us to more stern self-repression, or to more active and unyielding effort on behalf of others, is not that enough? But do we not err in assuming that the great business of life is to secure our *individual* happiness? Are we not taught in Scripture to look upon the world as a whole, and make it our one aim to advance the *general* happiness? If that be so, and it happen that our temporary privation form part of a scheme for the general good, we should do wrong not to accept such privation joyfully. I remember a passage on this subject, to which the Abbot Benedict directed my attention, from the writings of the Stoic Epictetus. 'A man,' said he, 'is a part of a commonwealth: what, then, doth the character of a good citizen promise? It promises to hold no private interest adverse to the general good; but to do as would the hand or foot, which, if they were possessed of reason and could comprehend the constitution of nature, would never act as members of the body except with a reference to the whole. If the members of the body are to be considered as so many unconnected individuals, I will allow

it to be natural for the foot to assert its right to be always clean; but if you regard it as a foot, and not as an unconnected agent, circumstances require that it should walk in the dirt, tread upon the thorns, and sometimes even be cut off, for the good of the whole. So, if you were an unconnected individual completely severed from human society, it might be natural that you should live to old age and be ever healthy and happy; but if you are to be regarded as a component part of social humanity, then it is fit and natural that you should, for the sake of the whole, be at one time sick; at another, take a voyage to sea and encounter the storm; at another, suffer hunger and thirst, or endure adversity and insult; and probably, at last, die before your time.' "

Agnes.—"If that be Stoicism, Constance, it is more beautiful than Christianity."

Constance.—"By no means, Agnes. The life of Christ taught us precisely the same lesson; and so do the lives of all persons eminent for virtue. The sacrifice of self for the sake of the world is Virtue's loftiest development."

Agnes.—"Have I not heard you say, Constance, that the strength of the faith wherewith we grasp the atonement, and the perfection, therefore, of our conscientious quiet, depends upon the depth of our

moral culture? Would it not thence follow that the holiest are always the happiest, even on earth?"

Constance.—"Our present happiness is dependent so much upon our domestic and social sympathies, that I should hesitate to hazard so broad a statement. Our Redeemer was the holiest of men, but notwithstanding that He was the 'Man of Sorrows.' Why? Because his human conscience, perfect in its relation to moral evil, and in the manner in which evil affected him, embraced the guilt and sorrows of the race. In proportion, therefore, as we are like Christ in susceptibility of conscience, we shall be like Him in sorrow.

"Still, this picture has two sides. Our Saviour had, with all his sorrows, moments of exquisite joy. So may we. And if our sorrows and privations add depth to our piety, they will enhance our joys; our struggles will be the soul's nightly ascent to some rugged mountain top, to be rewarded by seeing a glorious sunrise. But whence come these joys? Not from introspection; not by becoming better satisfied with ourselves, concluding that we are very holy, and, therefore, more deserving of the Divine approval. Our added joy is the result of looking away from ourselves to Christ, and seeing in Him

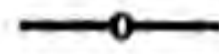
such a fulness of merit, and so complete an adaptation to the requirements of God's righteousness, that conscience's loftiest demands are felt to have been thereby fully reached, and every barrier removed to the soul's consummated union with God."

Thus did these loving sisters beguile the hour of travel. They were now within sight of the convent, and were passing the open door of a cottage, when their attention was attracted by a piercing wail. Entering, they found a young mother weeping over the cradle of her dying infant. The time had gone by when medical skill or nursing could be of any avail. One duty alone remained — to soothe the sufferer, and lesson the pang of bereavement.

"Had not the Saviour said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me'? Then hinder not this little one. 'Of such is the kingdom of Heaven!' Those cherub lips are fit for an angel's kiss. How sweetly the eyes gaze, as if on some unseen messenger, some beatified infant specially sent on this mission of love! Does not that smile indicate the recognition of an approaching companion? Why those outstretched arms? Mother, weep not! Heaven is thy child's home, and around its death-cradle winged cherubs

are gathering. Hark! the convent bell strikes the hour. Spurning earth, their outspread pinions bear them upward. That which was thine, mother, is thine no longer. Dry up thy tears, and follow his flight!"

CHAPTER X.



THE site chosen for Benedict's sacred pile was the summit of a mound, at the mouth of one of Northumbria's principal streams, which, after meandering for many miles between wooded banks, and passing many a scene of romance, made a last graceful sweep around the base of the church-crowned hill, before pouring its waters into the estuary that connected it with the German Ocean. The tower that still survives the wreck of time asserts unquestionable claims to a very remote antiquity, if not to be regarded as the identical tower which Bassano's mind conceived, and his skill executed. A smaller church, dedicated to the Virgin, and of which vestiges remained in the fifteenth century, and were then known as the "auld kirke," marked the site of Bishop Aidan's previous edifice, at a little distance from that of Benedict's, whose construction, in 674-6,

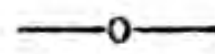
we now narrate. South of the church were the monks' dormitories.

Immediately opposite the monastery, on the other side of the river, the trading population were domiciled in rows of cottages, built in an amphitheatrical and crescent-like form, one behind the other, on the terraced embankment; all looking wistfully, with their wattled walls and thatched roofs, towards the more substantial edifice from which they sought instruction and succour. These feudal adherents, led by various considerations, had sought, in an ecclesiastical seigniory, the protection which no secular chieftain could, at that time, so effectually render. If the Church were not then so wealthy as she became in after days, when, prostituting her high trust, she bartered heaven for gold, the reverence with which a practically-minded people beheld her simple piety, invested her dignitaries with a power which the mightiest dared not but respect. Merchants flocked around her peaceful sanctuaries, because, unlike the followers of a military chief, they were there enabled to prosecute their commercial schemes without interruption. Artizans were attracted by the vast edifices necessary to be constructed for the accommodation of those who, under the impulse of a new zeal, sought

to advance the interests of their common faith by congregating under the same roof. The cultivation of the monastic lands gave employment to the agricultural labourer; for although, speaking in general terms, the monks tilled their own territory and tended their own flocks, their clerical and literary functions absorbed enough of their time to render indispensable other aid. The fisherman, with his boat and net, formed a necessary adjunct to a seaport. And, although the British marine was then in too infantile a state to have obtained a name in history, vessels plied along the coast and across the German Ocean in sufficient number to create a seafaring population of no inconsiderable extent. But, besides these ordinary attractions, numerous settlers had been brought from Italy and France to assist in the erection and embellishment of the monastery and its church, and especially in the manufacture of the glass required for the windows and utensils. And, to the influential and skilled adventurers thus collected together from various motives, lands were given in free tenure, and every practicable encouragement offered to attach them to the soil. In these grants of land, Bassano, as chief architect, had largely participated, and upon an elevated site, commanding an extensive sea view, and embracing within

its range of objects the ecclesiastical edifice now in course of erection, Bassano had built a substantial stone dwelling to which to conduct his bride. Thither Bassano and Bertha set out on horseback immediately after the interesting ceremonial; the villagers accompanying them to an elevated spot on the road, where the inhabitants of the district had assembled to offer their congratulations. Here Bertha waved her last farewell to the ancestral home which she had so long graced with her charity and hospitality. Manly lips quivered as they responded the parting adieu, and poured forth the eloquent benedictions of overflowing hearts. The poor, as she passed away, crowded to bless her. And long afterwards the village of her birth, now the theatre of traditions which associate it with the memory of her son, was familiarly known throughout Northumbria as Bertha's Home.

CHAPTER XI.



TOWARDS evening, in the month of December, a few years after the event last narrated, two venerable ecclesiastics paced to and fro along the strand, adjacent to Bassano and Bertha's matrimonial dwelling. The darkness had already settled upon the horizon, and although the sea had been during the day placid as slumbering infancy, it now presented unmistakable indications of an approaching storm. The moon gleamed fitfully from behind the dense clouds that hurried across her disk, revealing, on the opposite side of the estuary, a group of female watchers, who, approaching to the margin of the swelling tide, gazed wistfully out upon the sea, as if their keen vision, quickened by mingled hope and fear, had already caught sight of what they wished for.

Ere long, the deep dread silence was broken by the sound of human voices and the heavy labouring plunge of an approaching vessel. As she drew near,

the moonbeams shone upon her sails and flashed amid the spray, through which, like a foaming steed, she dashed in fearful haste, as if for life. A smile, at the same moment, cheered the countenances of the eager expectants. The mother's palpitating heart was at rest; and, breathing her thanks to Heaven, she hastened homeward, to prepare a fitting welcome for him whose longer absence—with such rapidity did the storm increase—would, in all probability, have deprived her children of a father's care.

"Ah, my brother!" exclaimed the elder monk to his fellow, "such is life! A stormy sea, from whose rude blasts we have here sought shelter!"

"And found it!" replied the younger, though in a faltering voice and a somewhat querulous, misgiving tone.

"Yes; and found it!" sighed his companion, "but how have we found it? Not in luxurious ease. They mistake our design who fancy that the hermit's cell and the monk's cloister are places in which society is shunned. Man finds not in himself the end of his own existence. Reading, meditation, and prayer tend doubtless to unfold the individual faculties; and if each were an isolated being, standing alone in his relation to the Supreme, such self-development would be life's ultimate object. But that is not so. Humanity

is one vast whole, struggling to elevate itself to perfection; and the incessant movement of the ocean is not more essential to the purity of its waters, than is social activity to human advancement. Put an end to the attrition of mind on mind, let there be no conflict of thought, no wrestling for mastery, no mutuality of help and dependence, no attraction and repulsion, love or hatred, and the stagnant world would become an abyss of pollution."

"Then separation from the world is impossible?" observed Ceolfrid, turning an inquiring gaze into the manly, open countenance of the abbot.

"Impossible!" was the decided reply. "We can no more sever ourselves from the brotherhood of humanity, than divide a wave from the ocean. As well try to wrest from its silvery source the moonbeam now glancing on those troubled waters."

At this moment, the abbey bell tolled the hour of prayer; and, wending their way to its sequestered walls, their voices soon joined in the *complin* or night song, to which many grateful hearts listened that night devoutly, as, gathering closer and closer around the domestic hearth, they heard mingle with the dread howling of the tempest, the swell of the solemn chant.

"Well, Turgar, saw you our Herbert on your

passage?" uttered a gruff voice, as the speaker lifted the latch, and, with hurried step, entered the cottage of the captain whose vessel had that evening entered the harbour. Amund was a short, thickset, old seaman, who had, by his hard earnings and severe frugality, become the owner of a vessel now navigated by his son; anxiety for whose safety gave occasion to the present visit.

The captain eyed his ancient comrade with evident concern, and could hardly command his tones to answer,—"Yes, Amund, I saw your craft, and right well she looked; as fine a little vessel as any in the fleet. We exchanged signals off Whitby yesterday at gloaming. We were both close in by the land, off Hilda's Abbey."

"Yesterday!" exclaimed old Amund, in alarm, "yesternight under St. Hilda's! And such a gale!" The gathering blast, as he spake, shook the dwelling.

"Don't fear! He is a smart sailor, and knows the weather and the coast as well as his father; and that, Amund, is saying a great deal." Turgar was trying to persuade himself that, notwithstanding his fears, all would be well.

Lundenwich or London was, even at that early period, as we learn from Willibald, a commercial port of great celebrity; and thence it was that Herbert

was now bound, having delivered there from Rouen a cargo of wine and other merchandize, purchased on owner's account with the proceeds of exported wool.

"And how have you had the wind, Turgar, since you left Whitby?"

"It boxed round from west to south and then to the south-east. But, with such a ship under him, Herbert would run off, and not hug the land. Our little bark is, as you know, as nimble under canvass as a fairy; and happening to have kept in shore for some time before we saw that a storm was brewing to the eastward, we had no course left open to us but either to run in for Hartlepool, or crowd all sail upon her and try to get down here in time to save the tide. Those, however, that kept well off the land will be safe enough."

"Heaven grant it!" said Amund, as he bade his friend "good night," and closed the door. His heart was cheerless and his step slow. He had no good news to tell. He hoped that when Herbert saw the wind eastering and the weather beginning to change, he would not forget the lessons of his youth, but would at once turn his bow off and secure ample sea-room. Yet how was he to persuade the anxious mother to believe this? She was listening for his returning footsteps. He knew it—and lingered.

Turgar shook his head mournfully as Amund withdrew. The wood was blazing on the hearth, and his wife was busying herself in preparing the welcome meal. She had heard all that passed, but spoke not; well understanding her husband's tones, and that the absence of his blithe, genial gaiety expressed much more of apprehension than words could utter. Turgar sat before the fire, looking into it in profound abstraction; his little daughter meanwhile clambering upon his knee, and playing with his long raven locks. He pressed her to his heart and kissed her, as she fondly wiped away the tears which forced themselves in drops upon his eyelashes. Then, with a strong and sudden effort, summoning his thoughts homeward, he strove to forget woes he could not succour, and, seated with his wife and child around the humble festive board, threw his frank temper and hearty humour into the endearing converse of domestic life.

It was now blowing dead upon the shore—a terrific hurricane. Dismay seized all who had husbands, fathers, children, upon that iron-bound coast, in the midst of the boiling surge. The danger was too apparent; solace there was none. Did the old mariner advert to his own hair-breadth escapes, and try to cheer the drooping hearts of weeping friends by magnifying his youthful perils, and describing in

minute detail his all but miraculous deliverances? the familiar tale fell on heedless ears: every blast of the storm carried the thoughts of the seeming listeners far away.

As the tide continued to recede, the jagged rocks bared, and, within a fearfully short distance of their seaward outline, several ships were seen at anchor, with their lights dancing—the witchery of the gale.

All the population was by this time astir. Those whom attendance on the sick and aged, and the watchings of infant slumber, kept at home—even they ever and anon looked out, or stood at the door, eager to learn from the hurrying passengers what vessels were supposed to be on the coast. The monastery had been early aroused, and such as were capable of rendering aid were soon seen ferrying over the river or plunging across the ford to the place of danger.

Let us glance hurriedly at the gathering crowd. Except the tonsured and shaven monk, the men wore their hair and beards long—the hair parted in the middle, the beard forked and pointed. No hat or other covering was used for the male head; but no woman was without her head-rail—a long strip of silk or linen folded about the head and neck. Hose stockings were general, and shoes; the hose of the men long enough to cover and protect the entire leg,

and cross-gartered with straps of linen or leather up to the knee. The well-known Saxon tunic, girded at the waist and reaching below the middle of the thigh, with sleeves tight at the wrist, formed the principal garment of the rougher sex, and over their tunics many of the men wore a cloak or mantle, the mantle being fastened by a buckle on the right shoulder, so as to leave the right arm free. The tunic or kirtle of the women was also tight-sleeved, but long in the skirt, reaching down to the feet; and above the tunic the female wore a loosed-sleeved short gown.

As this motley assembly stood anxiously gazing seaward, brief ejaculatory prayers and muttered words of hope were the only sounds that, mingling with the howl of the wind and the roar and dash of the wave, brake the monotony of terror. Hour after hour passed. The tide was again rising. Could the vessels but hold on at their anchors until high tide there might be a chance of their rescue. But is that possible? Alas! their lights are even now observed moving. The strained cable, no longer able to resist the combined force of the elements, has yielded; and first, one—then, another—then, another—drifts from her anchorage.

A rush is being made towards the spots nearest the anticipated wrecks, whence help, it is thought, may

be best rendered, when a low and dreadful murmur spreads through the crowd, that two of the lights have disappeared; two ships have foundered.

Around a fainting female form, a group of friends has gathered. "Courage, Elfleda!" cried the gruff, tremulous voice of old Amund. "Try to bear it more bravely. Hope is not gone yet. Herbert, maybe, is far off in the sea; out of broken water. Cheer her up, mother! Poor thing! She is new to trouble."

The person last addressed was a fine specimen of matronly age. Thoroughly Teutonic in her antecedents, she as yet sustained with dignified firmness the terrible apprehensions that haunted her maternal heart. Amund himself was of Dutch extraction. Their daughter-in-law was British; as intense in her affections as her Teuton mother, but with less self-control, less personal dignity. Her long hair streamed in the gale as, stretched on the ground, with her head-dress loosened, and her gentle features directed heavenward, the opening eye shot its glances to the throne of God, and the lips feebly muttered, "O God, preserve him!"

Next came the crash of another vessel striking upon the rocks—loud cries from the crew for help—answered by cries from the shore, enough to assure them that many brave hearts and strong arms were

nigh, to render all the help that man could render. But there are times when, however willingly offered, vain is the help of man. Boats attempted to be launched were violently dashed back, as if the sea, impatient of interference, was determined to grasp its prey.

Then followed another crash, and another. The tempest was at the height of its frenzy. The maddened waves foamed and bellowed. O'er the frightful scene, a drifting snow shower threw its deadly pall. In an interval between showers, the eye was strained in search of the lights which had hitherto betokened the position of the unfortunate vessels. All were extinguished. On that vast sea of darkness not a flame shed its radiance, not even a taper lighted the gloom. But out of it came the wild cry of drowning mariners; and even the stoutest heart quailed, as there arose upon the whirlwind the responsive wail of the widow, the fatherless, the bereaved. . . . . .

The snow has ceased. Its last descended flake has touched the ocean, and been absorbed. Though changed in form, each still preserves its individuality and identity as a drop amid the unfathomed waters. . . . . .

But hark! that shout tells that all are not yet lost.

Accustomed from childhood to toy with the billow, Herbert had thrown off every article of clothing as soon as he saw the struggle inevitable, and, plunging into the waves at a favourable moment, he now exhibited the sublime spectacle of weakness in devout conflict with Omnipotence, the finite struggling with the Infinite. He thought of home, his helpless children—and struck out with impetuous energy. The cleft clouds, as they coursed fleetly above him, opened a space through which the stars peered; suggesting the interested gaze of celestial intelligences, and that each man's destiny is sympathetically interwoven, not with earth alone, but with worlds, also, beyond. *

"How bravely he battles for life! God bring him safe to land!" There, at the head of the anxious throng, stood the stalwart Abbot, with the conversation of the previous evening fresh in his mind. "To be severed from society is to be alone amid the merciless elements; with no heart to pity and no arm to succour!" Happily, Herbert was not alone. Just as the exhausted struggler was about to yield himself up for lost, and the sea, mustering its rage was in the act of striking the final blow, Benedict

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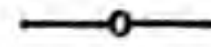
* Note A (6).

Biscop, having first fastened around him a line to be held by skilful hands on shore, rushed in at the imminent risk of his own life, and, seizing with an iron grasp the now passive victim, dragged him triumphantly to land.

CHAPTER XII.



CEOLFRID had not been present at the shipwreck. Long before dawn he was in his cell, at his devotions and his studies. A volume lay open before him, in which, by the aid of his lamp, he was reading as follows:—

"In the fact of civilization, is the individual cultivated for the sake of society? or society, for the sake of the individual? Which is the end? which the means? Does individual independence, and social anarchy, present itself to us as time's ultimate object? or individual supremacy and social subordination? or individual absorption and social unity? If the last, is it only national unity we seek? or is that but a means to a higher end, and do we not rather look forward to the unity of humanity? Were society transient, and the individual alone immortal, the ultimate place would, no doubt, be properly assignable to that which bore

the exclusive impress of immortality. But society, too, is immortal. As the individual man dies to rise again, modified in the form of his existence, so nations also perish but to reappear under other and wider combinations. Rome has accomplished her predestined 1260 years; and with her Assyrian, Persian, and Grecian predecessors, is now being driven away as the chaff of the summer's threshing-floor. The fourth great empire has been dashed, like a shipwrecked bark, upon the shores of time, and the eddying wave is sweeping away her broken rafters. Meanwhile, humanity lives on, and in its last grand catholic form of the kingdom of Christ. . . . . ."

Here, he was interrupted by the rush into the building of those who had been present at the recent disaster: and earnest conversations respecting the details of the sad event and its social consequences, with arrangements for the relief of the orphan and the widow, filled up, during that and several succeeding days, the intervals of time not pre-occupied by other allotted duties. And now was seen the value of that guild or fraternity which had been created by the chain of monastic influences, extending from Lindisfarne on the north, to Whitby on the south, whereby a generous provision was made

out of ecclesiastical funds for the bereaved families of drowned pilots and mariners,—the same institution which, after the dissolution of the monasteries, was re-established by Henry VIII in the degenerate form of a lay guild, under the title of "The Brethren and Sisters of the Holy Trinity," and which, modified by subsequent charters, although still retaining its august title of incorporation, exists now only as a miserable relic of ancient greatness.

How mournful the scene when, in one long funeral procession, the victims of the tempest, accompanied by a vast crowd of weeping relatives, and of sympathizing friends from the surrounding villages, were borne to a common grave! To the overflowing assembly that filled the church in every part, Ceolfrid, standing upon the steps of the altar, delivered an appropriate address. More than once the depth of his emotion choked his utterance, and, during these intervals of interruption, the general grief burst forth anew. The chanting—slow and solemn—was led by the arch-chanter John, who had formerly held that office in St. Peter's at Rome, but had been brought by Benedict to Wearmouth, whither on great occasions the performances of himself and his choir attracted vast multitudes from

all Northumbria. They at this time added much to the impressiveness of the ceremony.

Among the hearers of Ceolfrid, sat Bertha and, near her, her son, her first-born, in whose beaming countenance the genius and skill of his Italian father and the practical prudence and energy of his Saxon mother were strikingly portrayed.

The boy entered with extraordinary interest into the mournful service; and Bertha, reminded of her own early bereavements, betrayed emotions which evinced that time had even yet imperfectly healed her lacerated spirit.

Attracted by the paintings with which the church was ornamented, brought by Benedict, at great expense and with persevering industry, from the best marts of European taste, they lingered long after the swelling notes of the well-trained choir had died away; and accompanied by a grave, intelligent-looking monk, whose resemblance to Bertha was such as to preclude all doubt of consanguinity, they wandered from painting to painting, conversing rather of the subjects illustrated than of the artist's skill.

"In the middle of the vault," say the monkish historians, "were placed pictures of the Virgin and of the twelve apostles, extending from wall to

wall: the southern wall was adorned with pictures taken from the Gospel history; while the northern wall was similarly decorated with representations of the visions of St. John, as described in the Apocalypse." That which Bertha fixed upon for special notice was a painting of the Crucifixion, with Constantine's labarum and motto—'εν τούτω νίκα, "By this conquer!"

Bertha.—"Conquer what, Sigfrid? Sin? How does the cross conquer sin?"

Sigfrid.—"Afflictions discipline the heart, humble and purify it: may not the cross conquer sin in that way?"

Bertha.—"But does not the heart as oft rebel against chastisement? I have seen people so maddened with their woes that they could only curse and blaspheme."

Sigfrid.—"Or the Cross may conquer sin by the revelation it makes to us of God's great love."

Bertha.—"Yes! there is a conquering power in love: it melts, subdues, woos, wins."

Sigfrid.—"Yet even love can only subdue when it is appreciated. However much my parent may love me when he chastens, and although he desires nothing but my good, if I fail to perceive it and persist in misunderstanding his kind intentions, his

declarations of love, instead of subduing, will only tantalize and irritate."

Bertha.—"So that even the Cross can only conquer sin when we trust in it."

Sigfrid.—"And so trusting, it brings us into conscious friendship with God—the righteous God. Perhaps this, after all, may on further consideration prove the essential cause of Christianity's superior moral power."

Bertha.—"Explain it to me, Sigfrid, more fully. The morals which Christianity teaches are superior to heathen morals—may not that be the cause?"

Sigfrid.—"Much that is called heathen morality, Bertha, is not open to the censure of inferiority. It is pure morality as taught, but powerless in action."

Bertha.—"And why is that? One would expect holy teaching to beget holy living."

Sigfrid.—"Not if holy teaching serve only to expose to us the depth of our wickedness."

Bertha.—"But in doing so, it should provoke us to amend."

Sigfrid.—"And what if it also teach us that God is so perfect that no amendment can place us on such terms of moral equality as to justify the consciousness of friendship?"

Bertha.—"But may we not in that case accept God's favour as the stooping of perfection to vileness?"

Sigfrid.—"We cannot do so while we remain willingly vile: while we remain willingly vile, we shall have no wish for Heaven's friendship."

Bertha.—"That is true; but so soon as we begin to struggle to amend, may we not then infer that God stoops to become our friend?"

Sigfrid.—"Alas! all experience tells us, that in proportion as we struggle after moral purity, our cultured consciences acquire a deeper sense of our distance from God."

Bertha.—"Now I perceive your meaning, Sigfrid. The Cross, you would say, by reconciling man to God, gives to the conscience the persuasion of Divine friendship."

Sigfrid.—"And in so doing, awakens moral power. The Cross, therefore, conquers sin by inspiring the consciousness that, already at one with God, it is only by avoiding sin we can remain at one; than which it is impossible to conceive a more powerful incentive to virtue."

Desirous of interesting and instructing her juvenile charge, Bertha now directed to him her sole attention, narrating at full length the story of

Constantine's battle and victory, and adverting to the higher victory of which Sigfrid and she had just been conversing. Already familiar with the tragic facts, he listened eagerly to her glowing interpretation of their spiritual import; and, as the boy and his mother slowly left the church, and, bidding "adieu!" to their monkish conductor, descended to the river and crossed it homewards, Beda felt within him the kindling of those impulses which, for the next half century, flung their glorious light upon his unobtrusive but distinguished path.*

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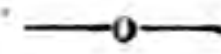
* See note B as to the time and place of Beda's birth.

CHAPTER XIII.



MATINS had just finished, and Benedict was walking in the garden of the monastery with the youthful Beda, who, at the age of seven, had been entrusted to his care,* when he was summoned to hear, in his judicial character, a charge preferred against two sailor-boys for robbery. One of them, apparently about sixteen years old, was short and stout, of a swarthy complexion and stolid countenance, but with a restless, piercing eye. The other was two or three years younger, ruddy, and of a more frank expression, with something of the placability which not unfrequently marks the criminal dupe.

On their being brought before the abbot, he at once recognized the younger prisoner; all the residents within his territorial jurisdiction, both young

* Note C.

and old, being familiarly known to him. The other was a stranger.

After hearing a general outline of the charge, he directed the boys to be confined in one of the cells of the monastery, and to be brought before him again in the evening, when the parents of the criminals were also required to attend.

"Well, Herbert!" said the abbot, as he entered the room, at the evening sitting, "you, the only survivor in that fearful gale, and yet, what see I here? Is this the return you and your family make for Heaven's mercy?"

Herbert hung his head, deeply abashed. At length he found courage to reply:—"I fear bad company has been his ruin. Would that my life had always been such as I had wished it to be! But however bad in many things, I am bold to say that he never in my house learnt to steal."

Benedict.—"It is not for human tribunals to blame and punish an honest father for his son's theft. God, we are taught, 'visits the sins of the fathers upon the children,' and sometimes, doubtless, the sins of the children upon the father, as you now experience. The guilt is your son's; the shame and sorrow are yours. And yet, if there be shame and sorrow, must there not also be guilt? Can it be that you

suffer the punishment, and not have also shared the crime?"

Herbert's eye flashed with something like indignation, although he severely restrained himself. The abbot observed, however, the movement, and continued:—"Do not misunderstand me, Herbert! I have no intention to impute dishonesty to you. I know you have a soul above everything that would degrade you in the estimation of your fellow-men. I only wish to convince you that, as between you and God, guilt must lurk somewhere. At all events, if the guilt be not *personally* yours, you suffer its punishment. Any penalty the law could impose would be nothing, compared with the fearful anguish of your bruised spirit."

The big tear stood in the eye of the bluff, hardy Herbert. His wife burst into a fit of the most excessive grief. The boy also shared his parents' emotion, and earnestly begged their forgiveness. At that moment, Herbert felt that he could have willingly borne *all* the punishment of his son's crime, if only he could have thereby saved the child from the degrading consciousness of his position, and have obliterated his guilt.

After a suitable admonition to each of the offenders, and the sentence of a sharp corporal punishment, the

parties were dismissed. But long after the door had closed upon them Benedict sat in his chair, buried in thought. An occurrence of every-day life had suggested a long train of reflections.

"Here was an instance of the conscience, in a cultivated moral nature, so sympathizing with an object of affection, whose sin he detested while he loved the sinner, that the guilt and punishment of the child's offence was actually laid upon the anguish-stricken parent. Was there aught in this illustrative of that grand transaction which forms the foundation of Christian theology? Was it thus Christ bore the sins of the world?"

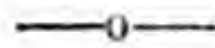
In the midst of such musings, the attention of Benedict was interrupted by a gentle tap at his room door, and the entrance of the father of the elder criminal. Until this moment Benedict had not recognized him: but something in the man's gait now revived the recollection of a former scene, and, without waiting for any further explanation, the abbot bluntly asked whether it was not to his visitor that Theodore and himself had, some years before, owed at once their captivity and their release. Cearl admitted the impeachment, and a few interrogatories evolved the mystery which had hitherto hung over the event.

Cearl's father was a Frank, but his mother a Briton. She had received the faith in advanced age, and died a true Christian. Cearl had been summoned to her death-bed to receive her dying charge. "Remember me, Cearl," said she, "when I am gone! Take that," handing to him her New Testament, which, in its fumbled leaves, bore evidence of its frequent use; "read one page every day! I ask no more."

Cearl took the book, put it into his pocket, carried it constantly about his person, literally obeyed his dying parent's injunction, but remained a pirate. The very name of "Cearl" was a terror in the Mediterranean. And he did not now hesitate to acknowledge that, but for the circumstance of his mother being a Briton, and Theodore being Britain's primate, his ecclesiastical dignity would have had no influence in saving all on board from their predetermined massacre.

Benedict shuddered to learn that his own life and that of his friend, and we may add—such are the complicated relations between the different parts of the mighty whole—the potent influences which their minds exerted on a great nation's character and destiny, had been made to depend on so slight an incident as the chance power of a mother's love.

CHAPTER XIV.



In this nineteenth century of the Christian era, the protective value of the monastic institute has been annihilated by advanced civilization, and its inutility as a school for virtue demonstrated by enlarged experience. But in the times of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, the missionary zeal of vast monastic establishments, and the grants made to them, by wise monarchs and powerful chieftains, of lands, money, patronage, and military protection, gave so decided an impulse to the progress of society that, "at the beginning of the eighth century, England possessed a number of scholars who would have been the just pride of the most enlightened age. Nor was the cultivation of letters confined to the robuster sex. The female correspondents of Boniface wrote in Latin with as much ease as the ladies of the present day write in French, and their letters often show much elegant and courtly feeling."

Such, in the year 701, was the wide-spread fame of the monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow, that the Pope sent a messenger requesting them to send one of their monks to advise with him on certain ecclesiastical questions of great difficulty. In 710, also, Naitan, King of the Picts, was induced to send to the abbot of this monastery for architects who might build him a stone church after the Roman manner.

These and other similar incidents prove that the district of the Tyne occupied at an early period a distinguished position in learning and art; so much so, that Northumbria, before the close of the eighth century, is universally admitted to have been further advanced in civilization than any other portion of Teutonic Europe.

But it is not with monachism as an instrument of social advancement that we are at present concerned to treat. We direct attention to it mainly because of the aid it affords in the elucidation of the more occult principles of social science: in which respect its use will become apparent, if we carefully examine the maxims which Benedict had caused to be legibly written, and hung up in conspicuous parts of the monastery. These were as follows:—

"I. The brethren having, by entering this monas-

tery, become conventionally one, so are they, by cultivating kindness and sympathy with each other, to seek to become morally one—one in their purposes, pursuits, and inward spirit.

"II. It is essential that a clear distinction be drawn between an apparent union, brought about by the application of external force, and a real union, the result of natural internal growth. The first destroys social life; and to secure the second, there must be free individual development, catholicized by amicable discussion.

"III. The first object we seek in this fraternal union is the elevation of each individual character to, at least, an average catholic standard. And this being attained, our next object is to transfuse the social spirit of the community into society at large.

"IV. Inasmuch, then, as the entire brotherhood is assumed to be animated by one mind, every fault of every brother is the common fault of all. The degree in which we become painfully conscious of this will indicate the extent of our moral cultivation. It is the mark of a low moral state for each one to throw blame upon the other, and seek to exculpate himself: and it is equally the mark of a high moral state, that the common faults of the

brotherhood are felt by each as oppressively as if they were personally and individually his own.

"V. On the other hand, the virtues of the brethren, as well as their faults, are common property, seeing that they redound to the general honour. Each shares the glory of the whole. A monastery rich in virtuous members is a luminous nebula; their lights commingle, become one. It is like the rainbow; various in hue, one in beauty. But let none claim an interest in these common virtues who do not make them the object of earnest imitation. They are ours only if we seek to imbibe the spirit of which they are the expression.

"VI. The principles which enter thus into the organization of a monastery enter equally into the organization of society at large. Humanity is a unit, and would be felt to be such were its conscience thoroughly cultured. The Christ-spirit would then animate each and all, inspiring individual consciousness of the world's guilt.

"VII. On the other hand, a higher development of the conscience of humanity would elevate us to the Christ-mind, in its state of acceptance and triumph. For, in proportion as our consciences become cultivated by penitence and obedience, the common righteousness of humanity in Christ be-

comes our *intuitively* appropriated inheritance, and we are able to plead it confidently before God, as the basis of a triumphant hope."

From the time that Theodore and Benedict met at Rome there had subsisted between them the closest friendship; and ever afterwards, to the end of life, they carried on a frequent epistolary and personal intercourse, discussing the passing events of the times, and exchanging their thoughts on the momentous questions which then, as now, agitated the ecclesiastical mind. Although Benedict's monastery was, by special licence from the sovereign Pontiff, exempted from all episcopal control, Benedict was not the less anxious to conform his doctrines and rules to the discipline of the Church; and he, therefore, sent a copy of his maxims to Theodore, soliciting their critical perusal.

Theodore, in exchange, sent to Benedict a copy of a work he had just written—the celebrated "Penitential"—which long exercised a powerful influence, both in England and abroad.

The principle of the "Penitential" was, that every man is responsible for his most secret acts—not only to God, but also to society; and it, therefore, imposed a graduated scale of penances, with the double purpose of making amends to society for

the wrong that had been done, and, through the fear of public punishment, checking sin's progress. So far as regards overt acts, the principle of responsibility to society is still enforced, but no further. Nor is it practicable in an advanced state of civilization to inquire into and punish non-aggressive immoral acts, except in so far as the injury, by example, to public morals is manifest. Still, however, the responsibility exists as a theoretical speculation, and flows necessarily from that organic unity which this tale seeks to unfold.

When Theodore and Benedict next met, the radical truth lying at the basis of the "Penitential" of the one, and of the monastic maxims of the other, came again under discussion.

"I see," said Theodore, "no objection to your maxims. The organic unity of humanity is almost too clear for doubt, so far as concerns the fact. The difficulty lies here—does not natural conscience revolt against the conclusion that one man suffers for another man's sins?"

Benedict.—"But if Christ's atonement has given us compensation for that seeming injustice——"

Theodore.—"I doubt if such a style of argument be allowable. We must not have God doing evil that good may come. The preferable way out of the

difficulty is to meet it point-blank, and consider whether natural conscience does really revolt, as is supposed?"

Benedict.—"If we might call in the history of the Saviour, and present his conscience as an example of what any other perfect human conscience would feel, there need be no further argument."

Theodore.—"As one argument—the very highest—I think the example of Christ conclusive. But that is because I regard his sorrows as the *natural* consequence of his humanity. I cannot look upon his sufferings as a special judicial infliction, analogous to the judicial punishment of a criminal. The analogy fails on the essential point of voluntariness; and if it fail in one point, it must fail in all. Christ's sufferings were undertaken voluntarily, and would not have been otherwise available: the sufferings of a criminal must, if judicially inflicted, be involuntary; otherwise he is a suicide, and justice is thus robbed of its satisfaction."

Benedict.—"And because they cannot be, therefore, regarded as a special judicial infliction, they must be looked upon as the natural result of previous circumstances. What, then, were those circumstances?"

Theodore.—"There was first his humanity; He was

born into the world as one of humanity's brotherhood, and became thus an integral portion of the organic unit."

Benedict.—"And as a perfect man—perfect in purity—his human conscience gave utterance to the sorrows which arose out of its relationship to humanity's guilt."

Theodore.—"Yes! the humanity with which He had chosen *voluntarily* to become incorporated. That choice was made by Him in his pre-existent Divine state; and his sorrows began to gather immediately on his birth, reaching their climax on the Cross."

Benedict.—"So that having once made his choice and been born man, the proper voluntariness of his sufferings became complete, and their accumulation thenceforth was the natural result of his human position. All that He afterwards suffered was inflicted upon him *justly*, as a man among men. He had chosen to become man, in order to redeem man; and being 'found in fashion as a man,' 'the Lord laid upon Him,' as the just and natural consequence of his human relationship, 'the iniquity of us all!'"

Theodore.—"But this argument is not the only one proving that natural conscience recognizes a joint responsibility for one man's guilty act. You remember the case of the Phenician seamen?"

Benedict.—"Who found themselves, to their dismay, in the same bark with the runaway Jonah?"

Theodore.—"They made no complaint against the justice of Heaven, in exposing them to the storm sent after Jonah. If natural conscience had revolted, instead of praying to their gods they would have scolded them. So the Greeks, on their voyage to Troy, were visited with a plague, by way of punishment for the crime of Agamemnon. Homer records the fact, but does not complain of it as an act of injustice."

Benedict.—"The Scriptures also record a similar visitation upon the people of Israel, for the sin of David."

Theodore.—"In that case David reproached himself, and asked that the punishment might fall upon his own head; for 'These sheep,' said he, 'what have they done?' That was fitting language on David's part, but the writer of the narrative does not speak of it as an unjust act, that the nation should be punished for the monarch's sin; and, by speaking of it as a divinely directed act, he in effect expressly affirms its justice."

Benedict.—"Again, Sodom would have been spared had there been ten righteous persons within its walls. One cannot read the story of Sodom's over-

throw without feeling that some blame is implied against Lot, and that if he had been as faithful as Abraham was, there would have been as many righteous persons in his family as would have saved the city. If that had been so, and the city had been spared for the sake of the ten righteous men within its walls, you would have had this state of facts:— Ten righteous souls 'vexed' because of Sodom's guilt; and, on their account, the city spared: how illustrative of man's redemption in Christ!"

Theodore.—"Thus the holy Paul required that the rich disciples should help the poor, and thereby create equality; adducing, by way of motive, the example of our Saviour, who, by taking our poverty and giving us in exchange his riches, creates the like reckoning to the world of righteousness as in your supposed case there would have been to Sodom."

Benedict.—"But further, is it not allowed that national offences really merit *national* punishment? Now surely if the nation sin, and wrath come upon it——"

Theodore (interrupting)—"Who is the nation, and on whom does the wrath come? The offenders are A and B; the wrath descends on C and D; all being component parts of the nation."

Benedict (continuing)—"True! yet every right-

minded and conscientious man—say C or D—will take part of the blame to himself, although personally he may have been a very obscure individual, and have had very little to do with the cause of offence. He who should attempt to throw the blame off himself upon others would, by so doing, make evident his low moral culture."

Theodore—"And if that remark hold good in regard to national sins and their punishment, why is it not equally applicable to world-wide sins; where is the difference?"

Benedict—"The argument points clearly to the conclusion, that conscience does *not* revolt against the idea, that humanity as a whole is more or less implicated in the accumulated acts of its individuals. On the contrary, as a fact of experience, the enlightened conscience is always affected by others' guilt; the degree probably lessening as they retire beyond the range of our sympathy. Our friends, the town we live in, our country, the portion of the world known to us, the part that is not known, seem to form concentric circles more and more distant."

Theodore—"We have an illustration of this in that remarkable prayer of Moses—'Blot my name out of thy book, rather than let *Israel* perish;' and in the no less remarkable prayer of Paul—'Let me

stand accursed from Christ, if it may save my Israelitish brethren, *my kinsmen* according to the flesh.' In both cases, the language of these holy men is the outburst of an oppressed conscience; but in the particulars you advert to, our Lord is pre-eminently distinguished from all others. His moral sympathies were not with Jew or Gentile, kinsmen or strangers, high or low, rich or poor, preferentially; but equally with the whole world."

Besides her regular and systematic correspondence with Benedict, Constance had several occasional correspondents, among whom Theodore was justly reckoned by Constance to occupy the most distinguished place. An opportunity will occur hereafter for extracting a few brief hints from letters so valuable as those of Theodore. The introduction at this place of a letter, written by Constance to Benedict, is probably in strict chronological order, and will further advance our tale.

"I regret to announce that my old and revered friend and abbess, Ebba, has departed to her rest. Her latter days have been embittered by a laxity of discipline in the monastery, her advanced age disabling her from controlling it with the necessary vigour: especially in a double monastery, which

requires more than ordinary energy and skill for its efficient discipline.

"I rejoice to learn that your new monastery at King Ecgfrid's port—Jarrow—is rapidly progressing, and cordially concur with you in thinking, that it will be best to unite Wearmouth and Jarrow into one institution—a united monastery. The great prosperity of the Wearmouth branch justifies your sanguine hopes as to the future of both.

"You inquire after our youthful friend, Esther, the sweet German Jewess, whom you recommended to my care. Her case is one of deep interest. As beautiful in mind as she is in person, I have watched closely every step of her progress, and have been delighted while comparing and contrasting the resemblances and differences between the opening of her mind and what I remember of my own.

"Esther, trained up in the religion of her fathers, and thoroughly educated in the Jewish Scriptures, grasps many principles as soon as they are propounded to her, which used to cost me months of anxious thought. Here, then, I see the advantage of a revelation. By condensing into an historic record, and into ritual observances, great moral truths, there arises a perpetual action and reaction between the intuitive teachings of conscience and their external

prefigurement, which very much facilitates the acquisition of spiritual truth. Take, for instance, the doctrine of sacrifice: to my mind, which had previously conversed only with nature, the doctrine appeared at first uncalled for and unreasonable; but to the mind of Esther, a religion without a sacrifice would seem no religion at all. I feel astonished to observe how, when Christian doctrine is explained to her it falls in with her preconceived views. Do I speak to her of prayer,—she points to the flame on the sacrificial altar. Do I tell her that our prayers must take cognizance of the work of Christ, his death and righteousness,—she reminds me that an altar without a victim, however bright the flame, would present no incense. Do I further suggest that prayer, breathing confidence in the righteousness of Christ, brings the conscience into union with God,—she adds, thus in olden times it is written, God accepted the sacrifice of the altar, smelling a sweet savour, and anon devouring with Divine fire the proffered gift.

"So, the idea of redemption, strange to my early thoughts, is quite familiar to the mind of Esther. Every Jewish family is redeemed by the death of an animal sacrifice on the birth of the first-born male child. 'Redeemed from what?' I asked. 'That,' she replied, 'I cannot say, but the rite is suggestive of a

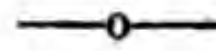
covenant relation and righteous obligations.' Again, by the sacrifices of the great Jewish Festival of Atonement the nation was redeemed; one kid was slain and burnt upon the altar; another became burdened with the sins of the people by the high priest, with superimposed hand, confessing them over its head; and, thus laden, the animal was sent by a fit man into the wilderness, that it might 'bear away the sins of the children of Israel into a land not inhabited.' What a significant ceremony!

"Still, all these external pictures of the truth seem to me very skeleton-like and unsatisfactory, until they become covered with flesh, and have life breathed into them, through the operations of the Divine Spirit within us and the outgoings of conscience. In this way, O Benedict! the sacred page, whenever I reperuse it, becomes emblazoned with new beauties; not discoveries through critical sagacity, but through an enlarged spiritual apprehension. It is like the grey dawn of morning brightening into sunrise, and advancing on to noon; or a landscape opening out more widely at our feet, as we get higher up the mountain side. I have now watched the operations of my mind a sufficiently long time to observe it to be an invariable sequence, that whenever conscience is disobeyed, in howsoever small a matter,

the mists gather; or, to use a Jewish metaphor, the guiding cloud of God's presence becomes less distinctly visible: but let the dictates of conscience be observed strictly, then the pillar of fire, amid the dreariest darkness of adversity, keeps flinging forth intenser glory.

"Nor is this all. Our faith in Christ is not intellectual, but moral. Intellectual investigations of Christianity's truth cannot carry us beyond its external appearances: of their inner significance we know nothing, until revealed to the cultured conscience. Hence I have found that, whatever my previous intellectual conclusions, spiritual unwatchfulness always induces a sceptical tendency; while unvarying submissiveness to conscience gives to faith ever accumulating strength, and brightens hope."

CHAPTER XV.



BENEDICT was now on his last journey to Rome, accompanied by Ceolfrid, who, on the grant being made by Ecgfrid, in 682, of land for a church and abbey at Jarrow, had been appointed abbot of that branch of the united monastery. During their absence, the care of both establishments was entrusted to the sub-abbot, Eosterwin.

It was during the unpropitious season which oft intervenes between the warmth of autumn and the frosts of winter, when a vessel from abroad, larger than had usually visited the port, appeared in the offing. A pilot put off to proffer his aid; and soon the vessel was seen standing inwards. After remaining for several days outside the bar to lighten, she was towed into the harbour and moored opposite to the monastery. Among the valuable goods she had on board were the ecclesiastical treasures which Benedict had forwarded from Rome, comprising silver

vessels for the services of the churches of Wearmouth and Jarrow, and a further magnificent supply of books and paintings.

But the excitement produced by the visit of so large a vessel, the richness of her cargo, and the intercourse of her crew with the inhabitants, many of whom were their fellow-countrymen, was destined to receive a speedy check in the sudden appearance of a strange and fatal disease. Persons previously in perfect health were suddenly attacked with violent spasmodic pain, followed by fearful prostration. The lips became livid, the face swollen, the tongue protruded, the eyes rolled in the frenzy of untold agony; and, amid shrieks and groans, the sufferer welcomed death with all its terrors, rather than endure longer the more awful miseries of life. The bell tolled perpetually, so quickly did the announcement of one death follow another. Every day at the appointed hour, the funeral processions were seen moving slowly towards the church, the entire population looking on in sorrowful bewilderment or breaking forth into passionate grief.

The monks had, from the earliest appearance of the calamity, been unwearied in every effort; and in this they were zealously aided by monks from neighbouring monasteries. On more than one occasion, a

new arrival of cowled visitors had been watched descending from the heights of Wredelau, or coming by sea from the religious houses along the coast. They prescribed medicines, supplied warm clothing, and whatever other alleviations the cases required. They ministered the consolations of religion, and lifted up the voice of exhortation and warning. All night long, boats were kept incessantly moving to and fro across the river. The doors of the monastery were besieged by hasty applicants, telling, in brief and rapid utterance, the name, the place; and instantly, with hurried steps, amid cold and sleet and rain, the flickering lamp lighted the feet of the benevolent priest to the wretched abodes of penury and plague.

Nor, as our readers will anticipate, could Bertha sit, with her husband and daughters around her, mingling her cup of mournful remembrances with much present enjoyment, while her neighbours were thus sickening and dying, without contributing personally to their relief.

But—so ungrateful is charity to her votaries!—those who were most active in rendering relief to others became themselves marked victims. The plague entered the monastery. Monk after monk was stricken. Bertha herself owed her escape to her

vigorous constitution, and to the promptitude with which she applied the appropriate remedies on the first appearance of unfavourable symptoms.

And yet, even these precautions failed to avert it from her family. First, her youngest daughter—then, the eldest—all her children, save one—sickened—died. Then Bassano himself sickened. On the first appearance of the disease in her family, Bertha had, with motherly promptitude, sent to the royal villa of Ad-Murum, for a physician who had studied abroad, in order that his skill might advise and aid the neighbouring Saxon leech.

A fortnight had elapsed, and in Bassano's case the disease had passed its crisis. During the next fortnight of convalescence, he frequently adverted, in his conversations with Bertha, to those topics which the proximity of death, when rationally considered, naturally suggests. "I own, Bertha," was his frank avowal, during an hour of deep confidential intercourse, "death has, until lately, seemed to me very terrible. The more correctly and blamelessly I have tried to live, the more has my conscience oppressed me. If, as you tell me, I have really been growing a wiser and better man, I have meanwhile become gradually more and more dissatisfied with myself; and had, in fact, almost abandoned hope. But, some-

how, when the night was at the darkest the morn began to dawn; in self-despair, appropriating to myself the righteousness wherewith man, through his Redeemer, stands arrayed before God, I now feel within me the growth of a joyful confidence. Yes, Bertha, our loved ones have gone to form part of that general assembly to whose gathering we look forward as the climax of our hopes."

Eosterwin and Sigfrid were Bassano's frequent visitants. The services of the Church were repeatedly administered;* and although Bassano's views with reference to their empirical efficacy were obviously much modified, he still valued them as well for their own sake as for the elevating converse of which they furnished the appropriate opportunity.

Deeming himself, at length, fully recovered, Bassano ventured out of doors on some pressing business. While abroad, the clouds gathered and descended in a cold drizzling shower. He returned home in a state of great physical exhaustion. A relapse followed. The old remedies which had been before successful were again had recourse to; but in vain. The dreaded result ensued. While Bertha and her attendants were anxiously watching around

* Note A (8).

his bed and using every expedient to relieve his sufferings, he suddenly sat upright, threw his arms around the neck of his wife, who hurried to his support, and in a moment the vital spark had fled. She laid his head gently upon the pillow, impressed upon the still warm lips a fervent kiss, spoke to him, but he answered not. Her attendants hastened to her assistance. She was led from the chamber. . . . Alas, how true!—"Our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding."

Sigfrid had, with his youthful nephew, promptly repaired, at the earliest intelligence, to the house of mourning. He would have spoken words of comfort, but could not. Whence was solace to be derived? Where sorrow is so appalling, silence is its only fit expression.

Even after many years had passed, and Bertha had reached to old age, the event could never be spoken of in her presence without causing her intense anguish. Bede's filial reverence ever forbade all allusion to it. And in his devotion to his bereaved parent who, a few years afterwards, on the death of her friend Benedict and her brother Sigfrid, left the scenes of her affliction and removed with her son to the neighbourhood of Jarrow and to association with the friends and circumstances of her earlier life, we

discover what it was which, notwithstanding distinguished and pressing invitations to visit foreign climes, bound indissolubly our venerable historian to his country and his home.

The last reports of the disease were more favourable. The number of deaths had lessened; the recoveries were more numerous; the symptoms less fearful. But Eosterwin had been taken ill. Just as the plague was being stayed among the sheep, it took away the shepherd.

On the return of Benedict and Ceolfrid, the latter delivered in the church a funeral oration, designed to illustrate the source and lessons of this and similar calamities. It is to be regretted that history has not handed down to us entire this piece of sacred eloquence, otherwise we might have had less difficulty in further unfolding the moral of our tale.

Ceolfrid's method of discourse was first to expatiate on the entanglement and perplexity of mundane affairs, and to show how utterly impossible it was to trace any connection between individual occurrences, whether adverse or prosperous, and their moral relations. "That such relations exist in the aggregate is indisputable; but it is in the aggregate only they can be traced, and all attempts to trace them in particular cases—to suppose, for example,

that a man is morally good because he is temporally prosperous, or morally evil because he is overwhelmed with calamity—is a fruitful source of superstition and error.

"When," said he, "one member of the body errs, it is not always the same member that suffers. The hand does the wrong—a member which might with safety be severed—but the organs that are punished for the offences of the hand are oft the more delicate, sensitive, and vital organs. So it is in the body politic. Vile persons sin and suffer not: nay! *seem* to be rewarded. The righteous meanwhile endure the judicial consequences of a world's transgression.

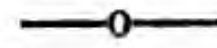
"And is there no assignable reason for this? Shall we dismiss the subject by calling it an inscrutable mystery, and make no attempt to discover the law by which such events are ordained? Shall we who have retired from the world for the very purpose that, in the solitude of the cloister, we may think over the vices of the world, until our consciences are affected by them as deeply as if they were our own—we who profess to be the world's intercessors, to be moved with contrition for humanity, to weep for humanity, to pray for humanity, to so identify ourselves with it that humanity is made to repent in our persons and plead with Heaven by our lips—shall *we* be at any

loss to determine the law upon which our whole ecclesiastical being is assumed to rest?

"Is not humanity, like man's physical framework, one united whole? So taught the stoic Epictetus: so taught also the Christian Paul, urging the virtue of truth on the ground that lying is suicidal, inasmuch as 'we are members one of another.' Such being the constitution of humanity, can it be matter of surprise that the most delicate and sensitive parts of the body politic become its focus of suffering? And is it not arranged so, in order that, by thus appealing directly to the more refined portions of the system, a more vigorous effort may be made to repel the causes of offence? Suffering is the beacon-fire of danger. This, then, is the true reason why the brightest lights in your households have been extinguished, the most beauteous flowers in your garden trampled under foot—it is to impel you to guard against impending danger, and penitentially to weep over that aggregate guilt of which human woe is the judicial infliction,—it is to prompt you to live not for yourselves only but for others, seeing that it is only by clearing entire humanity from moral evil that you can evade individual sorrow,—it is to induce you, by your devout and blameless conduct, to aid in infusing into the world the Spirit of Him who

made Himself one with the world in *its* guilt and sorrows, that He might assimilate it to Himself, in *His* righteousness and joy—and thus unite to hasten that grand finale of human history when the church having become co-extensive with the world, and been matured into 'a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle,' Christ, its Head, shall 'deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.' "

CHAPTER XVI.



Early in the year 685, in the forenoon of one of the bleakest days of a dreary Northumbrian winter, Cuthbert, the holy hermit of Farne, walked the rocky banks of his island home, in company with Eadfrith, a monk from Lindisfarne. Cuthbert had been requested by King Ecgfrid, to undertake the duties of the episcopate, and not being yet satisfied that his duty required him to do so, Eadfrith had embraced this opportunity of again urging him to accede to the general wish.

In the course of the conversation, Eadfrith remarked: "You cannot deny, my brother, that it oft becomes a Christian's duty to sacrifice his own will and enjoyment to do the will and promote the happiness of others."

"That I can do," rejoined Cuthbert, "without becoming a bishop. Self-sacrifice, Eadfrith, is the law of the universe. Whether we will or will not, Provi-

dence compels every atom of humanity to contribute to the general good. The downfall of one man advances another: if one be impoverished, others are thereby enriched: the mother suffers to give birth to her children: the father toils and sweats to provide them with bread."

Eadfrith.—"But cases of this kind differ from those in which there is voluntary self-sacrifice. The father when he labours for his children, does not elect to labour; he would prefer supporting them without labour, and submits to it only as a necessary alternative—out of two evils choosing the least."

Cuthbert.—"Or rather say, preferring the higher good. And does not this preference of the higher good enter into every species of duty—whether duties of self-mortification, self-sacrifice, or resignation? In self-mortification, duty consists in subordinating some of the lower appetites and desires of our nature to higher and more spiritual pursuits. In self-sacrifice, duty consists in submitting to personal deprivation and pain, in order thereby to win for others some benefit of higher value than that which we ourselves give up. So in resignation; we yield to a higher Will—why? If we do so reluctantly, and because the higher Will is irresistible, you would not call that resignation. If, on the

other hand, we yield cheerfully, it is because we have confidence in the higher Will, that some good will be achieved by our privations contributing more to the general happiness than we take from it. Our Saviour is the pattern of resignation; He yielded to the will of his Father; yet it was not a *blind* submission, but a submission that contemplated the Father's purpose,—'For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame.'"

Eadfrith.—"But how am I to know that the sufferings I am called thus involuntarily to endure have any valuable end in promoting the welfare of others? Until I am assured that they have this end, there is wanting the primary element you spoke of—a higher interest preferred to a lower."

Cuthbert.—"That God has adequate ends in view in all the afflictions with which he chastens his people, is a proposition about which we can entertain no doubt. It may not be, I repeat, that God's designs in our afflictions are concentrated upon ourselves. They may be designed to advance *not our* interests, but the interests of *others;* and it is in contentedness with this arrangement that self-sacrificing resignation shows itself. We must, if God so will, be content to grieve that others may rejoice; submit to be in poverty, that others may

be rich; be crushed and humbled, that others may be exalted: assured that all these are intermediate steps tending to humanity's completed redemption.

"Add yet another thought. Suffering is the index of guilt. To suffer without being reminded that sin and suffering are bound up together in God's irrevocable sentence, would prove that our consciences are not adequately sensitive. Hence the true doctrine of resignation and self-sacrifice is this:—We are to educate the conscience to contemplate human wickedness with a world-embracing penitence, and to regard all our sufferings and calamities as but strokes of the rod wherewith the world is being whipped into obedience; whence will arise active efforts on our part to improve the world, not through a benevolence falsely supposed to be disinterested, but through our sympathetic interest in humanity as component parts of a living whole."

In the great hall of the Abbey of Coldingham a solemn council was now assembling, and thither a sail was conveying Cuthbert and Eadfrith, as the above conversation concluded. Rumours had gone abroad, impugning the morals of the abbey, and the abbess had requested the assistance of several of the neighbouring ecclesiastics to investigate the facts.

On several occasions the inmates of the abbey

had been awoke by songs, and by loud conversation and laughter. The doors of some of the cells had been heard to open in the night, and sounds had been heard as of persons passing hastily along the corridors. Several attempts had been made to detect the offenders, but without success. At length, however, circumstances combined to fix suspicion on one individual, and her reputed excellence of character, and relation to Constance, rather fostered than repressed the wish in many that such suspicion might not prove unfounded.

The cell of the nun Elfgiva adjoined that of Esther, and the frequent opening and shutting of the door of one of these cells had become matter of common conversation, although none would undertake to say with certainty which door it was. But Elfgiva eventually stepped forward in the character of an accuser. "She had long," she said, "suffered herself to remain under an unjust suspicion, rather than undertake the odious duty of an informer; her conscience rebuked her severely for her long silence, and she could not now hold her peace. It was the cell of Esther into which nearly every night some person seemed to be admitted. On the first day of that month, as the clock struck the midnight hour she, Elfgiva, awoke, and distinctly heard some one

passing along the corridor. She sat up in bed and listened, and heard the door of Esther's cell open and shut; and placing her ear against the partition, she heard the sound of a male voice, followed by some one saying 'Hush!' after which, she heard no more." When questioned as to whether she could recognize the male voice she had heard, Elfgiva displayed great reluctance to answer, alleging that she had not heard it so distinctly as to exclude mistake, and that she was unwilling to speak, unless she were certain. At length, however, she admitted that "she thought it was the voice of the monk Wulfric."

Wulfric was now called before the council, and subjected to a rigorous examination. He denied, at first, that he had been into the cell of any nun, and affected great indignation that so unjust an accusation should have been made against him. He was then told of what Elfgiva had said, and threatened with severe discipline if he withheld a full confession. Thus urged, Wulfric confessed "that he had been in the habit of visiting Esther frequently; but being now convinced of his error, he prayed earnestly that his misconduct might not be punished with excessive severity, promising exemplary reformation."

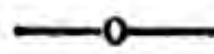
One of the domestic servants was next produced, whose duty had required her to be in attendance upon the abbess until a late hour on the night mentioned by Elfgiva. The clock struck twelve as she passed the end of the corridor; the full moon was shining into it, and, looking along it as she passed, she distinctly saw the nun Esther come up the corridor from the opposite end, and turn into her cell. When asked if she was certain that it was the nun Esther, she replied, "that she saw her face,—that she stood and looked for some moments at the nun coming up the corridor towards her,—that she was not quite sure as to the cell the nun entered; but having no doubt that it was Esther's face she had seen, she could not doubt that it was her own cell she entered,—that the figure certainly seemed taller than Esther, and she might have had some doubt of the figure if she had not seen the face so distinctly,—but that being dressed in a white wrapper, that circumstance might make the figure look tall, and as she felt quite sure as to the face being Esther's, she could not permit any misgiving about the figure to influence her decided conviction that it was Esther she saw."

Esther was now called. Puzzled to know why her presence had been demanded, she received the

message with some trepidation, and appeared before her ecclesiastical examiners with a blush and fear, which to some of them seemed a half confession. But on hearing the statements repeated to her which had been made by the witnesses, she aroused herself to give to them a very decided and indignant contradiction, denying that Wulfric had ever been admitted to her cell, or that she had been in the corridor at the time spoken to by the servant. She could, however, give no clue to the mystery. "She was accustomed," she said, "to fall asleep as soon as she lay down, and never to wake till the hour of morning prayer."

A long discussion followed between the abbess and her advisers, and they eventually separated without coming to any conclusion. Esther rushed from the council chamber to the arms of her faithful friend Constance. Constance wrote to Benedict, and a lengthened correspondence ensued. The mind of Benedict was astounded at the evidence of Esther's guilt; and, notwithstanding Esther's impassioned denial, and Constance's firm confidence in her innocence, Benedict would not say that he was satisfied,—a source to both Constance and Esther, for many months, of extreme distress.

CHAPTER XVII.



WHILE such were the events transpiring at Coldingham, other circumstances also occurred of a more public nature, which to Benedict were deeply painful. We have said that Oswy's two sons, Ecgfrid and Alcfrid, had received from Benedict their early education, and that Ecgfrid had evidenced his affection for his tutor by bestowing upon him those grants of land to which the United Monastery owed its endowment. With many excellent qualities, Ecgfrid was headstrong, and engaged not unfrequently in enterprizes contrary to good counsel and productive of disastrous results. He had sent a military expedition to Ireland, which, although successful in arms, had returned loaded with the reproach of having devastated the country, and destroyed several of the Irish churches and monasteries. And now, despite the earnest entreaties both of Cuthbert and Benedict, he had led his army against the Picts, or Britons of Strath Clyde. Here, as

Bede relates, "the enemy made a show as if they fled, and the king was drawn into the straits of inaccessible mountains, and slain, with the greatest part of his forces, on the 20th of May, in the fortieth year of his age, and the fifteenth of his reign, A.D. 685."

"Misfortunes," says the proverb, "seldom come alone." Within twelve months after those already recorded, a stranger arrived one morning at the monastery of Wearmouth, footsore and distressed. He had travelled all night, and had come last from the royal castle of Bamburgh. But his journey had commenced originally from Coldingham, and he was the bearer of most fearful tidings. Coldingham was in ruins.

After having rested and refreshed himself, the monks assembled to hear Edgill's tale.

"The monastery of Coldingham had, since the death of the Abbess Ebba, remained the abode of some who, violating its monastic rules, had brought odium upon the entire community; and by, as was thought, a special judgment of Heaven, it had been burned to the ground." *

Benedict could with difficulty restrain his emotion; and long before dawn he was far on his journey.

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* Note E.

The setting sun was bathing in glory the towers of Bamburgh as Benedict passed them on his way to Lindisfarne. Worn and weary, he traversed the sandy waste, and that night was domiciled in the monastery, where he learnt every particular respecting the recent catastrophe.

On Lindisfarne's rocky peak, Benedict kept watch day by day. The monk Eadfrith was then engaged in copying a magnificent manuscript of the Latin text of the Gospels, preserved still in the Cottonian Library, and known as the "Durham Book." At any other time such a matter would have excited Benedict's most lively interest; but, under existing circumstances, even this had no attractions for him; nor the well-stored library; nor the converse of the learned; nor the politics of Bamburgh; nor the news of the world. A solitary thought, in fact, engrossed his whole soul: and every vessel that passed he scanned narrowly.

At length, one day at noon, a bark was seen leaving the harbour of the Tweed, and steering southward. She showed a signal in passing, which, in connection with letters from Melrose, revealed the fact, that on board were several of the truly religious members of the late dishonoured community, who were about to seek, under the stricter

surveillance of the Abbess of Whitby, more hallowed and ennobling fellowship.

From these letters Benedict also learnt, to his great joy, that the fears he had entertained with respect to the nun Esther had proved wholly unfounded. The fire which had destroyed the monastery originated in the cell of Elfgiva. She had been rescued with difficulty, but had been much injured; and in the hour of her anguish and the prospect of death, she had made a full confession. It was into her cell, and not into that of Esther, that Wulfric had so often intruded. To facilitate these visits, he wore a mask made to resemble Esther; and thus masked, and in female apparel, he had been accustomed to visit Elfgiva.

In the burying ground of St. Hilda's Convent lies one whose heart had ever vibrated in harmony with the worthy object of her first and only earthly love. The daughter of one of Mercia's proudest Pagan chieftains, her father had denied to the youthful Benedict the boon he urgently sought. Crossed in their purpose, the pair had mutually turned their thoughts to a life of recluse devotion. Only once had the even course of their spiritual aspirations been disturbed; and that was when the nun, driven from Coldingham, shared the general degradation of the

convent, and sought at Melrose a temporary refuge. Her soul, the very essence of truth and purity, shuddered at the sudden discovery that had been made of the convent's old and secret iniquities, and her shame reddened at the thought of even an unwitting association with what she so intensely abhorred. To these sentiments her correspondence with Benedict gave frank expression, and though, in accordance with their vows, still fated to personal severance, they mingled in secret their shame, their tears, their prayers.

Elevated souls united in affection, yet severed by circumstances that compel their devotion to life's higher destinies, look naturally forward to the consummation of their union in death. A few days after Constance's remains had been committed to the tomb, there stood by it, in the dim twilight of eventide, the form of one attired in the garb of the Northumbrian Benedictines. He looked down upon the grave, in solemn meditation, long and wistfully; then, with raised clasped hands, gazed upward to heaven, tears bedewing his furrowed cheeks: awhile he knelt—in silence and sorrow; then rising, betook him to his homeward journey.

A packet of papers had, meanwhile, been left for Benedict, at his monastery, by some unknown hand.

It bore an inscription in a handwriting long familiar to him. He tore open the outward wrapping, eager to solve the mystery of its contents, and there he found, to his surprise and joy, a journal which Constance had kept during the whole period of her conventual life.

A careful perusal of this document led to the division of it into three well-marked intervals. The first commenced with her entrance into the convent, and attempted little more than a diary of the events occurring under her observation. The second indicated a decided growth of intellectual power. It noted the books she read, treasured up choice extracts, and added criticisms and remarks of her own, to which Benedict, learned as he was, attached for their own sake, and not undeservedly, a high value. The third interval recorded only her spiritual growth. It almost negatived the existence of the outer world, and instead of the intellectual speculations interspersed throughout the second division, the sole object of it seemed to be to trace the development of her Christian consciousness.

Passing over the first interval, we select a few extracts from the second and third.

"*December* 3, 675.—I have read this year several books on the doctrine of the Trinity and the Person

of Christ. I much regret the existence of so much acrimonious controversy on a subject which lies at the boundary of human knowledge, and can never, therefore, be otherwise than imperfectly understood. That the Godhead must necessarily be regarded in three aspects, seems to me, however, so clear, that were I left to frame my own creed, without aid either from the Bible or from the Church, I think I should naturally fall into recognizing some sort of Trinity, and certainly should never dream of any Trinity except in unity; for that there can be but one God reason and conscience alike testify. But in thinking of this one God, my reason tells me that He is infinite and eternal, and as I can comprehend neither the one nor the other of these attributes I must conclude that, so far as reason is concerned, God is incomprehensible,—the Father. I turn then to nature, and my emotions prompt me to look upon nature as animated by a Spirit Divine,—the Holy Ghost. But if I stop here I have no object of religious homage separated from myself. I am part of nature, and as such have divinity within me. But I cannot worship myself; my moral nature forbids it. Prayer is one of the first dictates of man's moral nature, and its first impulse is to ask God to reveal himself. Now, if He reveal himself, He

must do so as a person, in time and space. Any other kind of revelation is impossible. Whether He reveal himself in a cloud of glory, in an angelic and intangible form, or in a body of flesh, He becomes to me God made manifest—the Son of God."

"*January* 15, 680.—Received this day a letter from Benedict, out of which I select for meditation the following striking passage:—'It cannot be doubted that in proportion as anyone becomes more holy, he acquires a deeper conviction of his personal worthlessness; at the same time, however, he becomes more assured of the Divine approval. How is this? He at once sinks and rises; becomes humbled and exalted. Some third element is necessary to be introduced in order to solve the anomaly, and this third element is a believing or conscientious appropriation of Christ's righteousness. Let this element be eliminated, and the facts of man's moral nature then present an unsolvable difficulty; but let Christianity stand as a part of the question, and all perplexities vanish.'"

"*July* 3, 683.—Recently I ventured to express to Theodore an opinion that justification, as the word is used by St. Paul, implies a conscience so trusting in the righteousness of Christ as to derive therefrom peace, assurance, rest; adding that I was desirous of

being taught, how justification, in this sense, comes from faith. I have now received his reply. 'Faith,' says Theodore—'the faith that justifies—is not a mere *intellectual* apprehension of truth. The doctrine of Christ's Atonement—or of Christ's Righteousness having made God and man at one—has a *moral* aptitude to the earnest conscience, and, on the truth being declared, faith therein springs up *intuitively*, through such aptitude.'" *

"*September* 10.—After receiving my last letter from Theodore, I wrote him, with a full account of the death-bed conversion of my maid Agatha. He writes me in reply, courteously thanking me for what he calls 'an instructive narrative,' and invites my attention to the fact that faith *sprung up* in Agatha's heart while the truth was being proclaimed to her; thereby confirming what his letter so beautifully taught."

"*May* 1, 687.—My birthday. 'Tis now evening, and I have spent several hours in reviewing my past life. Although for the most part outwardly calm, what a storm has there been within! How seldom do man's inner and outer life run parallel. Some whose lives are incessant activity, are inwardly like

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* Note (A 7).

the deep unruffled river, flowing on at an even pace continually. Others, who seem to an observer tranquil as a summer's eve, are in their inner life in unceasing conflict. So has it been with me. Even when convinced that outward circumstances were all in accordance with Heaven's decrees, I have found it hard to submit,—hard to say, 'Not my will, but thine be done.' I would have had events differently arranged, and would have played in the world a more conspicuous part. Rebuked by repeated disappointments, and the ill-success of many ineffectual struggles, I submit at last. And in this submission I have at length found life's greatest good. Oh, how sweet the calm! Not the mountain lake, when not a breath of air stirs a blade of the pendant grass around its brink, is calmer than my once disturbed heart."

"*June* 6.—This morning, at three o'clock, sister Agnes entered her rest. For many years she has been the friend of my bosom. A gentle spirit! when first aroused to the consciousness of her guilty state she asked me to guide her; and with her last breath she bade me quickly follow. Oh, Agnes! though lost to sight, I feel thee nigh! Surely the spirits of the just, if 'present with the Lord,' may not improperly be regarded as present with them to whom the Lord is present. 'We are come to the general assembly,'

—it is around us; and, albeit still in the body, we are part of the gathering throng. In my earlier Christian life, I was wont to regard heaven as a place far distant. Now, heaven and earth seem mystically combined. My Lord and Master is not yonder, but here: and Agnes is here."

"*July* 10.—I have entered to day into the Holy of Holies, and beheld, from between the outspread wings of the cherubim, the glory of the Shechinah. How thin the veil that separates heaven from earth! Nay, I doubt even if there be a veil; for was it not rent when Jesus died? My happy life has of late been spent, not in looking for heaven, but in possessing it; not in waiting for, but enjoying it. I can scarcely imagine heaven to be better than I now feel it to be. Christ could scarcely be nearer to me than He is. My bodily sight of Him would not bring Him nearer. And yet, lofty as my thoughts are of Thee, O Saviour! how unworthy they are of their object! It is in the enlarged capacity to apprehend Christ, that He is to be brought more intimately nigh. Oh, *thus* come nearer! nearer! nearer!"

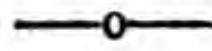
"*September* 30.—A letter from Benedict. His activity and success gladden me. How much we resemble each other; and yet how much we differ! . . . . ."

A break in the entry showed that the mind that dictated wanted a hand competent to discharge its much loved duty. Another hand had written the next entry, and with it the narrative closed.

"*December* 5, A.D., 687.—At one o'clock this morning, sister Constance broke away from the shackles of mortality, and joined the host with whom her ardent spirit had long held high communion. So complete had become her submission to the Divine will that pain and sickness were accepted by her as blessings. Resigned to live, or content to die, she uttered no complaint, and scarcely offered a prayer.

All her words were words of praise. To write them would feebly express their import. They were breathed with an ardour which only beatified tongues can imitate. Her chamber was as the vestibule of heaven. The abbess and several of the sisterhood knelt around the bed as she was departing; in reverential silence commending her spirit to her Redeemer; and at the moment—although no articulate voice was heard, nor object palpable to the senses—the vivid impression awoke spontaneously in each present, that the Heavenly Bridegroom had come among us to claim his bride; and that, arrayed in the bridal attire of her Redeemer's righteousness, she had fallen accepted at the feet of her Lord."

CHAPTER XVIII.



AFTER the death of Eosterwin, Sigfrid, then but a deacon, had been unanimously elected by the monks to preside over them as sub-abbot; a choice of which Benedict most cordially approved.

With the exception of the loss by the plague of many valued friends and adherents, the monastery was now in the highest state of prosperity. Six hundred monks were resident within the edifices of Wearmouth and Jarrow. Their lands, recently a morass, had been brought into a state of advanced cultivation, and the surrounding population, as a natural consequence, daily increased.

Sixteen years had transpired since the first foundation was laid of the fabric. Sigfrid had long endured a slow martyrdom from the perpetual gnawings of the disease which preyed upon his lungs, and, while it preternaturally brightened his intellect, annihilated

his physical vigour. Benedict's masculine frame had been subdued by paralysis.

Time advanced, and the two infirm abbots felt themselves placed on the brink of the grave, and destitute of all hope of ever again being competent to undertake the management of affairs. Under these circumstances, a mutual desire seized them of holding an interview, for the purpose of once more conversing with each other about the interests of the monastery, and concerting plans for its future government. To effect this, Sigfrid was carried on a bier from his own to Benedict's apartment. Here, as the chroniclers record, he was laid on the same bed, so that their heads reclined on one pillow. Yet such was their present state of debility, that, although now placed in contact, they were unable of themselves to exchange the last kiss of peace. At length, those around them having, for the purpose, raised their shattered frames, this preliminary salutation was exchanged, and the consultation ended in the devolution of the absolute control of the United Monastery upon the energetic Ceolfrid—a name still to be seen in the church at Jarrow, honourably recorded on the original memorial stone of the monastic foundation, in the following inscription of undoubted authenticity, and

such, perhaps, as no other church in England can boast:—

DEDICATIO BASILICAE
SCI PAVLI VIIII KL MAI
ANNO XV EGFRIDI REG
CEOLFRIDI ABB EIVSDEMQ
Q ECCLES DO AVCTORE
CONDITORIS ANNO IIII.*

Alcfrid at this time swayed the sceptre of Northumbria and, like the great Alfred of a subsequent generation, was as distinguished for the elevation of his personal character, as he was for the wisdom and vigour of his administration. "*In scripturis doctissimus*" is the attribute that was ascribed to him by the men of his own time. For nineteen years his light beamed from the Castle of Bamburgh, and during this period the moral welfare and happiness of his people was the exclusive aim of his untiring efforts. It was Northumbria's golden age.

Men die; nations rise and fall; but humanity careers onward in its mighty course. The battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift, but, as the moon wanes only to renew her glory, the tendency of all human events is towards a triumphant conclusion.

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* Note D

At the moment when our two recluse abbots were preparing to bid adieu to the scenes of their earthly toil, Europe and Asia were gathering the elements of dynasties whose pregnant future has crowded the historic page with deeds of renown. Mohammed had just fulfilled his personal career, and the crescent was summoning its Saracenic bands for rapid conquest. The foundations were being laid whereon, within a century afterwards, arose the Empire of Charlemagne and the magnificence of France. Gradually, the kingdoms of the Heptarchy were becoming combined, and the majestic oak of England was putting forth the leaves that flourish still in all the freshness of their early youth. But these combinations, if we are to infer the future from the past, are only preliminary to other and higher combinations, and to these higher and more perfect forms of social existence and unity, Sigfrid and Benedict, like Simeon of old, looked forward with prophetic hope.

Sigfrid first put off this mortal coil. Benedict speedily followed. The night of his exit was remarkable for a terrific storm. But it served only to mark the contrast more strongly between his sufferings and his hopes. The monks throng the church. Sleep is banished from every eye: and the solemn darkness of the night is spent in watching, psalmody,

and prayer. Many crowd into the cell where the dying abbot is laid, languid and emaciated in body, but vigorous and robust in soul, viewing with unshaken intrepidity the uplifted arm of his ghastly foe.

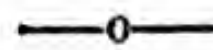
For his consolation, the sacred Scriptures were read aloud by one of the monks, such parts being selected, by his special request, as had reference to our Lord Jesus Christ's Second Advent, and, as connected therewith, to the "restitution of all things," the world's "regeneration," the "resurrection," the "new heavens and new earth," or however else yonder concluding, peaceful, happy, glorious, and never-ending era of the world's history is in Scripture described. While engaged in listening with devout interest to what was thus read to him, he was observed to gaze eagerly, as if at some bright vision gleaming before him; and with great effort he distinctly articulated a name long buried in the depths of his affectionate nature, but of which none around understood the import—"Constance! Constance!" His eyes for a few moments followed the beloved object, then closed, and during several minutes afterwards he was wrapt in reverie.

The storm subsiding, the moonbeams struggled through the cloud and penetrated his chamber. As

the night waned, the bright star of the morning, too, shone with unusual brilliancy. Benedict was noticed raising to it, with a smile, his dying eye. He was gone ere the sky was streaked with the sun's rising glory; but he had beheld its precursor, and was apprized of its approach.

A magnificent tomb once marked the spot where Benedict Biscop lay in the church of the abbey first founded by his pious zeal and governed by his wise counsels. With other monuments of greatness it has long since perished. But the more humble memorial-figure of the saintly Sigfrid still lies in the chancel where his earnest spirit wrestled in devotion; and each morn, when lighted by the flame that comes from the far east o'er the ocean, there plays suggestively upon its impassive features hopeful beamings of the brightening day.

NOTES.



NOTE A.

It is unnecessary to do more than refer generally to the "Monumenta Historica Britannica," "Wheloc's Bede," "Bede's Lives of the Wearmouth Abbots," the Publications of the Surtees Society, and the Proceedings of the Archæological Institute, as our principal authorities for dates and historic facts. On theological points we beg to cite the following extracts from Soames's Bampton Lecture, intituled "An Inquiry into the Doctrines of the Anglo-Saxon Church" (1830).

(1).

"The doctrines of the Anglican Church are in perfect unison with those traditions which were taught by all the earliest luminaries of our distant ancestry. The Reformers did little more than expel from her bosom the gradual accumulation of medieval novelties, and abolish various observances dependent upon ecclesiastical tradition, and convicted, by long experience, of inutility and danger. In other respects, the renovation of our religious system restored the ascendency of those doctrines which had been originally established in the land, and which had long been holden 'whole and undefiled.'"—P. 473.

(2).

"Unless the 'Spirit itself bear witness with our spirit' when we humbly and earnestly seek for comfort and instruction from Holy Scripture, assertions of its Divine authority would sound in the ears of most men as little better than 'idle tales.' It is because the sacred pages afford abundantly this kind of internal evidence, that they bring an irresistible conviction of their heavenly character to unprejudiced readers of every class."—P. 12.

(3).

"Of Theodore's history but few particulars are known. He is, however, expressly—and from no mean authority—styled a philosopher. Upon the school which afforded him intellectual culture, persons of any learning generally will have no difficulty to decide. In St. Austin's estimation, the Platonics were the chief and noblest of philosophers. Nor is it likely that Theodore belonged to any other sect. Its principles, therefore, we may reasonably suppose, affected far from inconsiderably the composition of that celebrated 'Penitential' whereof he was the author, and which long exercised so powerful an influence over England and over all her continental neighbours."—P. 258.

(4).

"The Lord saith to Peter, 'Thou art stony.' For the strength of his faith and the constancy of his confession he received the name; because he joined himself with firm mind to Christ, who is called 'stone' by the Apostle Paul. And 'I build my Church upon this stone'—that is, *over myself*—with the belief which now thou utterest respecting me. All God's congregation is founded over the stone—that is, over Christ—because he is the ground-wall of all the building of His own Church. All of God's

Church are reckoned as *one* congregation, and that is built with chosen men—not with dead stones. We are, through the belief, reckoned His limbs, and He our Head."—*Saxon Homily for St. Peter's Day*. P. 131.

(5).

"Peter's ship, which stood near, signified the Jewish folk who turned to Christ and believed in him, although some of them would not. In them was the beginning of the whole Church. That other ship signified the whole heathen folk who, of all mankind, acknowledged with faith the beloved Jesus; and this is the Church."—*Ex Hom. Dom. VI. post Pentec. Wheloc. in Bed.* 257. P. 161.

The idea of humanity's organic unity, referred to by our Saxon forefathers in the above extracts, under the emblems of a building, the human body, and a ship, occurs again in *Thorpe's Homilies of Elfric* (1844), *vol.* 1, *p.* 273. *See also Ibid, p.* 369.

(6).

"Our forefathers were trained in a belief that the happy spirits now resting from their earthly trials entertain a lively interest for mankind. The Church triumphant was considered as sympathizing completely with the Church militant."—P. 193.

(7).

"He (Peter) had not that understanding through human teaching; but the Heavenly Father, through the Holy Ghost, gave this belief unto Peter's heart."—*Saxon Homily for St. Peter's Day*. P. 131.

(8).

"Of the cordial agreement between our Saxon fathers and

ourselves, in maintaining that 'the cup of the Lord is not to be denied to lay-people,' their whole practice is a sufficient attestation."—P. 470.

NOTE B.

As to the time and place of the Venerable Bede's birth.

All we know with certainty about Bede is recorded by himself. Speaking of the monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow, he informs us that he was born "in territorio ejusdem monasterii," a phrase which King Alfred has translated into Saxon thus, "On sundorlande thæs ylcan mynstres." From these words we infer two things: —First, that the place of Bede's birth was within the monastic territory; and secondly, that he was not born until after such territory had been appropriated.

Is it not fair to infer, from the words "in territorio," that the place of Bede's birth was monastic territory *when* he was born; in contradistinction to the idea that it was land which *afterwards became* monastic territory? Bede having died in 735, and being then beyond doubt upwards of fifty-eight years of age, he cannot have been born later than 677; and as that portion of the monastic territory which had special relation to the edifice at Jarrow was not granted until 682, it follows that, if the place of his birth were monastic territory at the time of its occurrence, he cannot have been born on the lands of Jarrow.

But if not born on the Jarrow lands, he must have been born on the Wearmouth lands; and then arises the question—What are we to understand by the words "in territorio," and their Saxon equivalent "on sundorlande"? Are not both sufficiently comprehensive in their meaning to embrace the town or village built upon the common, and given up to the use of the lay population, as well as the edifice and enclosed lands occupied exclusively by the monks? Of "territorium," Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, lib.

v., cap. iv., thus writes:—"Terra dicta ab eo, ut Ælius scribit, quod teritur; itaque terra in Augurum libris scripta cum R uno. Ab eo colonis locus communis, qui prope oppidum relinquitur, *Territorium*, quod maxime teritur." Cicero, in his *Orationes Phillipicæ*, 2, 40, 102, uses the word in the same sense:—"Quo quidem vomere portam Capuæ pæne perstrinxisti, ut florentis coloniæ *territorium* minueretur." And although the Saxon word "sundorlande" *may* mean, as defined by lexicographers, "land sundered for exclusive occupation," its use as the proper name of several towns and villages whose locality indicates its import, justifies the conclusion that the word is with equal, if not greater, propriety referable to outlying land, or to land sundered from that which is exclusive and privileged in order to its common and miscellaneous occupancy. Of this we have examples in North Sunderland, an outlying portion of the royal demesne of Bamburgh, and held of it on servile tenure; Sunderland Bridge, severed and disrupted by the rivers Brun and Wear from other lands of St. Oswald; Sunderland-near-the-sea, severed by the river Wear from the Monastery of Wearmouth, and of free tenure; Sunderlandwick, in Yorkshire, anciently a considerable village adjacent to the priory of Wetadun; Sonderborg, in Schleswig; and other places.

Then, as to the time: if born within territory comprised in the grant at Wearmouth, that event cannot have occurred prior to the death of Coinwalch, king of the West Saxons, until which time Benedict made no application for land to Ecgfrid. And as the earliest period assigned by chronologists to Coinwalch's death and to Ecgfrid's subsequent grant is 672, we are thus shut up to the conclusion, that Bede was born somewhere between 672 and 677. Between these two extreme points, Bede's biographers vary considerably. Gehle fixes upon 672, Symeon on 677; but the more generally received opinion is in favour of 674 or 675.

NOTE C.

The "Ecclesiastical Institutes" (p. 475 in the folio edition of the Laws, by Thorpe) direct that "mass-priests ought always to have at their houses a school of disciples; and if any one desire to commit his little ones (*lytlingas*) to them for instruction, they ought very gladly to receive them, and kindly teach them."

NOTE D.

"The Dedication of the Church of St. Paul, on the 24th of April, in the fifteenth year of King Ecgfrid, and in the fourth year of Abbot Ceolfrid, who, under God, founded the same church."

Ecgfrid began his reign in 670, so that the church at Jarrow would appear from the above inscription to have been dedicated in 685, about a month before Ecgfrid's death; and between three and four years—or in the fourth year—after the grant by him of the land, and the appointment of Ceolfrid to be abbot.

NOTE E.

The Saxon Chronicle records a conflagration at Coldingham Abbey in 679; but its entire destruction did not occur until *after* the death of the Abbess Ebba. *Vide* Bed. Ecc. His., B. iv., c. 25. The Abbess died on the 25th August, 684, and the monastery was reduced to ashes in 686. *Vide* Mon. His. Brit., p. 229, note (*a*); and the "Lives of the English Saints," No. vi., pp. 117, 132.

THE END.

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