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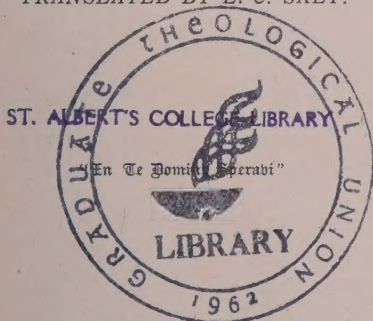
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LIFE
OF
ST. BONAVENTURE

CARDINAL BISHOP OF ALBANO
SUPERIOR-GENERAL OF THE FRANCISCAN ORDER

TRANSLATED BY L. C. SKEY.



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LIFE OF ST. BONAVENTURE.

CHAPTER I.

First Years of the Saint.

“Prævenisti eum in benedictionibus dulcedinis.”—
Ps. xx.

IN the year 1225, at Bagnarea, a town in Tuscany, it happened that a child lay dangerously ill. All that medicine could do had been done, in vain, and the utmost efforts of affectionate care seemed powerless to arrest the approach of death. But hard by there lived St. Francis d'Assisi, the friend of God, whose miracles and virtues were renowned throughout the world, and the mother of this sick child, when all hope had been taken from her, turned in her despair to Heaven, and sought the help of St. Francis. Grief never failed to touch his tender heart: he prayed, and the child was cured, and became so strong, that until his death he never again knew what it was to be ill.

This child was four years old when it was thus cured by the prayers of St. Francis, and had received in Baptism the name of John. Its father was John Fidenza, and its mother Mary Ritellis. They were both good people, who fervently tried to practise every Christian virtue, and to show her gratitude to Almighty God for the miraculous recovery of her child, his mother consecrated him by a vow to the Lord. The rank of these people is a matter of little moment; whatever their position in the world may have been, they are illustrious from the holiness of their lives, and from their faith, which God was pleased to reward by this miracle; and a great glory is theirs in being the parents of a child who became a Doctor of the Church, and has, by generations, been honoured with the title of "Seraphic," and held in public veneration by the whole world, and whose writings will, to the end of time, promote the praise of the Divine Master, by Whom they were inspired.

Some time after this miracle of healing, Francis d'Assisi came to Bagnarea, and visited the family of the child whom his prayers had

saved from death. At that time this great Saint and Patriarch of the poor was near his end. From the hour that the Sacred Stigmata of the Passion had been miraculously imprinted on his hands, and feet, and side, his heart had burned with so intense a fire of divine love, that it threatened to burst the bonds of a body already enfeebled by penance. He would cry out in these transports of love, "Oh ! love, why hast thou thus wounded me? My heart is bursting from my bosom, it burns and consumes away : it finds no home, it cannot fly, because it is in chains ; it melts like wax in the fire, it dies a living death, it languishes away ; it longs to take flight, it is in the midst of a fiery furnace ! Alas ! what will be the end ? This is rather to die than to live, so intense is the fire by which I am consumed. I suffer a torment that cannot be imagined ; its heat is melting my heart. I cannot explain what I suffer, I die of love, I have no heart left."

Thus death approached this holy man to whom love had given a mortal wound. But God would not allow him to mount to Heaven in His chariot of fire, without leaving one on

earth on whom his spirit might rest, to console and cheer the souls whom the Saint had left behind, exposed to the unholy influences of earthly things. "Oh! if only I could find a soul that could understand me!" the Saint had cried, and his prayer had not remained unheard; for he did not leave this world until he had held close to his heart such a soul as he had longed for, one who should reveal to future generations the deepest secrets of celestial love. When St. Francis came to the house of Fidenza, and looked upon the child his prayers had saved, the soul of the Saint thrilled at the angelic expression that illumined the countenance of the boy. At the sight of him, the Spirit of the Lord revealed to the mind of St. Francis the secrets of the future, and, like another Zachariah, he predicted the great future of this other John; exclaiming with enthusiastic fervour, "O Buona Ventura!" The Saint rejoiced, for he had found the soul for which he had sighed so long. This child, like himself, should be called a seraph; the same fire of devotion should be kindled in this soul, which burned so fiercely in his own. In

order to consecrate the solemn day on which he had met this child, and had pronounced of him the prophetic words inspired by the Spirit of God, St. Francis decided that he should henceforth be no more called "John," but "Bonaventure". A few months later the saintly penitent of Assisi passed away from the earth, his lips murmuring to the last a canticle of love divine.

The visit of the Saint to Bagnarea had made a deep impression on Mary, the mother of the child : henceforth, the young Bonaventure was looked upon by her as a sacred treasure which she was to guard and prepare, in order to make it worthy of the Lord, to Whom one day she was to restore it. She therefore applied herself to teach him to know the God Who had given him back his life, to despise the world and its frivolities, to practise the holy virtues of humility, obedience, and abnegation of self ; and she rejoiced to see that her pious efforts were crowned with success. The child grew to love the Lord ; the more he learned of Him, the more he took delight in acts of virtue ; and, like Tobias, he passed the first

years of his life without falling into any of the sins of youth.

Bonaventure had been promised to the Order of the Minor Friars, whose principal work was the salvation of souls ; therefore Mary sent him to their schools to be prepared to preach the truth, and fulfil all the work which Heaven might have in store for him. He progressed so rapidly as to fill his teachers with wonder, and his intelligence enabled him quickly to master all the circle of science, which, at that time, it was customary to teach. In the midst of all this hard study, however, his piety, far from being hindered or impaired, increased from day to day. Everything he learned he converted into a means of raising himself to God, of praising Him, and of leading a better life ; and while his aptitude for science astonished those whose duty it was to instruct him, his fervour, his innocence, his modesty, his wisdom, and the virtue, of which he might truly be said to be a model, filled them with admiration, so that they said to one another, like the inhabitants of Judea, "What will this child be? for the Hand of the Lord is with him".

Thus, under the care of his good mother, this young flower expanded to the soft breath of the grace of God, and soon its refreshing fragrance spread through all the Church.

CHAPTER II.

Bonaventure Renounces the World and enters the Religious Life.

“Erit tanquam lignum quod plantatum est secus decursus aquarum, quod fructum suum dabit in tempore suo.”—Ps. i.

UNTIL the Saint had nearly reached his twenty-second year, he went on gradually preparing himself for the accomplishment of the sacrifice he had promised to make to Heaven. To this end he used often to recall the words of the great Lawgiver, “When thou hast made a vow to the Lord thy God defer not to pay it, because the Lord thy God will take account of it”. It is true that the promise made by his mother did not impose any obligation on her son, but her promise was too much in accordance with his own desires, and with the necessities of his fervent love, not to be the dearest object of his thoughts. The world had

no attraction for a soul which had never been exposed to its delusive snares, and as he had already acquired a taste for the sweet ways of piety, the place to which his soul looked to find rest on earth was naturally the Order of the Minor Friars. Bonaventure never forgot the miracle which, in his infancy, had preserved him from death, and his gratitude would have made him think it a crime to seek any other Order than that of the Saint his benefactor. Its founder was a man of no great learning, and its first members had partaken of the simple nature of their master, and were for the most part even more unlearned than he had been. Yet Doctors had descended from their Chairs, learned men had abandoned their scientific success, the rich had renounced their treasures, the gay had forsaken their pleasures, the prudent had shut their eyes to earthly advantages, to follow St. Francis and to embrace this new kind of life ; people had come from all ranks of society, and from all countries where the sun of faith shone, to place themselves under the discipline of these illiterate men. The Order now included great preachers, re-

nowned theologians, missionaries, saints, and martyrs ; it had extended everywhere, and barriers which appeared to be insuperable gave way before its poverty and humility. Such a spectacle might well make a deep impression on the soul of the young aspirant. He said to himself, "The Finger of God is here ; here I shall find that which is the object of my desire—a life estranged from the world, a sanctuary of virtue, the way to eternal bliss". This feeling he expressed in the following words : "I confess before God that which has made me choose the way of life of Blessed Francis is, that it is no work of human prudence, but of Christ ; and as the works of Christ can never fail, we recognise as a divine work, one in which we see wise men condescending to unite themselves in a society with simple ones".

The Order was then under the government of Haymon Feversham, an Englishman by birth. Since he had been elected Superior-General he had applied himself with the utmost prudence to regulate and govern his Order in conformity with the spirit of its holy founder. The arrival of Bonaventure therefore rejoiced

his soul, and the fervour of the young novice consoled him in the midst of the many difficulties with which his path was strewn.

When an aspirant for the religious life presented himself to seek admission into the Order of St. Francis, the first condition of admission required by the Saint was, entire renunciation of the things of the world. He was inexorable on this point, for he feared lest the retaining of any possessions should be a cause of scandal.

The Rule of the Order, however, contains this clause: "If it is not possible to do it (that is, to give up all earthly possessions), a man may be content with the good will to do so"; for such good will implies a readiness to abandon all claims and to despise all wealth.

Historians have not told us whether Bonaventure had any possessions which he could resign, but it is probable that all he had to renounce was that which at some future time might come to him. We only know that, with all his heart, he willingly gave up all he had, in order that he might be united to Jesus Christ. The novitiate was for him a school of virtue,

he entered on its exercises with incredible eagerness, never looking behind him, as from day to day he advanced towards that holiness, which was to make him an object of admiration in an age when good men often passed unnoted and unknown.

In his eyes, the family of St. Francis had a sublime destiny. "This Order," he said, "has been given to the Church, from among other religious Orders, to edify the faithful in faith and in manners, by teaching doctrines and by giving examples of a good life. . . . It has been placed as a torch, whose flame is to dissipate the darkness of the house, and to fill with fresh courage all who labour in it." The conclusion at which he arrived was easy to understand. "The first ornament of our brothers," he said, "is an irreproachable life, for such a life is of sovereign utility to ourselves and edifies our neighbours."

But this irreproachable life involved the strict fulfilment of all the requirements of the Rule: it meant perfection in virtue, perfection in modesty, in silence, in mortification, in obedience, in union with God, and in humility.

To this young novice, therefore, the Rule was

a sacred law, of which it was necessary for him to know the minutest detail. He meditated on it day and night, in order to discern its spirit and to conform all his actions to it. Nothing was small or indifferent to him. "We must," he would say, "be faithful, with a strictness that knows no bounds, to the things we have heard, that we may not be leaking vessels which spill that which is poured into them. . . . We must receive with respect every word of our Rule, and avoid the slightest infraction of it. This Rule has been given us as our law; and no one can forsake the law without falling into darkness." Therefore, when it became his duty to explain the Rule to his brothers, he did it as a pleasant and an easy work, for he had only to speak to them of that which had been always the object of his affections, and the source of the sweet joy which filled his soul.

During the year of novitiate, which is appointed for all who aspire to a religious life, the young novice was truly happy. He found himself in an abode of peace, and he profited by it to draw near to God. In order to render his retirement as thorough as he could, and to

separate himself strictly from the world, he avoided all useless conversations as obstacles to the end he had in view. The world was dreaded by him even in the society of his brothers ; for he knew that the contagious and impure air of earth will sometimes make its way into the assembly of the children of God, and that, without unceasing vigilance, the Saints themselves are unable to lead a spotless life here below.

But the more he separated himself from men, the more intimate and ineffable became his union with Christ our Lord. His heart was always open to the inspirations of grace, his soul was permeated with love, his affections were kindled with celestial fire, and he experienced that *change into God* of which he speaks in the most fervent of his writings. He loved to contemplate, in his constant meditations, the life of the Saviour of men, to bow before the Cradle of Bethlehem, to follow the Holy Family into Egypt, to bury himself in the silence of Nazareth, to listen to the sweet words of Jesus. Above all, the recollection of the bitterness of the Cross attracted his thoughts and filled him with tender

sorrow. He often said that to meditate on these things is the most excellent wisdom. He raised his soul to the heights of Heaven to contemplate the bliss of the Saints, to listen to the songs of the angels, and to wander in those vast mansions where, as he said, "we shall see Him Who is blessed for evermore, where we shall love Him and converse with Him and praise Him for all eternity". It was especially when night had plunged all nature into profound silence and had hushed all the noises of the earth, that he loved to give himself up to the contemplation of things divine.

But exterior occupations were not permitted to deprive him of the Presence of his God, and his meditations were scarcely interrupted even by the requirements of sleep. Let us listen to him while he repeats to us, in his counsels to novices, the practices of his early days. "A truly pious brother," he says, "never gives himself up entirely to food, or to sleep, or to outside affairs ; but, whether he is eating or doing anything else, he is always keeping some holy thought in his heart, with which to refresh and cheer his spirit. When he goes to bed, before

lying down, he commits to memory some pious sentence, he sleeps with this sweet thought, it fills and sanctifies his dreams, it meets him as he wakes, and brings back to him the good intentions of the previous day."

Modesty graced all his actions and preserved him from affectation and extravagance; but the gaiety of his face showed the joy which filled his soul.

He practised in his own life, at this time, that which he would teach hereafter. Hear his instructions to the novices: "The sovereign virtue of a religious is humility. Humility heals him, perfects him, and keeps him; without it he cannot acquire any virtue, or preserve his soul in any perfection. It is the true foundation of all virtues, and if it is wanting, all the others are sure to fail. But as humiliation is the road to humility, religious must never blush at embracing humiliating work, and they must not make their work an occasion of praise." We shall see that all his life he remained faithful to the instructions which he gave to others, and, when the envoys of the Sovereign Pontiff came to bring him the insignia of the Cardinalate,

they found him occupied in these humble tasks, and far more anxious to fulfil them zealously, than to accept the proffered dignity.

The Saint, being devoted to the practice of virtue, and beloved by God and man, hailed with unspeakable joy the arrival of the moment when he was irrevocably to consummate the sacrifice of himself. He made his profession to his Superior-General with redoubled fervour, and he pledged himself unreservedly to observe the Rule, and to follow the Saviour in His poverty, having on the earth no other heritage than God, and a contempt for the opinions of men, and he thus deserved to receive abundantly, the benediction desired by the humble Francis d'Assisi for the newly professed of his Order. "The benediction of the father," say the Holy Scriptures, "establishes the house of the children."

CHAPTER III.

Bonaventure at the University of Paris—His Priesthood.

“Optavis, et datus est mihi sensus.”—WISD. vii.

THE Superiors of his Order knew well what they had to hope from the fervour and intelligence of Bonaventure. Shortly after his profession they sent him to finish his studies at the University of Paris. Of all the schools in the Catholic world, this was the most renowned. For the last century a multitude of doctors, illustrious both for learning and virtue, had attracted to it the eyes of all Europe; it had given to the Church a great number of pontiffs and eminent men, and its glory had so much increased that it had come to be regarded as the mother of discipline and the nurse of literature. Therefore, an innumerable crowd of young men sought admission there, whether they desired to make a great career either in

the world, or in the Church. For many years some of its Chairs had been occupied both by the children of St. Dominic and of St. Francis, but soon storms arose against them, as will be seen later on. The Order of Minor Friars was represented at Paris, in the department of Theology, by Alexander Hales, when St. Bonaventure came. Alexander had been born in an English town, and had shown from his youth a lively piety and a superior mind. The sweet virtues of Mary had tenderly impressed his heart, he loved her with filial affection, and the fervour of his devotion had induced him to promise never to refuse any request that was made to him in the name of the Mother of God. When he had finished his studies in his own country, he came to Paris to teach the science of theology and canonical law, and he soon became a clever master, whom people everywhere were proud to know. One day a religious met him and said: "Reverend Master, your position in the world is the most beautiful to which a man of letters can attain—men revere you and overwhelm you with praises, but, after all, this glory passes

away, and it is to Heaven that you should look. Do you think you have taken the right way to get there? Are you sure that you have nothing to fear from the obstacles which surround you on all sides, and have caused you to fail in breaking entirely with the world and the flesh?" The Doctor was surprised at such language, without, however, being angry at it. "Consider," the brother added, "your state and mine. Do you not see the difference between them? You are in the midst of honours and riches, while I am in abject poverty, and the end cannot be the same for us both. Judge of it yourself according to the Gospel." Alexander was deeply moved; and the brother then began to hope that he should bring him to renounce the world. "If I have chosen the wiser part," he continued, "why should not you take it also? It will cost you something no doubt, but I ask it of you, in the name of your best interests, and in the name of the Blessed Virgin, to whom you have promised to refuse nothing." At the name of Mary the soul of the young man yielded. "Go, brother, go," he said, "and I will follow you soon, and will do as you

desire." Some days after, he entered the Order of St. Francis, to whom he offered his talents, and accepted in return a humble and austere life, whose end should be a serene and happy death.

He composed a Summary of Theology, which Pope Alexander IV. called "a stream flowing from its source in Paradise, a treasure of science and wisdom, filled with invincible sentences, which crush error by the weight of truth ; a book useful to all who desire to advance in the knowledge of the divine Law, a book which is the work of God, and whose author has been inspired by the Holy Ghost". It is said that St. Thomas himself was among the disciples of the illustrious Franciscan : whether this be true or not, it is certain that the Angelic Doctor had a great admiration for this great man. Of all books the one that, according to Gerson, he most loved to meditate on was the Summary of Alexander Hales ; and this reading preluded the construction of that gigantic monument, the other Summary, the greatest known effort of the human mind, which cast into the shade the work of his predecessor, without, however, causing it to be forgotten.

Alexander Hales soon began to distinguish Bonaventure from among all his disciples. The habitual thoughtfulness and gravity of the new religious, his modesty and candour, filled him with admiration, and he was often heard to say that this young man seemed to have escaped the curse of Adam's sin. When he saw the surprising facility with which he comprehended the most arduous theological questions, the master rejoiced that the Franciscan Order had gained another great man, and that the Church would one day delight in the student who was now committed to his care.

Bonaventure, indeed, attracted the respect and love of all : in the midst of the multitude of young students, many of whom led a dissipated life, he shone like a star by the virtue which he displayed. Estranged and separated from all that did not concern the sublime end of his vocation, he lived in Paris as calm and peaceful a life as if he had buried himself in the deepest solitude. Divine love had for a long time wounded his heart, and he set himself to open it to receive this love, by all the means in his power, as we see in his beautiful Treatise of

The soul's walk with God. "The more learned a man is," he says in one part of it, "the more he is apt to love." The Holy Scriptures, on which from the time of his novitiate he habitually meditated, caused him always great delight. The writings of the Fathers ever increased in him more and more the spirit of devotion. Exterior works always obtained his aid, and among these works the chief one was the care of the sick and of lepers.

Charity had always led the pious to incline towards those who are afflicted with leprosy. Two thousand houses had been built in France, only, for lepers, and the people who liked to visit and wait on them were often among those of the highest rank. The great King St. Louis was one of these, Henry III. of England, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and a crowd of other illustrious personages.

The Order of St. Francis, which devoted itself to all the miseries of humanity, was particularly attracted to all who suffered from sickness of every kind. To wait on the sick and on lepers, and to console them, was for them the most pleasant work, and a true test of devotion.

They would have regarded the charms of contemplation and holy rapture as illusions, if such like good works had not accompanied them. "Who will have a horror of lepers or avoid intercourse with the sick," says Bonaventure, "when he considers Jesus Christ in them, when he sees that, in ministrations to them, he acquires more merits and is more pleasing to God than if he were to render such services to the Saviour Himself? I will show you, O Spouse of Christ, Him Whom my soul loves. You will find Him lying in the house of the sick, a prey to anguish, overwhelmed with pain, torn by sufferings. It is true, brothers, that we cannot aid all those who suffer, for the number is too large; but at least we can pity all, and see Jesus in them all. . . . Let us fear to show ourselves so negligent towards Him. Let us not say to Him, 'Where dwellest Thou?' We know where He dwells; we know that among the sick and suffering He is to be found. It only remains for us to go to Him, and offer our services to Him."

In such a manner both spoke and acted our Saint. Never did his tenderness cool or his

pious fervour grow less. The more repulsive their maladies might be, the greater was his devotion and love in their service ; and the greater part of each day was passed among them. But when he mounted the pulpit to comment on the Holy Scriptures, or to explain the deep mysteries of theology, his lessons had lost nothing of depth and clearness, because of the long hours which he had consecrated to the holy work of wiping away the tears and soothing the bitter hours of the sufferers, his charity seemed to have only brightened his intelligence.

To his works of charity he added all those exercises by which piety is nourished and sustained. He sought strength in prayer, in meditation, in constant self-examination, in frequent communion, in confession of the lightest failings, in mortification, and in acts of the deepest humility. It was in this way that he attained to peace and joy of soul, and that even in the middle of the distractions of the world, he continued to taste the heavenly consolations afforded by his novitiate.

Not that his happiness was invariable : it was

interrupted by times of bitterness, and, like all the favoured children of the Lord, he had to pay, by suffering, for the divine sweetness which he enjoyed. Days of trial came to him as they had done to St. Bernard, and as they were afterwards to do to St. Ignatius, St. Francis de Sales, and to all the souls who have attained to eminence in virtue. An excessive fear at one time took possession of his soul, and kept him away for several days from the holy Table. The presence of his God in the Holy Eucharist filled him with alarm. He had a burning desire to approach It, as his fervent love would have led him to do every day, but the sense of his unworthiness held him back ; and he was languishing with love and fear, when the Saviour Himself, being touched with compassion, put an end to his pain. On one occasion, when he was assisting at Mass, and was entirely absorbed in meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ, a part of the Sacred Host consecrated by the priest was miraculously placed between his lips. He was immediately filled with joy, his fears vanished, his soul recovered its confidence and peace, his communions became more fre-

quent, and every communion was a new source to him of consolation and peace. A great sorrow came to sadden his time of study, for the master whom he loved, and who so well appreciated him, was taken from him by death.

In order to receive the degree of Bachelor in Theology, in the time of St. Bonaventure, a religious had to study for three years. He had afterwards to study a year in the class of a doctor, and, after having passed a public examination, he took the degree of "licentiate," which gave him a right to teach as a doctor. After another year he received from the chancellor the degree of doctor, after which he had a school and a bachelor assistant who taught under him. St. Bonaventure had to pass through these different stages, and he was the third member of his Order who was made Professor of Theology in Paris.

But before he was called to the highest of all academic honours, he had entered the priesthood. For this great act he had prepared himself by fasting, by prayer, and by good works. His faith made him look on it as the

greatest of all dignities, and his humility made him fear that its faithful fulfilment was beyond his power. On the day of his ordination, his heart burned with fervent love, and his devotion, which had always been so great for the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, was even greater than before. He afterwards composed two treatises on preparation for the holy Mass. These works reveal more to us of the state of his soul than all that can be said by others about it.

“When you approach this Sacrament,” he says, “take heed that you are not shaken by any doubt, like a blind man who totters as he walks. . . . But submit yourself entirely to God, and keep your soul captive to the yoke of the faith which is supported by such powerful testimony. What doubt could you entertain about this Sacrament which was given by Jesus Christ to us, in so clear and express a manner ; which was taught by the Apostles and all the holy doctors of the Church ; which was prefigured during so long a course of years, and was afterwards confirmed by so many ceremonies, miracles, prodigies, and holy observances, all

of which are palpable evidences of its truth? Take away from the Church this Sacrament, and what would remain in the world but error and infidelity? It is for this reason that the Saviour said, 'I am with you to the consummation of the world'. This bread of Heaven cannot be a source of life to those who are withered and broken from the trunk. . . . The Sacrament is received, it is true, by those who are unworthy, but not the benefit of the Sacrament—that is, the grace of Jesus Christ, and loving union with Him. While the mouth receives Him, the spirit is estranged from Him; while He feeds the body, the heart is not nourished by His love; He does not give life to the soul nor unite Himself to it.

“O man of God! let the Lord be the object of your prayers and of your desires, and see with what affection, with what devotion, you will celebrate our Holy Mysteries.”

It is easy to judge now, what faith, what ardour, what holy dispositions, filled the soul of Bonaventure every time that he was privileged to offer the august and adorable Sacrifice. His devotion manifested itself in abundant

tears, and the humility which marked his every action, was in itself, an eloquent sermon for those of the faithful who were present. In the works of St. Bonaventure we have many prayers for Holy Communion, and, in reading them, we do not know which to admire the most—the deep humility or the burning love of this angelic soul. The Church has chosen one of these prayers for the use of her priests, by which to cheer their hearts after the accomplishment of the Sacred Mysteries, and to unite them more closely to the God Whom they have just received. This beautiful prayer is well known to all: it begins in these words, “*Transfige dulcissime Domine*”.

The Saint preserved this pious disposition throughout the day. He loved to go into the Church to discourse with his Saviour, and he enjoined this practice on his brothers. As with St. Francis, his beloved father, the sight of good priests pleased him and filled him with joy, because he knew that God was honoured in them, while the thought of the infidelity of a priest inspired him with grief, and caused him to express his indignation like the prophets of old.

Such were the sentiments of the new priest. Heaven looked down on him with love, for in him St. Francis was to live again upon the earth, and abundant blessings by his means were to descend upon the Church of God.

CHAPTER IV.

Theological Teaching—Theological Books— St. Thomas of Aquin.

“Sapientiam sine fictione didici, et sine invidia comunico, et honestatem illius non abscondo.”—WISD. vii.

THE Order of St. Francis had been worthily represented at the University of Paris by Alexander Hales and Jean de la Rochelle, but a still greater glory was reserved for it. The young religious, whose virtues spread among his brethren and disciples the sweet fragrance of Jesus Christ, had become a master entrusted with teaching them. His lessons at first were restricted to the interior of his Community, where he had to train the new members in sacred knowledge, but soon he had to instruct a larger audience. The hopes which had been formed of him during his time of study would not allow his superiors to hold him long back from ministering to the needs of the

multitude of students who were eager for instruction, and he soon received the order to appear in public.

At this time, the *Magister Sententiarum* was the text-book of the Professors of the University ; and it was their boast to make their commentaries as learned as possible. This book, which was about a century old, was an excellent abridgment of theology. Peter Lombard, its author, had sought out the arguments of the Fathers on all religious questions, and he had interpreted them with sense and order.

St. Bonaventure's book on the work of Peter Lombard is a sublime work on theology. In the first, second, and fourth part, St. Bonaventure can compete with the cleverest commentators of this writer ; but in the third, which treats of the Incarnation, and of the wonders of our Redemption, he has far surpassed all others. Love had revealed to him in the Heart of the Saviour, secrets which were hidden from the rest of mankind. Like St. John, he reposed on the Bosom of Jesus, and there learned ineffable things which love caused him to reveal to his brethren in Christ.

In all the course of his learned explanations, it is impossible not to admire the theologian who exposes, discusses, and prizes the inalienable rights of truth, the hero whose work is to drive back error to its retrenchment, and the mystic who is anxious not only to enlighten his hearers, to guard them against lying snares, but also to fill their souls with devotion, with confidence, and with love. What can be more tender and more affectionate than the following words?

“The new law has added to the ancient one, but all that is added to a thing does not always increase its weight; certain things, on the contrary, make it more buoyant and free, as wings to a bird, wheels to a chariot, and sails to a ship. So is it with all that the Gospel has added to the old law. These additions serve only to increase charity, and charity is the wing which raises us above the earth, the wheel of the chariot which bears us onward to good works, and the sail which wafts us in safety over the deep waters of temptation and tribulation.

“It is impossible to doubt that the great soul of Mary and her courageous nature consented to the death of Jesus, and that the mother’s will

was, in all things, similar to that of the Father's. Therefore our praises are due to her for having acquiesced in the sacrifice of her Son for the salvation of mankind. But at the same time she was penetrated by so vast compassion for the Saviour, that she would gladly have taken to herself all the torments He had to bear, if only she could have done so. She was, at the same time, strong, yet full of tenderness, gentle, yet severe, economical, yet full of generosity. That is why she deserves our love and our veneration and next after the Supreme Trinity and Jesus Christ our Lord, the divine mysteries of Whose Being no mortal tongue is worthy to relate."

Besides this great effort of his genius, St. Bonaventure composed several important treatises on theology. Among these there is an *Explanation of Theological Terms*, and one on *The Resurrection from Sin to Grace*, and another that is called *The Mirror of the Soul*. All these, and several other works, were written during the time that the Saint was engaged on his Commentary. He wrote them while he was General of his Order, when the spiritual needs of his brothers seemed to require them.

The *Brevilogus* is one of the greatest of these. It comprises in a small compass a complete course of theology, it explains certain rules for studying and explaining the Scriptures. It also treats of the Mysteries of the Holy Trinity, and of the Divine Attributes of the Creator, of the corruption caused by sin, of the Incarnation of the Word, of grace and of the Sacraments, and of our last end. In his admirable conclusion, the soul of St. Bonaventure and that of St. Anselm seem to have mingled in the same enthusiastic fervour, and to have invited the reader to share their joy.

“O my soul, awake with all the power of thine intelligence, and think, with all thy most profound attention, how delicious is that Goodness, in Whom is contained the sweetness of all good. If created life is beautiful, what must not be the Creating Essence Itself? If power is to us a source of joy, what must not that Power be by which all things were made? If the knowledge of created beings is pleasant to us, how much more delectable must not be the knowledge of uncreated Beings? Why, then, should our thoughts wander away to other things? . . .

If beauty attracts thee, consider how the just shall shine like the sun. If strength and freedom have a charm for thee, are they not enjoyed by the angels of God in Heaven? If a long and flourishing life is thy desire, in Heaven is the perfection of unchanging health. If thou wouldst be satiated, the blessed ones in Heaven will be satisfied with glory and intoxicated with the lavish abundance of the house of God. Dost thou love the sound of sweet melody?—thou shalt hear the songs of angels. Dost thou desire the charms of friendship and society?—there thou shalt enjoy the company of the elect, who are moved by one will and filled with the same desires. Lastly, if thou dost aspire to riches and honour, know that they abound in the house of the Lord. If thou dost seek certain happiness, thou shalt possess it for all eternity. O human heart, poor heart, heart that is a prey to grief, or rather crushed by it, what a happiness it would be for thee to possess such blessings as these! Ask of the inner depths of thy being, and see if they will contain the joy of thy beatitude. And if thou canst not contain thine own happiness, how wilt thou be able to

receive that of all the elect? There everyone loves his neighbour as himself, and rejoices in his happiness as much as in his own. And not only so, but each one there has a joy in the felicity of God, which is incomparably beyond the joy of his own beauty, and that of all the elect. As there, each one loves God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his spirit, his whole heart, soul, and spirit will be unable to contain the fulness of such joy, for the joy will equal the love, and the love will be immense as the horizon which is embraced by the eye.

“Assuredly the eye of man has never seen, his ear has never heard, or his heart conceived, O my God, how well the Saints shall know and love Thee! I ask of Thee, then, O Lord, that I may know and love Thee, so as to enjoy Thee for all eternity. And if, in this life, I cannot attain to the fulness of the knowledge and love of Thee, may these two things be ever growing in me, so that I may be happy here below in hope, and in Heaven may enjoy the reality of bliss. O Lord, our Father, Thou dost advise us and command us to ask, and thou dost promise to grant the petition, ‘that our joy may

be full' (St. John xvi.). I beseech Thee, therefore, to grant me that which Thy admirable counsel has taught me to ask, and that which Thou hast also promised to give, a joy that shall be perfect and entire. I beseech Thee to make my heart to meditate on this eternal bliss, that my tongue may speak of it without ceasing, that my soul may hunger for it, that my flesh may be changed by it, until it is given to me to enter into the joy of my God."

The limits of this volume do not allow us to describe all the other treatises written by the Saint. The *Mirror of the Soul* holds a distinguished place among them; it puts before us a triple aspect of concupiscence, with all the cortége of vices which accompany it, so that every man may see whether his own soul is infected by any of these vices. In the preface the author describes the tree of sin. Cupidity is the root of it, the consent of the will is the trunk, and the bad affections of the soul are the branches. He then describes the vices in detail, and concludes by gathering up all that has gone before, in order to make it more easily remembered.

In all his works the Saint showed himself to

be familiar with the secrets of theology. These writings did not take up much of his time, for his mind was as full of sacred knowledge as his heart was of divine love, and he wrote on piety or on theology, according to the different circumstances or needs which presented themselves. The request of a simple brother was enough to determine him to take up his pen, for his charity would not easily allow him to refuse. He simply had to invoke his memory, and soon the work was finished. Sometimes his motive for writing was to provide temporal relief for his brethren, as he could never see them in distress and privation without being touched; therefore, when other means failed, he would write a book, which they sold immediately to procure food, while the fact of so great a writer being reduced to poverty for the sake of Jesus roused compassion and brought relief. The book was sure to sell, alms were offered, and the Saint enjoyed the consolation of having calmed some distress, and of having, perhaps, revived some courage, which had been sinking under the weight of misery.

While St. Bonaventure was thus, by his teach-

ing, gaining the applause and captivating the intelligence of all Paris, the Order of St. Dominic was represented by a religious equally brilliant and renowned. Thomas of Aquin, who was younger than Bonaventure, was his equal, if he did not even surpass him, in the powers of his mind. He had had to pass through grievous and painful struggles in order to attain to the life of a Preaching Friar, but he had been victorious. From his infancy he had been seized with a longing for wisdom, and it was a passion with him to know and to love it. In wisdom he saw the pure effusion of the brightness of the Almighty, the spotless mirror of the Majesty of God, and the perfect image of His Goodness. For it he had despised terrestrial wealth and honour, the pleasures of the world, sufferings and persecutions, and in wisdom he found all that he desired. Such was Thomas of Aquin. His youth would have prevented his holding a professor's chair at the University, but the laws, bending before his genius, dispensed him from their rule, and soon he had proved by the fame of his teaching how well the privilege was deserved.

As soon as St. Thomas came to know the humble and learned child of St. Francis, he loved him. He appreciated better than anyone all that there was of sublime in his genius, of virtue in his soul, of tenderness and charity in his heart. He attached himself to St. Bonaventure, as to the friend whom the Holy Scriptures declare to be a "treasure"; and he made him the confidant of his most intimate thoughts. Bonaventure, on his side, soon discovered what the Church had to hope for in Thomas of Aquin; he saw in this young religious a treasure of love for truth, which the admiration of the world could not touch; he felt him to be worthy of his confidence, and he gave it him without reserve.

No one more sincerely admired Thomas than Bonaventure, and no one more highly esteemed the genius of Bonaventure than Thomas of Aquin; and he, who was the prodigy of his century, declared that he knew nothing compared to the extent of knowledge of his friend. One day he asked our Saint from what books he had learned so many admirable things, and in reply Bonaventure showed him his crucifix:

there was the abundant source from which he drew all his lessons, the book of his predilection which he loved to search, and on which he delighted to meditate ; the Master Whose light left no uncertainty in his mind.

The University of Paris had never shone with so bright a lustre, never had she appeared so glorious, as in these days when she could count among her children St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas of Aquin. Their lives were a constant exhortation to contempt of the world and its honours, to love of solitude and of contemplation, to the continual exercise of self-sacrifice and the renunciation of self-will. They were like the two olive trees and the two candlesticks in the house of the Lord of which the Holy Scriptures speak ; they enlightened the whole Church by their abundant charity and by the splendour of their learning. God, by a special providence, had caused them both to appear at the same time, like two stars arising from the two most famous religious Orders of that century ; He withdrew them both, also, from the world in one year, so that, after having been so closely united during their lives, they were not separated by death.

CHAPTER V.

Preaching of St. Bonaventure—His Zeal for the Salvation of Souls.

“Fratres ex sua professione habent prædicare, in quorum regula specialis tractatus de prædicationis officio continetur.”

FRANCIS OF ASSISI, in his solitude, had regarded the world with careful scrutiny, and he had discovered its needs and probed its wounds. “Go,” he said to his companions—“go and preach peace to men. Preach penitence to them, that they may obtain forgiveness of their sins.”

Since his day, the Order had not failed to fulfil its mission, and the prayers of the poor penitent of Assisi were answered beyond his greatest hopes, for the Minor Friars had penetrated to the farthest nations of the earth. Italy, Spain, France, England, Germany, Sweden, Poland, Greece, Judea, the heathen coun-

tries of Asia, the countries inhabited by the followers of Mahomet, had all heard their voices. The crown of martyrdom had been the reward of many among them, others had seen their efforts seconded by Heaven itself, by means of striking miracles, all had gathered in consoling fruits of salvation. Thus preaching was held in honour in the Seraphic Order, and to be a member of it was not only to be vowed to the practice of penitence, but also to the preaching of it.

From the time of his entrance into religion, Bonaventure had been preparing himself to announce to the people the message of the Lord. He continually read the Holy Books, meditating on them as the source of all truth, of all virtue, of all science; he probed the difficulties of them, and considered their different meanings, and at last the text was so familiar to him, that he was supposed to know the whole Scriptures by heart. As in his writings, so also in his discourses, he liked always to invoke the authority of the Holy Scriptures, and they lent suavity and unction to his words.

The works of the Fathers, also, were no less familiar to him. Those who read his meditations on the Life of Jesus Christ would say that he had spent his life in studying St. Bernard, he quotes his words so often and so much to the point; but his other books plainly show that his knowledge was by no means confined to a single author. He had read everything, and those who read his writings ask with astonishment how this religious, who was so devoted to contemplation and to the practice of good works, so occupied with the teaching of theology, could find time for such extensive reading? As with St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Thomas of Aquin, and, later, with St. Charles Borromeo, love had taught him to become insensible to fatigue, or rather, as he said himself, he considered that he had only two possessions—his body and his soul; and he offered them so incessantly for the love of the Saviour, that his body was entirely sacrificed by mortification and charitable works, and his soul by contemplation, prayer, study, and meditation on the Divine Mysteries.

In his study of the Doctors of the Church,

in his meditation on the Holy Scriptures, this son of St. Francis had conceived the most sublime idea of the ministry of preaching. More than once in his discourses he speaks enthusiastically on this subject.

“Preaching,” he says, “illuminates the soul by teaching it what it ought to do, what it ought to avoid, what it ought to renounce, to love, or to hate. What would become of the soul if deprived of such light? What would be the state of a soul that was a prey to blindness and deprived of knowledge? It would be as a canvas on which the painter had not made any mark.

“Preaching inflames the will. What is the state of a soul that has no fire? It is like coal in which the fire has been put out. . . .

“The Divine Word confirms men in a good life in a truly admirable way. Why is it astonishing that it should be so? Why should it be surprising that the faithful should be strengthened by the Words of God, when mere human speech is able to effect so much? Are athletes insensible to the applause of the multitude? Are not soldiers more courageous in the

fight when they hear the voice of the prince? And what is still more astonishing, even a horse plunges bravely into danger if it hears the trumpet call, while the song of the labourer makes the oxen's yoke seem light."

The sermons of St. Bonaventure which we still possess are but sketches, his many labours did not allow him to make a longer preparation, and the habit of speaking made preaching always easy to him. But what admirable things are there to be found in these sketches! There, as in everything he wrote, the preacher is full of tender feeling; he speaks to men of all ranks, of his God and his Saviour, with as much unction as when he was addressing only members of the Seraphic Family. His only End, on Whom his eyes were always fixed, was the Lord Jesus Christ: he knew what paths would lead to Him, and he longed to draw the whole universe close to His adorable Heart.

It is only possible here to give some few treasures from the full storehouse of his thoughts, which are offered to our readers as a faint image only of the beauty of the whole.

"The heart of him who loves is the furnace

of God, and is kindled by God Himself. Such a heart is the mirror of God, the sacred ark of God, the field of God. But, if it *is* a mirror, it must be pure and spotless; if it is the ark of God, it should be full of treasure; if it is a furnace, it ought to be burning; and if it is a field, it ought to bring forth much fruit; it should be pure in its innocence, rich in the brightness of its virtues, burning from the vehemence of its love, and covered with fruits from the multitude of good works. . . .

“A holy man is the mirror of God and of men. He is the mirror of God in his soul by the purity of his conscience; he is the mirror of men by the regularity of his life. . . .

“When the soul acquires the beauty of the purity which exists in the unity of grace, and the trinity of the theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, this soul becomes dear to God, desirable to the angels, terrible to demons. Divine wisdom loves, with so great affection, souls that are adorned with this spotless purity, that it appropriates all their works, and calls them fruits divine. . . .

“The garden of the well-beloved, the garden

of Jesus Christ, is the pure heart, the devout heart, the heart in which abound the most varied plants, flowers, and fruits of virtue and of merit. The spouse loves to come into such a garden as this. . . .

“O faithful soul! you are not only the spouse of Jesus Christ, you are formed of His flesh. If, then, you desire to love Him Whose flesh has given you life, love Jesus Christ; the Son of God has taken a Body similar to your own, in order that, by His flesh, He may give you spiritual life. . . .

“The holy temple of God is a pure body in which the soul adores the Lord, and celebrates His name. . . .

“O precious soul, redeemed by the blood of the Immaculate Lamb, consider how great is thy value, think what a price has been paid for thy redemption! The members of the Lamb have been extended on the Cross. ‘All My bones,’ He says, ‘are out of joint,’ they have been placed on the wood of the Cross, and fire has not been wanting for the sacrifice; love constrained the Saviour to endure death, in order that He might reconcile us to His

Father, by offering to Him the sweet fragrance of His Passion. . . .

“The sun cannot hide the brightness of its rays ; the rose cannot restrain her sweet perfume ; the stream cannot cease to water the earth which forms its brink ; so also the heart that is fully devoted to God is powerless to hide its love. It will reveal itself by its words, when necessity or charity shall call them forth. A living root cannot remain buried in the earth, it germinates and soon produces a blade. . . .

“There is an interior piece of land which we carry within ourselves : it is our conscience. This piece of land we have to cultivate with extreme care, if we do not wish it to bear the thorns and weeds of sin. If it is not well hedged in, if it is not broken up by the ploughshare, if it is not watered by abundant rain and warmed by the rays of the sun, it will remain perfectly sterile. Yes, if during life you leave your conscience untrained, if you do not often break it by the iron of discernment, if you do not bathe it in tears, if you do not burn it with the heat of divine love, it will produce no good, it will only be fruitful in evil. . . .

“If you are a Christian, show that you are such, not only in words, but by your works, and in truth. . . . Fix your eyes on the Face of the Saviour ; consider the crown of thorns ; the blows which bruised Him ; the rod which struck Him ; the shameful spitting ; the cruel lance which pierced His Side ; the sponge, filled with gall, which touched His Lips ; the blaspheming that a vile populace shouted in His Ears ; the ignominy of the Cross. To it all He only replied in the words, ‘ Father, forgive them ’. . . .

“No one ought to be praised, no one ought to be crowned, before his victory is won. While the ship has not touched the shore, while she is not yet enjoying the safe shelter of the port, it is impossible to call the navigator happy. Will he arrive at the end of his voyage when the sea is tossed by the violence of the wind and he has to pass over the raging waters ? Who knows ? The soldier is not applauded till the war is ended ; for if it is possible that he may win a victory, it is also possible that he may encounter defeat. . . .

“The soul which shall have gloriously trodden the way of life shall reign gloriously in the heavenly country. This is only just and reason-

able. The soul which on earth is purified by grace will be for ever blessed in Heaven. . . . Such a soul will have for a friend, not merely a king, but the King of all knowledge, the King Almighty, the King Who governs the universe.

“Oh ! when will the day come that, full of joy, we shall enter into the kingdom, into that kingdom where we shall contemplate the supreme light of His Being, where we shall love, with all our heart, the Supreme Good, where we shall for ever be closely bound to Him. There our desires are satisfied so that there is nothing left to desire ; there our sight is not obstructed by any cloud ; there our taste is satiated with sweetness, our peace is established and cannot be moved, our rest has no bounds to its completeness, our joy is eternal and unmixed with any ill. . . .”

In the thirteenth century, as in our day, the spirit of man was apt to look too much to himself, and to idolise his own learning. In every age a conflict has been going on between terrestrial knowledge, and the knowledge that is from above. This is how the Saint cautioned the world against mere earthly learning.

“All knowledge is good,” he says, “because it comes of God, but knowledge, when it is misused, becomes food for the passions. It is called worldly, because it is, for those who are weak and incapable, an occasion of much error ; it is earthly, because it engenders cupidity which destroys their manhood ; it is animal, it produces voluptuousness which lowers them ; it is diabolical, because of the pride which it inspires. The slaves of this knowledge will not believe or acquiesce in the truth, who invites them to come to her, like a mother full of tenderness, and hence they are justly punished when they add faith in an infamous stepmother to philosophic reason.

“Jesus Christ has been in our midst as a Doctor full of wisdom, that He might teach by His doctrine men who were plunged in ignorance. On the last day of a great Feast He cried with the voice of a trumpet, ‘Let him that is athirst come to Me’ ; let him drink the sweet water of life, which I will draw for him from the well of My knowledge.

“The Son of God is come as a Mediator full of grace, to offer us the remedies of peace and

concord ; and thus He merits our love. He has come as an incontrovertible Teacher, to give us lessons in mercy and justice, and under this title He is worthy of all our veneration. He has come as a King in infinite humility, that He may give us an example of humility and poverty, and to call us to follow in His steps.

“ He has come to take our nature, to heal us by His grace, to reconcile us by His penance, to reward us by His glory. . . .

“ He has come in the Name of God the Father, and His authority has no bounds ; He has come in His own Name, and His coming was humble ; He did not appear as our Master, but as our servant, and He did not take the form only of an ordinary servant, but of a despised servant, so that He might be subjected to bad treatment ; a servant of sin, that He might be constrained, in spite of His innocence, to pay the debt of sin. He has come in the Name of the Holy Spirit, and He has been like a river, for by His doctrine, by His grace, and by His Blood He has purified, and nourished, and watered the world. The more a river is restrained in its course, the more violent and impetuous it

becomes ; so it was with the Son of God while occupying the narrow dwelling of His Body. The Spirit of the Lord governed Him Who is Love, Goodness, Charity. The south wind causeth the clouds to give us gentle rain, and the charity of the Holy Spirit caused Jesus Christ to come down to us with the sweet rain of His graces. Hence it is written of Him : ‘God will come from the way of the south’.

“He came to enlighten us by the knowledge of the truth ; He came to enkindle in us the purity of love ; He came to revive us by the abundance of joy. . . .

“He came to confirm us by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and to prevent us from falling away. . . . He came to console us by the tenderness of His mercy, and to give us refreshment in the burning fire of tribulation. . . .

In Jesus all good is to be found, as it is written, “Seek and you shall find”. It is Him Whom we must seek ; and the Saint teaches us how to set about this search after the Supreme Good.

“We ought to seek Jesus Christ as beggars seek their food, wandering through the streets of the

town, and going from house to house. We too must go through the places where the Apostles live, and the martyrs dwell, and the virgins, and the confessors ; we must knock at the door of each, sometimes at Mary's door, and sometimes at that of Peter, sometimes at that of Francis ; we must pass along the streets where the Orders of Angels reside, and stop at the door of Michael, and then at that of Gabriel, seeking while we meditate, and in our meditation ceasing not to beg and to pray. . . .”

After Jesus Christ, or rather with Jesus Christ, Holy Church has been in all ages an object of unspeakable love to the servants of God. Indeed, what would become of the world without the Church ? What would become of the treasures of the teaching, the tribulation, and the Cross, of God made man ? The Saint distinguished himself by his tender veneration for the Church ; he loved to praise her in his sermons, and to declare the superabundance of her wealth. He calls her “the Mother of Jesus Christ, because without her the Saviour is dead for us, and by her He is born in our hearts”.

As he was called to preach the Word of God to all men without distinction, He would exhort, encourage, reprove, and correct, without giving way to any human fear. All ranks came to his tribunal, and if he had praises for virtue, and loving words to bestow on good examples, he had also rods and censures for vice and for forgetfulness of duty. None respected the ministers of the Church more than he did ; but when he found them unworthy of their heavenly calling, his soul was filled with sorrow.

“Bad superiors deserve as many deaths as they have given bad examples. . . .

“When did the enemy sow tares? When men who are the heads of families, when prelates, and all those to whom the care of souls is confided, were sleeping in their torpor, negligence, and idleness. O ye idle, how long will you sleep? What power would the demon have against you, if you had not given yourselves over to sleep? . . .

“Unhappy are the sheep whose shepherd is blind ! They are without defence against savage beasts, and those beasts are demons. . . .”

France and Italy in turn heard the words of the seraphic preacher, and everywhere he conciliated the love and the veneration of men. His success in the pulpit surpassed that of his theological teaching; the most distinguished personages gave him their confidence, and many sinners broke the yoke of crime, and embraced a life more in conformity with the dignity of the name of Christian.

Such zeal, indeed, consumed the soul of Bonaventure, as made of it an altar where the celestial fire burned by day and by night. The exterior man was nothing in his eyes but a "mass of mire," but the interior man, "created in the image of God, redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ, made the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the habitation of the Saviour, the seat of wisdom and of the virtue of God, the interior man capable of eternal beatitude," attracted all his attention and carried him beyond himself. Thirsting as he did for the honour of God, he wept when he saw that image of God dishonoured.

"Who will make me," he cried, "to be clothed like Mordecai in sackcloth, not to mourn over the threatened death of my people, but to weep

over a death already consummated, and to lament incessantly before the gates of the palace?" If the abundant charity of this illustrious man brought him to pour out his lamentations in public for the temporal ruin of his people, how, unhappy ones, shall I cease to shed bitter tears when I see an infinite multitude of souls delivered over to carnage, and my God regarded as nought? . . . How can he flatter himself that he loves God, who will see His image dragged through the mire, without troubling himself? If he remembers that the Son of God died for the salvation of souls, will he not desire to give his life for these same souls? And when he sees the Blood of Jesus Christ trodden under foot, how, I ask, can he endure such an outrage on his Lord? Will he not every day spend himself in prayer, and make his voice heard in preaching; will he not instruct his neighbour in every way, by reading, by hearing confessions, so as to gather up the Blood of his Lord, by gathering up, and converting, souls? . . .

After his zealous efforts of apostolic preaching Bonaventure always found Him Whom he

loved so well ready to lavish on him ineffable consolations. Never has any man had his days besieged by more absorbing cares, and yet never was man more united to his God. If you desire to know by what secret he managed thus to reconcile his external occupations with interior contemplation, and how his intercourse with men left him free at all times to rise to celestial heights, you must ask of the love of the Saviour. The ministry of preaching held a very special place, as we have said, among the labours of the Seraphic family, and St. Bonaventure continued to practise it to the end of his life. Only a few days before his death, he spoke at the Council of Lyons, in that assembly of the Princes of the Church, and he ended his mission by glorifying that Church which he had always loved as a mother, and whose triumph had been the one desire of his life.

CHAPTER VI.

University of Paris and the Mendicant Orders.

“Quidam Scripturæ sacræ intelligentiam se habere putantes, sed divertendes a tramite recti sensus, cogitaverunt malitiam, et contra innocuos et rectos iniquitatem maximam sunt locuti.”

MEANWHILE some stormy days were in preparation for the Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic. In the year 1229, the University of Paris thought that it had a grave cause of complaint against the Court of France, and it suspended its lessons, but things turned out otherwise than had been hoped for. The Order of St. Dominic had, among its members, some eminent men of letters, who, before their entry into religion, had been distinguished professors of theology. The Bishop of Paris accordingly chose two from that Order to occupy two of the chairs left vacant by the resignation of the professors, and when, some years after, by the efforts

of Pope Gregory IX., things were restored to a more peaceful state, the new masters continued to occupy their posts, to the chagrin of the old doctors. After the Dominicans, the Minor Friars had also gained a footing in the University, and if we may judge by the privilege granted to Alexander Hales of choosing a successor, and the great renown attained by his *Summary of Theology*, nothing could have made them foresee the attacks which were hereafter to be made upon them.

The tempest which had so long been threatening the children of St. Dominic burst upon them at this time in all its force, and attacked both Orders at once. The opportunity was too favourable to the enemies of the regular clergy to be allowed to pass. The seculars had only two or three of the theological professorships. Out of twelve, six were occupied by religious, and three by the Canons of Nôtre Dame. Their enemies therefore resolved to enter seriously on the combat, in order to recover the lost ground. Then a general movement was organised against the Mendicant Orders, and the religious applied to the Pope. The Nuncio from the Holy See, on

his way to England, stopped at Paris, in the hope of making peace, but at last his efforts having proved fruitless, he went away leaving the question in the same state in which he had found it. The affair was carried to Rome, but before it could be settled the Pope (Innocent IV.) died.

Alexander IV. succeeded to the Pontificate; he was the nephew of Gregory IX., who had canonised Francis of Assisi and Anthony of Padua. Like his uncle, he had a great affection for the children of St. Francis and St. Dominic, and he took their cause in hand and supported it against the pretensions of the University. One of the most bitter of the enemies of the religious Orders was William de Saint-Amour, who may be regarded as the principal author of the scandals which this quarrel caused in the Church in France. In his theological courses and in his sermons, both in public and in private, he took every opportunity of hurling his invectives against the religious, and he gathered together all the different satires written by himself and by others against the Mendicants and published them under the title of *Livre des perils des derniers temps*. This book brought the scandal to its

highest point : the world was astonished to learn that these men, who had hitherto been considered as the most perfect imitators of evangelical poverty, were instead the false prophets, against whom the Holy Scriptures had warned them.

This book of Doctor Saint-Amour attained a deplorable popularity. It became the fashionable book among scholars, always greedy for novelty, gossip, and scandal. But the religious who were thus attacked were not inclined to see themselves crushed, without raising their voice. Albert the Great and St. Bonaventure were sent to Anagni, where the Pope resided, to defend their cause before him, and St. Thomas was ordered to leave Paris, where he was exposed to constant insult, to join them. Although the Pope and the Cardinals had no need to be reassured as to the justice of the cause of the religious, it was necessary for the sake of weaker brethren that they should be ready with a reply to the accusations which were made against them. "Our light," said St. Bonaventure, "ought to shine before all eyes, if we do not wish our works to become a snare to the blind. It is important for us to bring into the broad

light of day things which, if not understood, might seem dark and hurtful to the edification of our neighbour. The works of God are of sparkling purity, and yet, for the ignorant and faithless, they are often an occasion of ruin, when they are misunderstood and explained in a rude and perverse way. . . . If you desire that your torch should spread rays of light afar, remove all the obstacles which might make its radiance less pure and less bright."

St. Thomas was deputed by his Order to examine and to refute the book of Saint-Amour. Before he began to read it, with his usual humility and modesty, he asked the prayers of his Community, and afterwards he examined it with his penetrating eye, which would allow no error to escape its vigilance. By the next day he was able to lay before his assembled brethren his plan for its refutation. "I have read," he said to them, "this miserable publication, which has made our enemies triumph too easily. It is a mystery of lies, which the Spirit of Truth will enable me to confound as positively as such a holy cause requires." In fact the famous Doctor crushed, with all the power of his great

genius, the arguments of his foes ; and up to the present time the book of Thomas of Aquin stands like a pillar, which resists the ravages of time.

Bonaventure, on his side, was not idle. His fiery soul could not contemplate without bitter grief the attacks which threatened the vineyard of the Saviour. The religious life was for him what it had been for St. Bernard, the house of interior peace, the sanctuary of virtue, the garden of the Heavenly Spouse, the sacred Mount where God manifested with special tenderness His designs for the children of men, and now a savage hand threatened to break down its walls. The Church looked to him, and waited like a sorrowing mother for the consolation of her son. He took up his pen and wrote a first book against Saint-Amour, on the subject of the *Poverty of Jesus Christ*. In it he distinguishes between the forced mendicity of the ordinary poor, and of vagabonds, and that of the poor who have voluntarily embraced that state, in imitation of Jesus Christ, and in order to give themselves more entirely to the preaching of the Gospel. He shows how per-

fect is this last poverty, and reduces to nothing the vain arguments of his adversary.

Saint-Amour had insisted on the necessity of the valid poor, and especially of poor religious, giving themselves up to manual labour to provide their own subsistence. The Saint follows him in this point also, and refutes him by passages from the Gospel, which declare that a contemplative life is superior to an active life. Finally, taking each objection in turn, he reduced them to powder, but without losing his unalterable peace and calm.

But the book on the *Poverty of Jesus Christ* was not the only one which St. Bonaventure wrote in defence of his Order: there is another called *Answers to Questions about the Rule of St. Francis*, in which he states "why the Minor Friars preach and hear confessions," and several others, among which is a short treatise written to prove that Jesus Christ and his Apostles wore only sandals on their feet.

But in spite of all the explanations which were given on the disputed questions, the contest continued with undiminished zeal; and after

a time the Saint again took up his pen in defence of his Order, and wrote a new *Apology*. He despised none of the attacks made upon his community, however devoid of sense they might be, knowing well that such senseless accusations are sometimes the most productive of harm among simple and unlearned men.

Not all the members of the University had joined the enemies of the Religious Orders, but there were many who, while they preserved their old affection for those on whom those virulent attacks were being made, yet could not avoid being disturbed by the evil things that had been said. One of these men begged St. Bonaventure to enlighten him as to three special points in the Rule of the Franciscans: poverty, manual labour, and study. The Saint replied in a work called the *Defence of the Rule*. Its language is affectionate and tender. In speaking of philosophic studies, he exclaims: "Listen to me, O my well-beloved, and on this point, as on others, you will find that we are agreed. Vain curiosity displeases you, and I confess it displeases me too; it is displeasing to all good

religious, and to God and to the holy angels. I do not wish to defend those who indulge in foolish reading; like you, I have a horror of them. But I counsel you, as I warn myself, to have a zeal according to knowledge, and not to allow yourself to conceive an aversion for such men. . . .

“I pray you then, dear brother, not to think too highly of your own sense, and not to think yourself more prudent or better than other men who are called by God to the same state; and when once you yourself are called to it, never to look back on what you have left behind.”

A cause defended by such men as Bonaventure, Thomas of Aquin, and others, and pleaded before a Pope who fully appreciated the value of the work done in the Church by the Mendicant Orders, could not fail to triumph in the end, over the persecutions of jealous ambition, especially as the King St. Louis, whose virtues were the praise of France and of the Church, joined in the debate. The cause was tried in Rome, and the book of Saint-Amour was seriously examined by four chosen Cardinals, renowned for learning and

virtue, and in October, 1256, it was condemned by them as an *iniquitous, perverse, execrable, and lying book*. It was ordered that all the copies of it should be burned, and that anyone should be excommunicated who should be found to possess one. Still the war continued, notwithstanding the condemnation; the Deputies at once submitted to the decision of the Holy See, but not so the author of the work.

As for Saint-Amour, he retired to his birth-place, whence he continued to stir up again the strife which had been temporarily calmed. But Alexander was not to be moved from his decree by any agitations; pity seemed to him to be weakness, if applied to the bad faith of a man who was a rebel to the Church, and at last by his wise determination he won the renown of having put an end to a dispute which had lasted for many years.

It was while all these controversies were raging that St. Thomas of Aquin and St. Bonaventure took their degree as Doctors. According to many historians, they presented themselves on the same day for examination, and a dispute

arose between them, not of the kind which makes a sensation in the world, but such a dispute as Saints may take part in. Bonaventure, it is said, wished to give precedence to St. Thomas, and he was obliged in his turn to yield to the wishes of his good and virtuous friend. However this may have been, the two religious certainly proved themselves worthy of their high renown, and of the confidence which their brethren placed in them.

CHAPTER VII.

Election of St. Bonaventure to be Superior-General of his Order.

“Non parva dignitas est præesse tot fratribus, quot sunt in religionum minorum, tam longe lateque, diffusa per orbem.”—ACT OF CANONISATION.

DURING the time of these University disputes, an event of great importance for the family of St. Francis had taken place. Bonaventure, at the age of thirty-five years, had been chosen by his brothers to the dignity of Superior-General of the Order.

Never, at any period of the history of the Church, had the religious life presented itself to the world in a state of more strange destitution than in the penitent of Assisi, but never had any family seen its members multiply with so marvellous rapidity. The odour of the virtues of the holy Patriarch, which resembled the fragrance of a field strewn with flowers, and

filled with the benediction of Heaven, exercised an ineffable influence over the hearts of men, and the astonished world found itself drawn after him. No man ever humiliated himself like St. Francis, and no man was ever so highly exalted during his life as was he. The Princes of the Church considered his friendship an honour, the great people of the world admired his virtues, and rich and poor renounced the hopes and the treasures of the world to join his standard. Only a few years had passed since the first days of his penitence, when he had passed through the streets of Assisi amidst the jeers and derision of an angry people, and now already he could count an innumerable multitude of zealous imitators of his poverty, of his privations, and of his contempt for terrestrial things. In the year 1219 five thousand Minor Friars met at St. Mary of the Angels to discuss with the Blessed Founder the needs of the Order, and to receive his advice. They came from all the countries of the Catholic world to represent a still greater number of religious, and the spectacle of their devotion induced five hundred men to come in a few days to

throw themselves at the feet of St. Francis, and to entreat him to receive them among his children. But among this multitude there were some, of course, whose abnegation was imperfect, and whose first fervour cooled and became alarmed at the austerities which strewed the path of a child of St. Francis ; these judged the Rule of the humble Saint, by the light of mere human wisdom, and they thought to temper its severity. Among these the first to be noticed is Elias of Cortona, who was the immediate successor of St. Francis in the government of the Order. He had been admitted into the Community by the Saint himself, who loved him with the tender affection of a father to a son. His cleverness and energy might have made him a pillar of support to the pious family, but humility had not taken a sufficiently deep root in his soul, and hence his wisdom had a worldly tone, and his actions produced bitter fruit for him and for his brothers. St. Francis knew that Elias had the propensity to introduce innovations, and he had severely reproved him for it, and one day the Saint addressed him in these prophetic words : “ Alas !

unhappy man, thy fate is already decided ; thou wilt not die in religion. Thou hast been weighed in the balance, and thou art found to be too light with thy pride and worldly knowledge." After the death of St. Francis, the brothers, who were deceived in their estimate of the virtue of Elias, chose him to be Superior-General, and for some little time they had no cause to regret their choice. He was very active in providing for the needs of the Order, and he took a prominent part in procuring the canonisation of their much-loved Father. But this state of things did not last long. He first began by altering the Rule as to the poverty which Francis of Assisi had bequeathed to his children as their most precious inheritance ; and even in the presence of the Founder's tomb he did not fear to lay a profane hand on the trust which had been confided to him, and began to verify the sad prediction which had been made about him.

Great complaints soon arose against the proposed alterations of the Rule. St. Anthony of Padua was at the head of the opposition. The complainants appealed to the Pope, and Gregory IX. thought their complaints sufficiently well-

founded to induce him to depose Elias from the government of his Order, and John Parent was elected in his stead. He was a religious whose life was above all reproach, and he had grieved over the introduction of any laxity among the children of St. Francis, whose poverty he imitated with sincere devotion. As soon as he was elected he hastened to abolish the innovations which his predecessor had introduced, and to restore things to their former state.

But the evil was greater than he had imagined, and there were many malcontents among his brethren, who regarded the reforms of the new Superior with an evil eye. Though the Pope had deposed Elias he recognised in him a man of a superior mind, and he was touched with his humility, for he had begged to be allowed to pass the remainder of his days in solitude, but his heart, so impatient of control, could not rest, and he rekindled the discontent of his party. Anthony of Padua was no longer there to exercise his powerful influence over the disaffected, and, at a Chapter held in the year 1236, they demanded the restoration of Elias, and the

Pope consented to their desire. As soon as he was re-appointed he began again his system of innovation; the elder members of the Community, beside themselves with grief, remonstrated with the General, but he made use of his prestige with Gregory IX. to obtain from him powers to act against the religious who differed with him as rebels and law-breakers. Then all the most venerable men in the Order, being condemned to silence, were exiled and dispersed to other monasteries, their only resource being to pray to the Lord in their humiliation, that He would preserve from destruction the great work of St. Francis. The chief among them, Cæsar of Spires, who was eminent among his brethren, was thrown into prison, and one day his gaoler, thinking he was about to escape, struck him so violent a blow that he expired at once.

When Gregory IX. heard of this sad event, he was overwhelmed with grief, and it became apparent to him that his old age had been taken advantage of, to serve the ambitious purposes of Elias. The Pope at once assembled a Chapter of the Order, when the General was again deposed, and Albert of Pisa was elected in his

stead. This was a fortunate choice, for Albert was a man whose heart was devoted to the religious life, and whose gentleness might have healed all the distressing wounds; but death did not allow him to fulfil the hopes that had been entertained of him, and he was obliged to bequeath to another the burden which he had borne as a faithful son of St. Francis. Haymon succeeded him in 1241; he edified his Order by the holiness of his life, and arrested for a time the tendency to relaxation of the Rule; but, like Albert, he did not live to carry out all his salutary intentions, as he died in the year 1244, only three years after his election.

The partisans of Elias now made another attempt to procure his re-election, but in vain, and Crescentius was chosen to the vacant post. Bad days followed for the unfortunate Elias: he was accused of taking part with an excommunicated prince, and the Pope, Innocent IV., in consequence, deprived and excommunicated him. After this he left his Order, and by his actions confirmed the truth of the charges made against him. However, when sickness came to him, repentance touched his soul, and before he

died, he was reconciled to the Pontiff and to his brethren in the Order.

Crescentius was an aged man whose life had been spent in exemplary observance of the Rule, but he had no longer sufficient energy to control the Order in its present disturbed state, and another Superior was chosen in his place.

John of Parma, who was chosen to succeed him, had all the fervour of the early days of the Order. One of the brethren, saluting the new Superior, said to him with intense sadness: "*Bene venisti Pater, sed tarde,*"—You are welcome, Father, but you come very late. However, his courage was indomitable, and in three years he had visited all the houses of his Order, pitilessly putting down every abuse. Two religious only accompanied him on his journeys; he travelled on foot clothed in a poor habit, and giving no sign that he was the first personage in his Order.

Those who were zealous in the Community seconded his holy efforts, but the brothers who had become lax, and had incurred his reproofs, only waited for an opportunity to rebel against their brave Superior. They appealed to the Pope,

and his Holiness, after vainly endeavouring to calm the malcontents, advised the General to yield to the storm and to resign. The good Superior did not hesitate for a moment, and, in spite of the strenuous opposition of his friends, he resigned his office at once. The Chapter, to show their esteem for him, asked him to appoint his successor, and he considered that no one would be more capable of carrying out the work of reform, and at the same time winning all hearts, than Bonaventure. He therefore proposed him to his brethren as the man who would be most likely to revive among them the fervour of their early years, and his choice was unanimously confirmed. The reputation of St. Bonaventure had reached many countries, and all the religious of his Order had heard of the innocence of his life, his extraordinary progress in sacred science, the sublimity of his teaching, and the success of his preaching. Therefore all hailed with joy his appointment to the Generalship.

But for Bonaventure himself, this news came like a thunderbolt, and he was filled with dismay at the thought of the burden which was to be laid upon him. But he was obliged to sub-

mit, and to accept it, for the Pope had confirmed the choice of the Chapter. He therefore prostrated himself humbly on the ground, and with many tears, he besought the God of St. Francis of Assisi to give him the wisdom, intelligence, and strength, which he needed to enable him to govern the great Order which had been confided to his inexperience.

St. Bonaventure started for Rome without delay, in order to take into his hands the direction of the affairs which had been committed to him, and to endeavour to bring back the hearts of his brethren to peace, obedience, and humility.

He began at first by looking to himself. "A Superior," he said, "ought to be a model of good life for the others, and to demonstrate by his actions that which he teaches by his words." He resolved to unite himself more closely than ever with God. "A Superior," he said, "is a mediator between God and his brethren, for he treats with them about the things of God by instructing them, correcting them, and making them advance in virtue. He ought also to try to advance their cause

with God by endeavouring to appease His anger with them, and to obtain His grace for them, to preserve them from sin."

Therefore, besides the exercises which were practised by all the religious, he planned some special ones, setting apart more time for meditation on the love of God, and when the pressure of business prevented him from doing all that was suggested by the intensity of his devotion, he kept his thoughts fixed on his Lord, he worked always under His Eye, and kept his heart ever open to the effusions of His grace.

After God, he looked to his brethren. Their virtues and their defects, their spiritual infirmities, and their bodily needs were his care. His inexhaustible charity embraced all and made him consider himself, as the rule expressed it, "the servant of all the Order". The Order was his cherished family; he had seen it sorrowfully fall away from the teaching of its holy Founder; it was his desire now to reconcile the hearts of the children with their father, and to prepare a perfect people for his Lord. In order more surely to attain this end, he made a resolve never to let justice flinch in presence of

disorder, never to forget mercy towards the repentant, to be always faithful in encouraging the weak, in confirming the strong, in being gentle towards the timid, in associating himself with the sorrows and troubles of his brothers, and in considering them all to have a right to his utmost care and tenderest love. During the eighteen years that he was General, Bonaventure showed himself to be worthy of St. Francis, and when, before his death, he resigned his sacred trust into other hands, peace prevailed in the Order, the virtues flourished there, and his successors had only to walk in his steps, in order to maintain the great Community in fervour and holiness of life.

The Pope gave him powerful aid; in his anxiety to consolidate peace in an Order which he took under his special protection, he tried to smooth the way for the new Superior. In a Bull issued with this intention the Pontiff revoked all permission to alter, in ever so small a degree, the Rule; he conferred on the Saint the most ample powers, and in order to strengthen him for the accomplishment of his heavy duties, he expressed to him, in language

truly paternal, the confidence with which his virtues inspired him, saying that he believed him to be specially endued with grace from Heaven, to govern this holy people and to guide them in the paths of a perfect life.

When the Father expresses himself in such language, the devoted child is filled with joy and gratitude—the sun seems brighter to him, the air more serene, the storm less terrible, the labour less intense. He goes to his work singing a song of confidence and love, and with his eyes fixed on the end of his toil, he goes forward without fear of any obstacle, bearing about with him, graven on his heart, those beautiful words: “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. viii. 31.)

CHAPTER VIII.

“L’Evangile Eternel”—*John of Parma.*

“Eruis sustinentes te Domine, et liberas eos.”—
ECCLES. li.

THE dispute between the Mendicant Orders and the University of Paris was at its full height when St. Bonaventure was raised to the dignity of Superior-General of the Order of St. Francis.

There was at this time in the world a very deplorable book called *The Eternal Gospel*. The author of this book, imbued with the teaching of Abbé Joachim, maintained that there were three epochs in religion, the Old Testament, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and after that a more perfect law, which was destined to replace the law of Christ, and to endure for ever, and this new law formed the subject of *L’Evangile Eternel*. The doctrines taught by this pernicious book had already been condemned, but some Franciscans had allowed

themselves to be seen with it, and soon the report spread, that the introduction of the work had been written by John of Parma, and that the book itself proceeded from his Order. His enemies eagerly seized this opportunity to make inquiries on behalf of the University, but they were rendered unnecessary by the condemnation of the book by Alexander IV., and by a second condemnation by the Council of Arles some years after. The Church rejected and anathematised its errors, and continued to lower the pride of the Doctors of Paris.

Two religious among the Franciscans had publicly declared themselves in favour of Abbé Joachim, whose names were Leonard and Gerard. When St. Bonaventure arrived at Rome, he inquired into their opinions, and was soon convinced that they had wandered from the way of truth. However, he proceeded with great charity to press them earnestly to conform to the decision of the General Lateran Council, and to say: "We agree with Peter Lombard, and we condemn the book of Joachim". But he had to deal with men whose obstinacy was incurable. Gerard replied: "I confess with the

Church and with the Apostle St. Peter, all that the doctors and the councils may have defined on this question and on all others". And he obstinately adhered to this ambiguous answer, in which he could appear to reject the error without condemning it. His companion imitated him, and the examiners proceeded against them as heretics. They were condemned to be imprisoned for life. Leonard died in prison some years after, and Gerard, after spending eighteen years of his life in the captivity which his pride had brought on him, was released through the advocacy of St. Bonaventure, who found him to be much changed by the sufferings and humiliations which he had undergone.

The affair of John of Parma arose out of this one, and needed much more delicate treatment. John was one of the most distinguished personages in the Order ; he had renounced the world while still very young, and after attaining great distinction in his studies, he was made a Doctor of the University of Paris. After he was made Superior-General, he was sent into the East as a Legate of the Holy See, to work for the extinction of schism, and was held in great veneration by

the Greeks. We have seen that while he held the office of General, he showed himself to be an earnest disciple of St. Francis ; but now the accusation of heresy was brought against him ; men called him a partisan of Joachim, and demanded that he should be judged accordingly. St. Bonaventure could not decide alone in such an affair ; the interests of the Order required his presence elsewhere, and it was besides intensely repugnant to his noble heart, to have to pass sentence on a man who had chosen him, in spite of his comparative youth, to the eminent post which he had now occupied ; as therefore he distrusted his own wisdom in a cause which so nearly touched the faith, he thought it better to leave it in the hands of the judges, but in order to secure justice and moderation in the conduct of the trial, he named a commission of several of the brothers, of which he chose Cardinal Cajetan, who was afterwards Pope Nicholas III., to be the president.

John showed himself before his judges as great and dignified in his humiliation as he had done in the midst of honour and applause ; and by the intervention of Cardinal Cajetan was acquitted.

CHAPTER IX.

The Minor Friars and the Preaching Friars.

“Fratres Minores sunt illius sanctæ regulæ professores, quæ in Evangelii fundatur eloquio, vitæ Christi roboratur exemplo et fundatorum militantes Ecclesia apostolorum actibusque firmatur.”

MEANWHILE the new Superior-General of the Minor Friars had gone to Anagni to defend his Order. He found there Albert le Grand, whom he had known and admired in Paris ; Humbert, General of the Dominicans, and lastly, Thomas of Aquin. It has already been said by what writings the Saint replied to the detractors of his brethren, and how Alexander IV. showed himself a zealous protector of the persecuted religious ; it remains now to see how the persecution which these two great Orders had had to endure contributed to strengthen the intimate ties which had bound them together from their birth.

St. Dominic had met St. Francis of Assisi at Rome, and there, after having exchanged ideas, they had engaged to work in indissoluble union, for the conversion of the world; and since the death of the two Founders, remembering this friendship which had existed between them, the two Orders had gone on increasing side by side, like one and the same family. The Order of St. Dominic had been more fortunate than the Order of St. Francis, inasmuch as it had never had among its chiefs any such men as those who had been injurious to the interests of the latter Community; and their present Superior, Humbert de Romaus, the friend of John of Parma, of St. Bonaventure, and of St. Louis, during the ten years of his government, had witnessed the establishment of fifty-four new houses. Never for a half-century had the two Orders been subjected to such a tempest as that which now disturbed the University of Paris. They had been attacked in common, and they defended themselves in common, and as if suffering had made their union more close, about a year before the election of St. Bonaventure, John of Parma and

Humbert had addressed to all the members of their Orders an admirable letter, which was to show to the world how the children of the Lord preserve their strength, and by what secret means they prepare themselves for the day of trial. This letter has been preserved from generation to generation, as an evidence of the affectionate intimacy which prevailed between St. Dominic and St. Francis.

“To our well-beloved Brothers in Jesus Christ, the Minor Friars and the Preaching Friars throughout the world.

“The Saviour of the world, Who loves all men, and does not will the death of any of His children, has taken different means, in different ages, to repair the primitive ruin of the human race, and in these last days has raised up our two Orders for the ministry of salvation. We believe indubitably that it is He Who has called, and enriched with His most precious gifts, this innumerable company of devoted men, who both by speech and by example are to save the earth. For the glory of God and not for their own, they exist as two great torches which illuminate with celestial light those who sit in

the shadow of death ; they are two cherubim, full of knowledge, who have in their souls the same thoughts and the same desires, and, extending their wings over the people, they protect and nourish them with salutary truth ; they are the two breasts of the Spouse from which the little children are fed ; they are the two sons of the Governor of all the earth ; they hold themselves ready to execute His will, they are the two witnesses of Jesus Christ ; clothed in symbolic habits, they preach and bear witness to the truth ; they are the two brilliant stars, which, according to the speech of the Sibyls, had the appearance of four animals, and which in these last days were to publish to the world the praise of humility and voluntary poverty. Who could count up all the mysterious and symbolical communications which have passed between these two holy Orders ? The divine wisdom which produces all things in numbers has not willed to create one Order, but two, so that they may form a mutual society for the service of the Church, and for their own advantage ; they will kindle in each other the same love, they will help and encourage each other ;

their zeal will be double, and the strength of the one will supplement that which is wanting to the other, so that the united testimony which they shall render to the truth may be the more imposing. See, O our very dear brothers, see how abundant should be our sincere delight—we who were born to our mother the Church, at the same time, we whom Eternal Love has sent two by two, to work for the salvation of men—how would they recognise us if not for the affectionate union which subsists between us? How shall we spread charity in other souls, if it is feeble and languishing in our own? How shall we resist persecution, if we are torn by interior dissensions? How great, how strong should be the love which unites us, when we consider the immeasurable affection which existed between Blessed Francis and Blessed Dominic, between the first Fathers of the two Orders! They looked upon each other as Angels of God, they received each other as they would have welcomed Christ; they honoured each other, they rejoiced in each other's spiritual progress, they praised each other, they helped each other in everything, and avoided carefully all scandalous disputes.

“What great advantages have accrued from this union to our two Orders and to the people ! What great glory to God ! This it is that has made the enemy tremble ; like a furious lion he seeks to break this old attachment. O you who are blessed by God, take heed lest in his pride he should be able to say of you : ‘I have prevailed against them, because they have left the ways of their forefathers, and have ceased to walk in the paths of love’. May the demon always find us ready to defend this most precious charity which our Fathers have bequeathed to us ; the law of love must always rule our actions, and we must not, because of the faults of any, allow our displeasure to be victorious over our love. Let not the desire of passing from one Order to another cause us to disturb the general tranquillity, but let each encourage and persuade his brother to remain in his vocation. Let the protectors and benefactors of each Order be blessed in common ; let not one Order seek to take away the converts of the other, nor that which is given in alms or by inheritance ; and let there be no jealousy in the ministry of preaching. Otherwise, where will be the charity ? Let not

one Order exalt, in an inconsiderate manner, its great men and its privileges ; let the brothers of the Order avoid, above all things, to reveal in public the troubles and defects of the other, for this never can be useful, but rather let them in all kindness reprove the guilty. One brother should never be ready to believe evil of another. . . .

“ We beg you for Charity, which is God Himself, to do carefully all that may lead to peace, to mutual concord in the Lord, and to indissoluble unity. Know that each of us desires, with all his heart and will, that this should be done by you. The transgressors will be punished as enemies to unity and peace. We have regarded it as our fatherly duty to write these things to you, since we cannot say them to you with our lips.”

But it was not enough to cause this letter to be read by the two Orders. One sad thought had troubled the soul of Bonaventure for some time, and had filled it with grief. He could not forget that of the accusations made against his brethren, many were, at least in part, founded on fact. In his replies, he had not hesitated to

impute blame where it was deserved. He considered it to be his duty to place himself as a wall of brass in defence of his children, and at the same time to crush by his virtue any iniquity which might disfigure the beauty of their souls. He therefore addressed himself with apostolic freedom to the provincial ministers of his Order, and with that authority which belongs to a Saint whose only desire is for the honour of God, he wrote to them the following letter :

“To his well-beloved in Christ, the Provincial Ministers and all the Guardians, Brother Bonaventure, Minister-General, and servant of the same Order, wishes salvation and the peace which surpasses all understanding.

“Although I know my manifest insufficiency to bear the burden that is laid upon me, because of my bodily weakness, the imperfection of my mind, my inexperience in business, and the repugnance of my will, yet, as it is hard to ‘kick against the pricks,’ by obstinately resisting the will of so large a Community, the order of the Sovereign Pontiff, and the will of God as expressed by their means, I have submitted my feeble shoulders to so heavy and almost intoler-

able a burden, full of hope in the help of the Almighty, and of confidence in the aid which you are anxious to lend me. For, though it is impossible for a man, even if he be endowed in the highest degree, with strength, aptitude, and experience, to bear alone the weight of so heavy a load, yet when the weight is divided into several parts, and each one is enjoined to have his share according to the extent of his courage, there is no one who need, even with the meanest capacity, give way to the despair that is inspired by the fear of something that is new. I expect therefore, from your intelligence, your carefulness, and your active zeal, the most eager desire to reprove the evil, to promote the good, to encourage the weak, and to ensure the perseverance of the strong. Also, as I find myself placed as the sentinel of the House of Israel, I have resolved, for fear that I should have to render an account of the blood of souls, to write to you briefly about things which I would much rather have explained to you by word of mouth in a general Chapter, if I had had the opportunity. But the peril of the moment is urgent, even the loss of consciences and the scandal of the world,

o which in many places our Order is become an object of disgust and of contempt, instead of being a bright mirror of sanctity. Having then taken the advice of prudent men on the points which need correction, without entirely keeping silence, or expressing all that there might be to say, without establishing any new obligations, or imposing new ties, but simply as a herald of truth, I tell you in a few words that which I cannot silently pass by. I ask myself why the splendour of our Order is in some sort obscured, why the external observance is feeble,* why purity of conscience has lost its brightness; and my answer is, that the reason lies in the multitude of business which its children undertake. In return for their work they greedily claim money, which is the thing most opposed to the poverty belonging to the Order; they receive it imprudently, and spend it more imprudently still. Then I see that idleness prevails among certain of the brothers, which is the advance guard of all disorders; they sleep in this vice, proposing to occupy a monstrous state lying between the active and contemplative life, where they cruelly drink the blood of souls. Others take useless

measures for the comfort of their bodies ; they are a burden to themselves, and their examples, far from edifying, are a scandal to souls. Others are importunate in their demands, and wherever they go they leave behind an aversion for their Order, so that their visits are dreaded by the people, as if they were brigands. In many places they build sumptuous and elegant edifices, and, for fear of troubling their brethren, they make them chargeable on their friends, thereby exposing themselves to the adverse criticisms of men. Offices are imprudently bestowed on brothers who have not yet passed through the required examinations, and are little mortified in body or strengthened in soul, thus laying on them burdens which they are unable to bear. Many eagerly search documents and tombs, thereby exciting the clergy against them. Again others make frequent and costly changes in our houses, and by so doing they bring trouble on the country, violate poverty, and are accused of inconstancy. In fact, these superfluities are without end ; the brothers forget how to be content with a little and the charity of men grows cold ; we shall be

made burdensome to all men, and shall become yet more so, if we do not find a prompt remedy for such a state of things. . . .

“Let, then, the devotion of our hearts be great ; let our zeal burn with fervour ; let us drive the merchants out of our Father’s House ; let us kindle in the hearts of our brothers an ardent love for prayer and for the practice of devotion. Be less willing to admit so many people ; I desire absolutely that the Rule for the admission of religious should be strictly observed. Stop the perverse and disorderly customs which are enumerated in this letter. This may perhaps seem hard to many, but the holiness of our profession demands it ; present tribulation demands it ; the world demands it ; Blessed Francis cries to us ; the Blood of Jesus Christ, poured out for us, orders it ; the Lord insists on it from the heights of Heaven.

“Stimulate the idle to work ; force into a quiet life those spirits that are eager to extend their labours outside the walls ; impose silence on the importunate ; make the men who want to build grand houses enter into deeper humiliation ; keep in solitude the souls that are too much

inclined to intercourse with the world. Never impose the offices of preacher and confessor on any who have not undergone a strict examination. . . . Do not, under any pretext, give permission to anyone to change his residence before the General Chapter has been held. Indeed, by the advice of wise men, and in order to avoid scandal, as well as to obey the command of my predecessor, I strictly reserve to myself this point. I order, by virtue of the obedience they owe me, that, for the future, no one shall change his House without my special permission. Let the brothers also learn to be content with a little, for wise men think that they have good reason to fear that all will be constrained, whether they will or not, to be content with it soon."

The language of this letter is grave and solemn ; it is severe, and contains some serious reproaches. But we are not to imagine that these reproaches were deserved by the majority of the Order. We have seen how the relaxation of the Rule had been introduced since the time of St. Francis, how the heroic poverty enjoined by it had been exchanged for a

poverty less rigid and more guarded, but we have seen at the same time a constant struggle going on against this laxity ; we have seen that the majority chose for their generals those men who were most remarkable for their fidelity to primitive observance, and, in the election of St. Bonaventure, we find a last protest against all deviation from it.

But it was in these days especially that Bonaventure, in his desire to see the Lord's earth purified from all that may shock the eyes of God, addressed those who were charged to watch over it ; it was in these days that saints abounded in the pious and venerable family of Francis of Assisi. These men were the counsellors, the friends, the children of our Saint. They have passed through the world as beneficent clouds sent by the hand of the Lord to refresh the earth, and their memory is retained in benediction by their brethren.

CHAPTER X.

St. Louis—Works of Piety.

“Glorificavit illum in conspectu regum.”—ECCLES. xiv.

BESIDES the holy religious of the Franciscan Order, the Church could turn her eyes on a multitude of other children equally illustrious. The holy and blessed Spouse of the Saviour had never been so triumphant and so glorious. Beside the two great Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic, other Orders sprang up like sweet flowers under the protection of their Mother. The Carmes had seen the benediction of Heaven descend on them; they were multiplied in a marvellous way, and fame had carried the fragrance of their virtues afar. Orders devoted to the relief of those taken captive by the infidels offered a new kind of heroism, and exercised a powerful attraction over those minds that aspired to sublime and dangerous enter-

prises. The Servites, devoted to the worship of Mary, had, in their Seven Founders, seven saints; men desirous to lead solitary lives opened monasteries in Italy, France, Spain, and England, and, in every country in the Catholic world. The world seemed to be penetrated by the spirit of Christianity to an extent hitherto unknown, and by identifying itself with that spirit, it was raised to a position to which it has never attained since those more happy days.

This movement was due, in the first instance, to the Popes. It was commenced by the indomitable will of Gregory VII., and continued by his successors in the twelfth century, and it was developed in the thirteenth century by the energy of Innocent III., and Gregory IX., and all the Sovereign Pontiffs of that time. The Crusades had helped to propagate it among the masses, by teaching them that faith is the foundation of social life, the impulse of noble actions, the most glorious inheritance of men, and the most worthy object of heroic sacrifice. The Religious Orders, from the time of St. Bernard, had exercised an enormous influence over every class of society, and at the time

when St. Francis and St. Dominic appeared, the world needed that new Orders should come in contact with it, and teach it the practice of sublime virtues in family life, without imposing on it sad and often impossible conditions of renunciation. These two great men understood its needs, and their children seemed to be destined to crown the great work of Blessed Gregory.

France was the head of the Catholic nations of the world, and, at this time, France was governed by St. Louis, the greatest of the French monarchs since Charlemagne. We have seen that St. Louis took the side of the religious in their dispute with the University. No one had a greater love for science than he, but science, he considered, ought to remember her right mission, and not to set herself against men who were devoted to the instruction of the people and to the maintenance of religion, or she would become only a hindrance to the light which she professed to propagate.

St. Louis extended his protection equally to both Orders, and loved them both tenderly, saying that, if it were possible, he would divide himself equally between them.

Among the friends of the great monarch, St. Bonaventure occupied a prominent place: his reputation for virtue, his writings, his learning, his zeal in preaching, his election, while yet so young, to the dignity of Superior-General, all these things inspired Louis IX. with a profound veneration for the Saint. And he did not limit his affection to a mere sterile admiration, he desired to gather some fruit to his soul from his intercourse with the holy Doctor, whom he asked to write for him one of those books which his love could so easily produce. St. Bonaventure at once acceded to his request.

No subject of meditation was so dear to the good king as that of the humiliations of the Son of God made Man. They were the constant theme of his contemplation, and from it he acquired courage in adversity, wisdom in prosperity, and the fragrance of tender devotion which filled his heart. He had spent immense sums of money to secure for his kingdom the possession of the crown of thorns and of a considerable portion of the true Cross, and he had built the Sainte Chapelle with royal magnificence, to afford to these precious relics

a shelter that should be worthy of their value ; and Bonaventure gladly assisted a devotion which so harmonised with the feelings of his own heart, by composing an "Office of the Passion" for his royal friend. In this, as in his other works, his language is pious and compassionate, and it is evident that he is speaking of that which most tenderly excites his love.

This is the first Hymn of this beautiful Office, the rest is still more affectionate in tone :

"Let our refreshment and the supreme desire of our heart be in the Passion of the Lord, by which man obtains salvation.

"Let us bear in our memory the sorrows of Jesus Christ ; let us carry His opprobrium and His crown of thorns, His Cross, the nails, and the lance.

"Let us bear with us His most sacred wounds, most worthy subjects for our praise ; let us carry the vinegar, the gall, the reed, and all the bitter adjuncts of His death.

"Let these memories satiate us with sweetness, and make us to abound in virtues and in glorious fruit.

"O crucified Saviour, we offer to Thee the

homage of our hearts, and we entreat Thee to unite us in Heaven to the assembly of Thy Saints.

“To Jesus Christ, Who was sold for us, be honour and praise, to Jesus Christ betrayed for us, and delivered to the cruel death of the Cross, for the salvation of His people.”

Among the religious who were called on to appear from time to time at the court, there was one who was remarkable before all others for his modesty, the sweetness of his face, the gentleness of his language—a man whom to know was to love, and who could not speak without leading others to think as he did, and to become better men. This was the General of the Order of St. Francis, Bonaventure, who was recognised by all who knew him, as a learned Doctor and a perfect imitator of St. Francis.

Not only the king, but his children also, came to the Saint to learn the ways of holiness, and he wrote for the Princess Blanche, a daughter of St. Louis, a little work on *The Government of the Soul*, which contains in a few pages, all that is necessary to attain to eminent sanctity.

“Exercise yourself in a modest economy of food and clothing, of sleep and waking, without exceeding in anything, by moderating your silence and your conversation, your sorrow or your joy, your gentleness or severity, according as necessity or reason shall direct. Exercise yourself in a modest honesty, by the dignity, the suitableness, and good tone of your actions, your movements, your gestures, your clothes; order your exterior, your members, your senses, as moral honesty or the observance of your Rule shall demand of you. . . . Practise yourself in justice . . . justice which consists of zeal for the love of God, of the accomplishment of the law of God, of the desire for the salvation of your brethren; practise yourself in the justice of order, by obedience to your superiors, by union with your equals, by vigilance over your inferiors; in the justice of perfection by adhesion to all truth, by love for all good, by the hatred of all wickedness, not only of heart but of words and actions, doing nothing to others which you would not have done to you, and never refusing to another what it would pain you to be refused yourself.

“Practise yourself in piety . . . in the piety whose end is the worship of God, by reciting the Canonical Hours with sincere reverence, by confessing every day, and weeping for your sins ; by receiving the Most Holy Eucharist at fixed times, and by hearing Mass every day ; by the piety which has for its object the salvation of souls, helping them by frequent prayers, and the preaching of a good example. . . . Act wisely in all things, so that your salvation may not receive any injury. Practise yourself in the piety whose object is the comforting of bodily sufferings, bearing them with patience, lavishing tender consolations on them, helping those who are afflicted, with humility, with joy, and compassion. . . .

“Now, if you wish to practise all that I have pointed out to you, the most powerful means is to remember constantly Jesus Crucified, and to bear your Well-Beloved, like a bouquet of myrrh, on your heart. May He grant it to you, Who is blessed for evermore.”

Among the other works of St. Bonaventure are “Meditations” on Sin, on Death, on Judgment, on Hell, on the Glory of Heaven, on the Bless-

ings of God, on the Eucharist, and on the Passion of Christ our Lord. After having, in these meditations, sought to inspire fear by the consideration of the more appalling of these subjects, he tries to inspire love by the memory of the blessings of God, and especially by the blessing of the Most Holy Eucharist, and, transported at the thought of that ineffable gift, he exclaims—"O truly admirable munificence! O unheard-of generosity, super-excellent charity! What can He refuse to us, Who gives us Himself? He hath done for us everything that He could do; all that He possessed, He has given to us; He has given us His kingdom, He has given us Himself. . . . The Eucharist is the medicine of the sick, the daily Bread of travellers, the strength of the weak, the joy of the strong, the health of the infirm, the antidote of all maladies. By It man becomes more gentle under chastisement, more patient in work, more earnest in love, more active in vigilance, more ready to obey, more fervent in giving thanks to God."

These meditations were eagerly read, and they served to cement the union between the

world and the poor religious of the Lord. In all ages it has pleased God to regenerate the world by means of men who were poor and destitute of all temporal resources. They have inspired it with a hatred of vice and a love for virtue ; they have revealed to it the loving Heart of the Redeemer ; they have brought it into the shelter of that Sacred Heart, and, in consequence, great things have come to pass, and happiness has brightened the face of the earth.

CHAPTER XI.

General Chapter at Narbonne—Legend of St. Francis.

“ Circa illum corona fratrum ; quasi plantatio cedri in Monte Libano,” —ECCLES. ii.

ST. BONAVENTURE had been appointed to the government of his Order at a time when it was harassed by interior agitations, and he was, therefore, called upon to fight. He had early had to contend with the enemies of his Order, and he was afterwards obliged to encounter new adversaries who rose up against him, but his main occupation was to revive among his brethren the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, to encourage feeble hearts, and to strengthen failing courage, to cause the earth, confided to his care, to produce abundant flowers of piety and the fruits of salvation.

St. Francis had adopted in his Order a practice which had long been in favour in other Religious

Communities for the maintenance of discipline. This was the holding of General Chapters, where the principal members of each province were called together to give an account of the different houses under their authority. These Chapters were held every three years, unless the Superior-General judged it to be necessary to hold them at shorter intervals, or to postpone them for any special reason. The Provincials also held Chapters, in their respective provinces, to promulgate the orders of the General Chapter, and they also assembled their brothers every year, in order to remedy any more pressing needs. St. Bonaventure fully recognised the advantage of such gatherings. As much as he could, he liked to mix with his religious, and to question them about the needs of their different houses ; to ask their advice, and to discuss with them the best remedies that could be applied to any disorders that might arise. Five Chapters were held by him—the first at Narbonne in 1260, the second at Pisa, the third at Paris, the fourth at Assisi, the fifth at Lyons—and at each he presided with striking wisdom and virtue.

Of these five Chapters, the first is the most

important, for it was there that the Rule of St. Francis was explained, and this exposition of the Rule has caused its author to be considered as a second Founder of the Order. In it the Rule is divided into twelve Chapters, and to each is added a commentary intended to recommend it, and to prevent any arbitrary interpretation being made. "I propose to myself," says the pious General, "to make more fully known the holiness of this Rule, in the hope that by so doing I may console those who have embraced it, and may lead in the right way those enemies who, considering it with eyes full of envy and dislike, attribute to its light the defects of their own darkness."

Every part of this exposition is extremely clear, and leaves no occasion for doubt; every part is consoling to a humble religious belonging to the Order of Minor Friars; every part contributes to fill him with a holy pride and sweet confidence. The end of the first chapter is an example of the piety and rich imagination of the commentator.

"The Rule," he says, "is divided into twelve points, which are like the twelve hard stones

taken by the command of Joshua from the bed of the Jordan, at the place where the priests stopped, by twelve chosen men, and set by them in the place where the children of Israel were to encamp the following night. The Minor Friars, like men chosen by the true Joshua, who is our Lord, wishing to pass the Jordan and to march on quickly to the promised land, ought to take twelve stones of impenetrable hardness, that is to say, the twelve points of the Rule, which is confirmed by evangelic and apostolic authority; and they ought to take these stones to the place where the feet of the Priests have rested, by following the footsteps of the twelve Apostles. The three first chapters receive the rays of the rising sun, the three following ones warn us against the dangers of the north wind, three others protect us from the evils of the night, while the three last are full of the delights of a southern land. Thus, our city, being developed on four different sides, and ornamented by twelve gates, which are the twelve apostolic pearls, has nothing to fear from the insults of the great: it is fortified by the wisdom of the poor."

After the exposition of the Rule, the Saint made several orders, which mostly related to the observance of poverty, as that was the point on which more disputes had arisen, and in which laxity was most to be feared. Francis of Assisi had bequeathed poverty as the inheritance of his children, and had made it the queen of his Order. Hence the zeal with which Bonaventure endeavoured to keep it intact. He had noticed with sorrow that some of the best religious had fallen from the brightness of their first fervour by indulging a love for earthly riches ; he had seen the salt deprived of its savour by mixing with the dust of the world, and he trembled for the welfare of his children. We will give a few of these regulations which the Saint introduced. They may seem to us to be severe, but they were all strictly founded on the Rule of St. Francis. “ No dome is to be built in the churches without the express permission of the Minister-General, except above the high altar. The steeples are no longer to be built in the form of a tower. There are not to be in the churches any paintings except those of the principal altar, where may be represented the image of the

Crucifix, the Virgin Mary, St. Francis, and St. Anthony of Padua. The retables of the altar are not to be sumptuous. The censers, crosses, and images, which are of gold or silver, are to be removed under obedience, except in the case of those crosses which contain valuable relics, and those vessels which are to receive the Body and the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The chalices are to be simple and unornamented, and are to weigh two marks and a half. Each altar is to have its own chalice, but there is to be a special one for use at the Conventual Mass."

At this Chapter of Narbonne was made also a new arrangement of the provinces of the Order : fresh limits were assigned to them, and two new ones were added, with four vicariates ; and the record of this circumscription shows how the blessing of Heaven had multiplied the family of St. Francis. The Order had existed now for fifty-three years, and it had spread through Italy, France, Spain, England, Ireland, Portugal, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Dalmatia, Poland, Bosnia, the Empire of Greece, the Holy Land, Tartary, and other countries visited by its missionaries. It had now thirty-three provinces

and four vicariates, and in all two hundred and thirty houses. Nor did its growth diminish after the time of St. Bonaventure, for about a hundred and forty years after this Chapter at Narbonne, Barthelemi of Pisa gives a list of the houses which then existed, and which numbered fifteen hundred and fifty-six. Thus were accomplished the promises of God to St. Francis ; thus the new Abraham was privileged to see his race multiply like the stars of Heaven, and cover the whole earth.

Another important incident of the General Chapter of Narbonne was the composition by St. Bonaventure of the beautiful "Legend of St. Francis". Shortly after the death of the founder of the Minor Friars, one of his favourite disciples, Thomas de Celano, the author of the *Dies iræ* had been commissioned by Pope Gregory IX. to record all that he knew of the acts and virtues of the Saint. Later on, three others of his contemporaries in religion—Léon, Angelo, and Rufino—also wrote a history of his life, at the request of their Superior-General. But these works did not satisfy the tender love of the brethren for their illustrious Father, and

they now besought Bonaventure to relate in his turn the history of that marvellous life. The most influential members of the Order assembled at Narbonne made an appeal to their General to undertake this task, and the Saint regarded their prayer as a command which he could not disobey.

“I feel myself to be incapable and unworthy,” he replied, “to write the life of so venerable a man, that life which is so valuable a model to us all, and I should never have attempted such a work if the earnest desires of my brethren of the General Chapter had not imposed it upon me, and if their special devotion to our blessed Father had not made me feel it to be an obligation upon me to do as they ask. For in my infancy I was rescued from death by his merits and his prayers, and the memory of this benefit is always present to my mind. If, then, I were to refuse to celebrate his praises, I should fear to be guilty of the crime of ingratitude. Therefore the principal motive which makes me undertake this work is the fact that I am indebted to the intercession of Francis for the life of my body and of my soul ; and as I myself

have experienced the effect of his power with God, I have resolved gladly to gather up as far as I can all the virtues, actions, and words of his life, as precious relics which have been scattered here and there, and to keep them from falling into oblivion."

St. Bonaventure applied himself to fulfil this work of love and gratitude with fervour and with zeal, and to this end he made a pilgrimage to all the places which had been honoured by the presence of the Saint whose virtues he had to commemorate. He also visited any of his disciples who were still living, appealed to their recollections of St. Francis, and carefully treasured up all the particulars they gave him of that holy life.

Bonaventure entered upon his work with the zest of filial love. After having collected the necessary materials, he examined them carefully by the light of truth, and arranged them to form the body of his work. Then he began to write his story, and every page of it shows us the feeling of veneration which filled his heart. One day, St. Thomas of Aquin came, with a brother of his Order, to visit the Saint while he was

occupied in this work. The " Angelic Doctor " loved, as we have said, to commune with Bonaventure on the deep mysteries of theology. He found an ineffable charm in these conversations, from which all earthly interests were excluded, and he venerated the love which filled the heart of his friend. But on this occasion, when he knocked at the well-known door, no one answered to his call. St. Thomas therefore partly opened the door, and saw Bonaventure entirely lost in contemplation, raised up above the ground in ecstasy, and unconscious of all that was passing around him. We know not what incident in the life of the great patriarch had thus transported the soul of his historian from earth to Heaven, for the pious discretion of St. Thomas has left the mystery unexplained. He blessed God for having allowed him to witness these marvels, and turning to his companion, he said, " Let us leave a Saint to work for a Saint ".

This work, so worthy of the piety of the Seraphic Doctor, must be read to be appreciated, but we will bring forward one passage from it, which follows a long account of the miracle of the Stigmata :

“ And now, O valiant soldier of Christ, thou dost carry the arms of thine invincible Chief, and, so protected and defended thou shalt overcome all thine enemies. Thou dost carry the standard of the Almighty King, and at the sight of it all the members of the army of God will be encouraged to the fight. Thou dost bear the seal of the Supreme Pontiff, and thy words and actions will be regarded by all as words of truth, as actions that cannot be condemned. To-day thou art marked with the Stigmata of the Lord Jesus ; none can harass thee now, but all the servants of God will surround thee with their homage and their love. These signs, the truth of which does not rest on the evidence of two or three witnesses only, but on the superabundant authority of an innumerable multitude—these signs, I say, which are irresistible witnesses of God in thee and in thy person, remove every excuse for incredulity ; they confirm the faith of the children of God, they fill them with hope, and they kindle in their souls the fire of love. Now is accomplished the vision which was shown thee at the beginning, in which it was declared to thee that thou, bright light of Christ, shouldst

be clothed in celestial armour, and shouldst bear the standard of the Cross and its glorious insignia. . . . This manifestation of Christian wisdom, graven in the dust of thy flesh, no truly pious man will be able to reject, nor will any faithful man attack it, or humble heart despise it. It is the work of Heaven, of God Himself, and deserves to be accepted without reserve."

We may add that this "Legend" was one of the most popular works of the Middle Ages. The faith of our fathers was nourished by it, and they loved, after having heard the fervent preaching of the Minor Friars, to look back to the days when the Lord sent St. Francis to console His Church, and to call men to repentance. The forty-five editions of the work attest the esteem in which it was held by the nations of Catholic Europe.

CHAPTER XII.

Pilgrimage to Mount Alvernia—The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure.

“In philosophia naturaliter latet sapientia Dei.”

AMONG the places which are sacred to the memory of Francis of Assisi, there is none more famous than Mount Alvernia. There the holy Founder loved to repose in prayer and meditation. There innumerable wonders were wrought in him, and, above all, the ineffable one of the imprint on his flesh of the Sacred Wounds of the Redeemer. There the fragrance of his virtues lingered, and the soul could not approach this solitude without unspeakable emotion, and without finding the burden of the world more heavy, and the blessed yoke of the Saviour more light and easy. Two sanctuaries were especially dear to the children of St. Francis, that of Assisi and that of Alvernia. At Assisi, Francis had united himself to poverty, and the fruit of that union

was a generation as numerous as the stars of the firmament—a generation of Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, of Anchorites and Doctors—whose virtues, like the rays of the sun, have penetrated to the extremities of the earth; at Assisi, Francis had laid down, in humility and in hope, his natural body, and had passed to the blessed regions of eternity; at Assisi, new miracles occurring every day, had rendered glorious the cradle of this pious family. Therefore the Saint thought himself happy when he could go and kneel on the soil which had been watered with the tears of his venerated father, and had received his last sighs. The world itself turned lovingly towards this country, which was overwhelmed with heavenly favours; it sent painters and artists to place in the temple of the Saint the flowers of their genius; it invited its great men to bow before the dust of the Saint; it brought sorrowful hearts to seek strength and peace in the memory of the most humble virtues of the child of God.

The sanctuary of Alvernia was the object of an equal veneration. According to a pious tradition, the sides of the mountain were rent

by the earthquake which shook the earth on the day of the death of the Saviour, and had left in these places imprints of its violence. All the great and illustrious of the Church had enthusiastic words for the sacred mount, in the time of Bonaventure, and in the following centuries. Popes and kings, great nobles, rich men and poor, have loved this place, and have related all the wonders of it.

“We love with all our heart,” said Alexander IV., “the celebrated mountain of Alvernia, when we remember that it is the place where St. Francis, his heart being kindled at the sight of the seraph to more fervent love, received those marvellous wounds which made him appear to be crucified, and which, like precious jewels, gave his body a dignity proportioned to that of his soul.

“We, who confide in the prayers of so great a Patriarch, take Mount Alvernia under our special protection, and use all our powers for its defence. That is why we pray you, and warn you all, we exhort you seriously, and we command you expressly, in virtue of your obedience, by these apostolical letters, to appoint some of the brethren to serve God continually on this

holy mountain, as we desire that this establishment should never, on any account, be destroyed or abandoned by the Order."

St. Bonaventure had desired for a long time to seek rest in this land of saints, and amid his painful labours, he ever looked towards this holy mountain, for a secret voice had told him that help would come to him from thence. Accordingly, when he had accepted the task imposed on him by his brethren, of writing the life of St. Francis, and began to collect, from various sources, the information he required, Mount Alvernia attracted him, as to a garden of delights, where he could gather the sweetest flowers with which to adorn his work, and he directed his steps thither without delay. Great, indeed, were the fervent transports of his love, when the Mount of Vision at last appeared before his eyes, and when his feet trod its narrow and precipitous paths.

"It is love, O my God, that directs me, and not reason, and I run eagerly wherever Thou dost lead me. Those who see me do not know that I am intoxicated with love. . . . They cannot discern the extent of my desire. They

know not that Thy love, when once kindled in the heart, prevents the use of reason ; that he who fervently seeks Thee abandons himself and everything else, and that he who comes to Thee with a pure heart disquiets himself so little about all that passes around him, that often he hardly knows what he is doing himself."

Thus the disciple of St. Francis went on his way, plunged in an ecstasy of heavenly thoughts and meditations, till he reached the holy place where Heaven had worked its wonders, and where Christ had taught St. Francis a martyrdom of love. His ascent of the mountain was interrupted by an imposing ceremony. The principal church, which had been built there and dedicated to "St. Mary of the Angels and of St. Francis," had not yet been consecrated, and the ceremony was delayed till the arrival of the Saint. Brothers had been invited from far and near, and many days before the time fixed, the roads were thronged with Franciscan travellers, till a thousand religious had been gathered from their narrow cells, on the heights of the sacred Mount.

Seven bishops attended this august ceremony, and it was a solemn and impressive moment,

never to be forgotten by this great assembly of the Order, when the voice of the consecrating Prelate and the chants of the religious awoke the mountain echoes by the praises and supplications which they offered before the Throne of God. Men of all classes in the Church were assembled there, and the sacred edifice itself could not contain the multitude. The whole Church was represented on that auspicious day, on the summit of Mount Alvernia. The ceremony of the consecration lasted for a long time, and when it was over the immense procession—consisting of bishops on horseback, and people preceding them with crosses and banners, the religious following and carrying tapers and singing psalms and hymns—descended the mountain, and marched round it; then the bishops, to commemorate the mysteries which had been enacted on its heights, blessed it under the name of the “Seraphic Mountain”.

From that day Mount Alvernia became more than ever venerable in the eyes of Christian people, and the great ones of the earth considered it an honour to tread its paths. Other churches were built there, and on one day only

did profanation and sacrilege ever penetrate to this holy place, when the Venetian army took possession of it, and it fell a prey to the fury of the soldiers ; then, indeed, mourning and desolation, for a short time, replaced the holy sounds of penitence and praise. But as soon as the soldiers retired, the zeal of the surrounding populations and of the religious repaired the havoc that had been made, and the children of the Lord continued, in their peaceful solitude, to celebrate His Name.

After this day of pious solemnity, Bonaventure passed some time in meditation, the secret joys of which he has revealed in one of his most sublime writings. For a long time, during his busy life, he had sighed for a retreat where he might taste of the peace which Jesus brought to men, and whose joys St. Francis had so fervently declared. Alvernia seemed to him to be the most favourable spot in which to find what he sought; and when the crowd had dispersed, and the brothers had departed after having received the blessing of their General, he entered upon his retreat, and the fruit of these quiet hours with God was the immortal book called *The*

Journey of the Soul to God, the great work which formed the delight of Gerson for more than thirty years.

Philosophy has never risen to greater heights or pushed her investigations further than in this book, nor has theology spoken in language of greater charm. The philosophy of St. Bonaventure does not consist of a series of arid speculations which only deceive the soul. The soul is made for happiness, and happiness is to be found in the Sovereign Good. As this happiness is far above man, he can only reach it by raising his mind above himself, and as we are powerless to raise ourselves in this manner, except by the help of a superior virtue, our best dispositions are vain unless they are assisted by the Most High; and as this succour is only given to those who ask it, prayer is the source and principle of our elevation to God. "The soul is not only the image of God: it is His dwelling-place, and we can find Him in it. It is His dwelling-place when faith enlightens it, when hope excites it, and when charity inflames it. It becomes like the Heavenly Jerusalem, and recalls to us the nine orders of angels, by its

possession of the qualities corresponding with those of these Orders. Then God dwells within it, and makes it His abode; it is His child, His spouse, His well-beloved, the sister and co-heir of Jesus Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit."

We can give no idea, in the small limits of this present volume, of the beauty of this book. Its pages should be read and re-read, for there are in it almost as many thoughts as words, and we must meditate on it long and seriously, in order to penetrate its beauty. Not only in this work, but also in his other works, all philosophic questions are included in his domain. The human soul has nothing that is hidden from him, for he has sounded its deepest mysteries and discovered its most hidden retreats.

St. Bonaventure never forgets that reason without faith is restricted in its researches, and that, on the other hand, the torch of reason gives light to faith. And in the same manner as reason is to be subject to faith, so philosophy is to be subject to theology, as to a science that is more august, more holy, and more suited to the needs of a heart which was created for a supernatural order. St. Bonaventure has proved

this inferiority of philosophy, when compared with theology, with special clearness, in a short Treatise written to demonstrate the relation which philosophy and the arts bear to theology, and to prove that they are all absorbed in it, as into a natural centre.

The one thought of the Saint was to seek God in all things; to make everything a means of reaching Him, to see Him in everything, and to trace Him in every branch of science, as in every creature, and never by anyone was the divine mission of science so clearly understood. Science, so directed, can indeed produce wonders, but it needs for its disciples such men as Bonaventure, and even in a Christian age such men are rarely to be found.

CHAPTER XIII.

Visits to Monasteries—Writings on the Religious Life.

“Vagando per diversas terras, vix vel raro propter multas occupationes habui opportunitatem scribendi modicum.”

THESE days devoted to contemplation on the solitary heights of Mount Alvernia passed very quickly, and even in that holy place, the burden of government which St. Bonaventure had to bear, did not leave him free from innumerable anxieties and cares. He had soon therefore to relinquish the pious solemnities and the sweet meditations of his sojourn on the sacred mountain for journeys to visit the different houses of his beloved and ever increasing Order. Since the time of St. Francis, these visits had been regarded as a powerful means of maintaining fervour and discipline, and the Saint always regarded them as some of his most important duties. After his

visit to Mount Alvernia, he continued them with the same zeal as before. He made these journeys on foot, always absorbed in contemplation, in meditation, and in prayer, unless when busied about the needs of his brethren. In each house he was welcomed as an angel from Heaven, who had been sent to bring men consolation and love. He inquired strictly into everything, and especially into the spiritual state of his children; and great was his joy when he found them walking with a firm step in the paths of self-denial and charity, while any forgetfulness of their sublime vocation caused him bitter grief. This he would reprove, but with so great tenderness, that more than once, in the Chapters, some of the elder brothers reproached him with his lenity, which they thought to be injurious to the public good. But he never could resolve to quench the still smoking flax, and where he saw any hope of return, he showed pity to the weakness of his erring children, as a tender mother compassionates the sorrow of her only son. But when he saw that the evil was inveterate, and that his fatherly remonstrances and fervent exhortations availed nothing, he did not hesitate

to have recourse to more severe remedies, and to punish the guilty.

In his visits to the different houses, he liked to converse separately with each brother, in order the better to discern the hidden needs of each. He knew at the cost of what sacrifices, what struggles, what daily bitternesses, the difficult edifice of religious perfection is built up, and all his desire was to alleviate the pain of his dear children.

When a young religious asked him by what means he could best preserve himself in his Order, from sin, and increase merits for eternal life, the good Superior replied, "O my son, if you wish to remain in the religious life without sin, remember the six precepts which I give you, and let them always be present to your thoughts : they are taken from the writings and examples of the holy Fathers.

"I. Be always faithful in prayer and in the reading of holy books ; and in order that you may not neglect this duty, visit the church night and day, and love your cell above all. Never let yourself be seen out of it or the church, passing your time with others in idleness in the

streets and roads ; but when the office or repast is finished, or when you have fulfilled your duties in obedience to your Superiors, return at once to your cell, without raising your eyes, and there return to your own thoughts.

“II. Watch well that you may preserve honesty in your heart and in all your senses. To this end, avoid too great intimacy with anyone, but live in such a manner with all the world that no one may have occasion to remark anything singular or extraordinary in your conduct.

“III. Keep a strict watch over your tongue, and when you are with others, speak only of necessary things, and in answer to inquiries. Praise no one, and blame neither those who are absent, nor those to whom you speak, even though others should have set you the example.

“IV. Above all things, be careful never to repeat what you have heard from others, unless for the purpose of edification.

“V. Often call to mind the recollection of the benefits of God, and of your own sins ; the bliss of heaven, and the pains of hell. Think often also of all who are in tribulation and misery in this world.

“VI. Faithfully keep yourself from judging anyone, either in your heart or by your words ; judge only yourself. Observe these rules, and you will save your soul.”

Sometimes he was asked to help souls, by means of written counsels, to advance more rapidly in the way of perfection, and he was never known to refuse such a request. If he delayed his answer to such an appeal, his conscience gave him no peace till the sacred debt which, in his charity, he felt he owed his children had been duly paid.

In the letter which is here given, the Saint seems to have effaced his position as Superior, and to speak only in the character of a kind and loving brother :

“Bonaventura Bagnaria to his well-beloved in Jesus Christ, to his Brother in the Lord, to him who, having cast off the old man, desires to live for Jesus Christ, and to die to the world.

“You entreated me with most earnest prayers, my dear son in the Lord, when we were living under the same roof, to visit you after your departure, by a letter of encouragement. Such a petition, I own, heaps burning coals on my

head. But your great humility, by its loving perseverance, has conquered my inflexible pride, and I have promised to satisfy your desire, though it would have been more in order for me to receive from you, that which I have now pledged myself to give. However, since the incessant urgency of your love has forced me to be insensible on this point, I am going to try, as far as I am able, to do what you ask of me, not, however, confining myself to write to you on any special matter, but contenting myself with such simple thoughts as I have collected for my own use, and many of which are already well known to you."

Then after giving in detail a suite of pious instructions for the higher walks of the way of perfection, he concludes thus :

"If I have told you these things, my dearly beloved, it is not because I thought you had need to be so instructed, but I had gathered them together for my own benefit, and seeing my own inconstancy, and how little I can depend on my own courage, I determined to communicate them to you as to a faithful helper, in the hope that, if by my idleness and the negligence

which increases with age, I should relax in any point, your magnanimity and the fervour of your solicitude would set me right. I am the more confirmed in this assurance, that I know how all your wishes are the same as mine, and that you will take pleasure in the simple thoughts which I have suggested to you. So, my well-beloved in the Lord, receive them with the same charity which has led me to address them to you. Apply yourself to act upon them, and encourage yourself in such practices by the habitual thought of Heaven. The trouble which it costs to practise these things does not seem in truth to bring joy, but sadness; but in the end it will bring you in much peace the fruits of justice; and even at present your attempt at such practice will be full of sweetness to your soul, and will give it a taste for piety, filling it with abundant strength in our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom I hope that your fervent prayers will recommend the dryness of my soul and the feebleness of my devotion."

The greater part of the time that he governed his Order was spent by St. Bonaventure in visiting its different houses; for, in order to

remedy all evils, it was necessary that he should particularly inquire into the state of all. Moreover, as he had under his care many houses too distant to visit and encourage with his own voice, he had to find time to instruct and edify by means of his pen, the many brethren at the further extremity of the world, who were ever looking with longing eyes, to receive counsel and encouragement from their venerated Superior.

In one of the books written at this time he says : “ I also desire, when writing or reading on different subjects, to employ my time in a useful manner, to fill my memory with holy thoughts, to render my intelligence capable of penetrating more clearly the interior secrets of the spiritual life, to excite my will to walk in virtue and to burn with devotional ardour, to remove from my body the means of indulging in dissipation, to overcome by hard toil my negligences and my sins, that so I may be able to recall, and thus save from oblivion, the subject on which I have been meditating ”.

To his arduous cares for the novices and religious under his government, St. Bonaventure added another which was still more important.

When he was called, while still young, to govern the great family of St. Francis, he found himself in the face of many serious difficulties, and thus his own experience had taught him the value of good Superiors and the difficulty of finding any who are endowed with all the virtues required for such a post. The agitations which had troubled the Order since the death of St. Francis had all arisen in consequence of the weakness or pride of its Chiefs. He therefore made it a special work to benefit his Community by endeavouring to form in it men who should be capable of maintaining it in the full dignity of its providential mission. It was with this end in view that he wrote the important work entitled *The Six Wings of the Seraphim*. These "six wings" he calls the six principal virtues that a Superior ought to possess. "A Superior is needed," he says, "to teach them what is necessary and profitable for their salvation and their progress: what they ought to avoid, what they ought to love, what they ought to do, what they ought to hope, what they ought to fear, what they ought to choose, of less or more, of good or evil. . . . A Superior is

necessary to exercise them in the practice of virtues, to hinder them from falling into sin, and to correct them for their faults." And again : " Those who command, need, in order the better to fulfil the duties of their office, to be submitted to other Superiors, rising by degrees to the Sovereign Pontiff, who holds the place of Jesus Christ in the government of the Church militant. . . .

" The *first wing* of the director of souls, which is zeal for justice, does not allow him to bear, without interior pain, any evil in himself or in others. . . . This zeal, like scarlet twice dyed, shines with a double radiance of love—the love of God and the love of men. . . .

" The *second wing* of the Superior is brotherly tenderness. Love to God kindles zeal for justice, and love to man produces compassion. If it is necessary to scourge vice with a rod, it is also necessary to support weakness with a sustaining staff. And there is a weakness of the body and a weakness of the spirit. The infirm in body need the remedies of medical science : for them the rigour of the discipline must be relaxed, they must be exempted from

work, assisted in their offices, to them unlimited humanity must be shown, for they are being scourged by the Lord. A good Superior is a father to his brethren, and not their master and lord. He treats them as a good physician, and not as a tyrant—not as vile animals or as slaves,—but as children who are called to share with him the heirship of Heaven. There are three sorts of spiritual weakness. The first represents those who suffer from want of devotion and the violence of temptations. The second class consists of those who have good will and piety, but who lose courage at the first alarm, and sometimes give way to despair. The third is made up of all those who are subject to imperfections, who falter in the practice of virtue, and are at times subject to the fever of the passions. It is necessary to remove from those who suffer from these spiritual infirmities, all occasion of scandal, to strengthen them by encouraging exhortations, to abstain from reproofing them too severely, to bear their defects with patience, and never to impose on them burdens which are too great for their strength.

“Patience is the *third wing* of the Superior.

In the same way that the roof of the Tabernacle protected and kept pure and bright all that it contained, defending its contents from dust, rain, and wind, so also the Superiors who wish faithfully to defend their children against the tempests of sin, must be ready themselves to receive the violence of the attacks of all adversaries. Three things make patience necessary for those who govern : *first*, the many occupations which their position involves ; *second*, the small progress made by those under them ; *third*, the ingratitude of those who cause them the most anxiety. They need patience to enable them to answer with modesty, reflection, and goodness ; patience to remain peaceful and avoid revenge ; patience to resist *ennui* and a distaste for work.

“The *fourth wing* is an exemplary life. The Superior ought, in the first place, to share the common life in food, clothes, and labours ; he ought to practise humility in his own person, in his intercourse with his inferiors, and in his use of temporal things. He should be grave in his demeanour, showing no frivolity in his exterior acts, in his affections, in his designs, or in his resolutions. These three points demand his

special attention, if he desires to be an example to his inferiors.

“The *fifth wing* is a clear and circumspect discernment, and an attentive and serious consideration of things. Four points require the special vigilance of the Superior: *first*, how to direct his subordinates in the state which they have adopted, so that the good may persevere in well-doing; *second*, how to redress and correct those who are fallen and those who are wandering from the right way; *third*, how he ought to manage the exterior affairs which demand his care, in order that due order may be maintained; *fourth*, how he ought to keep and to conduct himself in the midst of all these anxieties and cares. Such are the points on which a Superior has to exercise his discernment.

“The *sixth* and last *wing* is devotion to God; for it is by devotion that zeal for justice is kindled, that compassionate tenderness penetrates the heart, that patience is confirmed, that a good example is given, and that discernment becomes glorious. Such devotion must be common, special, and continual. Common devotion is applied to the Divine Offices;

special devotion to private prayers ; and constant devotion is applied to all our actions. This devotion requires the uninterrupted thought of the Presence of God in the heart, an incessant endeavour to please Him in every action and in every word, and the care to precede every action by prayer, at least mental, so as to provide against evil, and to receive every benefit with thanksgivings and praises to God.

CHAPTER XIV.

Translation of the Relics of St. Anthony of Padua—New Regulations.

“In omni ore quasi mel indulcabitur ejus memoria.
. . . Ipse est directus divinitus in pœnitentiam gentis.”

THE Order of St. Francis had among its members no more illustrious man than St. Anthony of Padua. Having been filled from his youth with the desire of martyrdom, he had always looked longingly towards heathen lands; but God had called him to other work and to other sufferings; He had reserved him to be His envoy to the great ones of the earth, He had chosen him to console the earth, and cause it to bring forth abundant fruits. At his voice, as at that of St. John the Baptist, whole populations ran to him, tyrants submitted, and sinners were converted, the just felt themselves strengthened in will, and the Church of the Lord dried some of the tears which she never

ceases to shed bitterly over the ruin of her children.

The city of Padua had heard his last sermons and had received his last blessings. In him she had recognised the man from Heaven, and she was the first to proclaim his virtues ; for after he had breathed his last, the children ran through the streets calling out : “ *The Saint* is dead ; Saint Anthony is dead ”. The voice of these children of Padua was the echo of the voice of God, as was formerly the voice of the children of Jerusalem at the triumphal entry of the Saviour. Soon the tomb of the Apostle became glorious, and Pope Gregory IX., who had been his friend, consoled his fellow-citizens by giving them, as their Patron, him whom they had so tenderly loved.

In the year 1263, Bonaventure, then Superior-General of the Minorites, was travelling through Italy to visit the houses of his Order. The memory of St. Anthony was as dear to him almost as that of his Father, St. Francis of Assisi. Anthony was, in his eyes, a man divinely endowed with the wisdom of angels and prophets, patriarchs and apostles, martyrs,

doctors, and virgins; a man divinely enlightened, a child of obedience, whose heart was full of passionate love for Jesus Crucified, and of mercy for his neighbours, and whose soul was absorbed in the desire after heavenly things. During his stay at Mount Alvernia this devotion, on the part of Bonaventure, increased, and as he was in Italy, not far from Padua, he wished to preside at the translation of the relics of the Saint. He himself opened the tomb, and when the remains were exposed to his eyes, he found that the tongue remained sound and incorrupt, as when in life it had declared the mercy of God to men. At this wonderful sight, he burst into tears, and taking this precious relic in his hands, he exclaimed : “O blessed tongue, which always praised God and caused men to praise Him, we see now how precious thou art in the sight of God !” The tongue was then placed in a golden shrine, and preserved thenceforth as an inestimable treasure.

Towards the end of the last century, when the French gained possession of the city of Padua, the golden shrine excited the cupidity of the soldiery, and they wished to take it away. But

the inhabitants rose as one man, against such a proposal, and resolved to prevent it at any cost. They accordingly raised a subscription at once, which quickly covered the sum which the rapacity of the troops required.

After the ceremony of the translation of the relics of St. Anthony, St. Bonaventure quitted Padua, and went to Pisa, where he held a General Chapter of his Order. There he introduced to his brethren the *Legend of St. Francis*, which he had undertaken to write three years before, at the request of the members of the Community, then assembled at Narbonne. It was a solemn moment in his life, when he read to the present assembly this admirable work, in which a faithful son extolled the virtues of a venerated father. When the reading was ended, the brothers rose and thanked the illustrious author with great enthusiasm, and declared that they received this book as a present from Heaven, which should cause the memory of Francis of Assisi to be blessed throughout all ages.

In the course of this Chapter at Pisa, the Saint endeavoured above all things to inspire his brothers with the love of solitude and

science. Solitude he considered to be the guardian of recollection and the nurse of virtue. In it the soul is refreshed after toil ; it finds God, it enjoys sweet conferences with Him, and prepares itself to undertake new labours. When the Lord calls a soul to perfection, He always imprints on it a love of solitude. St. Francis, the model of his children the Minor Friars, loved solitude dearly, sought it eagerly, left it sadly, and returned to it with joy ; and his faithful son, Bonaventure, had early recognised the priceless advantage of retreat. "Solitude of the body," he would say, "is insufficient, unless accompanied by that of the spirit ; but in order to attain to solitude of the spirit, that of the body must be very strict."

Solitude, doubtless, is a powerful means of sanctification ; but what could the Franciscans do without adding to solitude the powerful aid of science. How could their words have had any weight with learned men ; or how could they have successfully resisted the arguments of the enemies of religion without it ? St. Francis understood this well when he ordered Anthony of Padua to study theology, and to teach it to

his brethren. At first the world had been ready to accuse the brothers of ignorance, but now it had changed its tactics, and asked, instead, why the children of St. Francis gave so much time to the study of science, which is not in conformity with the simplicity which they profess. Bonaventure had a ready answer for such objections, and his ardent desire was to see the men who owed obedience to him endeavouring to make themselves familiar with all holy learning, so as to become wise and capable ministers of the Church of God.

At this Chapter, also, he enacted certain regulations for the increase among his brethren of love for the august Virgin Mary, and the works that he wrote in her honour must be spoken of in a separate chapter of this book. In the following year the Festival of the Most Holy Sacrament was instituted. Everyone knows what was the origin of this beautiful solemnity, which fills every Christian heart with joy. The name of St. Thomas of Aquin is naturally associated with the thought of it, and the divine songs of which he is the author would alone be sufficient to cause him to be loved and

blessed by all generations of the Catholic world. But, according to some authors, the name of the Seraphic Doctor ought to be united with that of his illustrious friend on this occasion so glorious to them both. Pope Urban IV., these authors assert, had ordered the two religious, St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure, to compose a special office for the great Mystery of the Altar. On the appointed day they presented themselves before the Pontiff, and St. Thomas began to read what he had written. Bonaventure could not listen to it without testifying that enthusiasm which has been shown by all succeeding ages to this magnificent work of the great Doctor. The majestic language in which the minute exactness of theology is maintained, the sublime thoughts which seem to have been borrowed from Heaven, their tender and holy piety, ravished the impressionable soul of the humble Franciscan, and he felt that his own work was unworthy to enter into comparison with that of his friend. He at once gladly recognised in St. Thomas the man whom God had raised up especially to celebrate this Mystery of Love, and the judgment of the Pope, which agreed with his own, filled him with joy.

It is a touching spectacle to see these two men, both endowed with brilliant genius, without ambition or vanity, absorbed in the one desire to promote the glory of God. St. Thomas remained humble and indifferent to the praises of the Supreme Pontiff; Bonaventure blessed the Lord Who had inspired the noble spirit of his friend with fitting words in which to bless for ever His Most Holy Name.

Some have imputed to St. Bonaventure the authorship of the *Lauda Sion*, but it unmistakably bears the imprint of the hand of St. Thomas, who, with all his burning love, was above all a theologian, while St. Bonaventure, in his mystic compositions, allowed the affections of his heart to be supreme.

CHAPTER XV.

The Religious of St. Clare—Book on Perfection of Life.

“Flores apparuerunt in terra . . . vox turturis audita est in terra nostra . . . vineae florentes dederunt odorem suum.”—CANT. ii. 12, 13.

ALONGSIDE with the great family of St. Francis, and under its shelter and protection, grew and multiplied another family, equally blessed by Heaven and dear to the Christian world. A young daughter of St. Francis of Assisi had originated it, and he had seen it develop like a tree full of vigour, in the strengthening breath of his example and his words. Clare, attracted by the brilliant virtues of St. Francis, had conceived a contempt for the world, and had pledged herself, under his direction, to a life of penitence and contemplation. Soon all those fervent souls, who could not breathe freely in contact with the earth, sought out the humble virgin,

and prayed her to guide them into the sacred paths of perfection, and to be their mother during the time of their pilgrimage to eternity. Clare, whose heart, like that of Francis, was overflowing with charity, had gladly embraced these poor souls who came to warm themselves at the fire of her devotion. A family was formed, and soon it had establishments all over the world.

The Minor Friars had naturally been the directors of these houses up to the time of St. Bonaventure, but without any definite law in the matter. St. Francis had been pained by seeing in some of his religious too much eagerness about the new Order, and he feared that the cares of such direction might be injurious in the future to the well-being of his sons. Therefore he would not impose any other obligation on them in this matter, save that of charity alone, and the children of St. Francis had carried out his desire, for, while willing to render these holy communities all the services which they required, they were yet free to refuse when such services could not, without evil to their own Order, be continued.

During the disputes with the University of Paris, the Franciscans had been assailed with many calumnies on this account, but their virtue was beyond dispute. The heroic life of the daughter of St. Clare, and the fidelity of the religious to the counsels of their Father, had deprived malice of the least excuse to doubt, and the reproaches which were made against them only served to make known to the world that which the charity of the brothers would have concealed. For when people asked, "Why do you burden yourselves with the Order of St. Clare, and thus shackle your liberty?" St. Bonaventure replied : "The Order of St. Clare is not servilely united to ours, nor are we under any obligation with regard to it ; but at the request of the Cardinal, who is the real Superior of their Order, our ministers have given them Confessors to administer the Sacraments of the Church, and visitors to correct abuses. The other brothers are not obliged to do anything for the nuns, and if they do serve them they only do it as they would for any other friends of our Order, but as these religious live in the cloister, and under a uniform Rule, it is easy to direct them. How-

ever, if it were generally considered that such a charge is unsuited to us, we could easily relinquish it, for our Rule imposes on us no obligations but such as concern members of our Order, and with regard to all other Orders it leaves us perfectly free."

The enemies of the Minorites, however, persisting in the belief that the daughters of St. Clare were entirely under their government, raised another and a more important complaint against them. They objected that many of the religious had brought a dowry with them, and that this was against the rigorous poverty which the Rules of both Communities enjoined. To this charge the Saint replied:

"If any Communities should act in such a manner, it is their own affair, and does not concern us. However, in order to satisfy those who inquire of us, we may say that there are four different ways in which people may be received into any Religious Order: *First*, without money and purely for God, and this is the most perfect way, both in the sight of God and of men. *Second*, with money, but not as a condition of admission, so that if the person gave nothing,

he would be admitted all the same. . . . *Third*, with money, but not for the sake of money, though, because of the poverty of the house, he could not be received without it, and here is nothing worthy of blame. *Fourth*, for the sake of the money alone, so that they would prefer to receive the money without the person if possible, and this is simony. . . . If, then, the money is received of a person whom they would willingly admit without it, if it were possible in that case to provide for his subsistence, there can be no simony in that. . . . Therefore, the Sisters of St. Clare are permitted to bring a dowry, when the resources of the monastery are not sufficient to provide suitably for all who desire to be received there."

However, as it seemed possible that their services, rendered in charity, should come to be considered as obligatory, the Brothers, when they had met at the General Chapter of Pisa in 1263, had resolved entirely to renounce the direction of the Sisters of St. Clare, and Pope Urban IV. had accepted their reasons for this decision; but, the following year, at the earnest request of Cardinal Cajetan, St. Bona-

venture consented once more to accept the charge of their direction, only requiring the Sisters occasionally to acknowledge, in writing, that the services rendered to them by the Minors were voluntary acts of charity, and not imposed on them by any obligation whatever.

After he had once taken these precautions, the good Superior gave full liberty to his zeal in his dealings with the holy daughters of St. Clare. Many of them had held a high position in the world, and even the seclusion of the cloister could not entirely hide from those outside it the life of holiness that was held within its walls, thus many feeble souls were encouraged when they saw the self-sacrifices that such distinguished persons were ready to make for the love of God. Much more, then, the soul of St. Bonaventure rejoiced in the spectacle of these generous and holy lives, and he could not refuse them counsels of perfection, thus bringing to the purest flowers of Holy Church, streams of living water to refresh them and preserve their sweetness.

He, therefore, addressed to these holy Sisters a book entitled *The Perfection of Life*, which

he wrote at the request of one of them. It speaks of the true knowledge of self, of humility, of perfect poverty, of silence, of prayer, of the Passion of Jesus Christ, of the love of God, and of final perseverance.

At the request of another religious of the Order of St. Clare, he wrote another well-known book of Meditations on the Life of Jesus Christ, which causes its reader ever new delight.

In our own century, one whose words carry great weight has cleared the Saint from the unjust aspersions of a former age.

“We do not know,” says Cardinal Wiseman, “what to admire the most, in the excellent Meditations of St. Bonaventure on the Life of Jesus Christ: whether the riches of the imagination, that no poet has surpassed, or the tenderness of feeling, or the variety of applications. After having led us through all the touching events of the Infancy and the Life of our Saviour, when he comes to the last scenes, so impressive, his step becomes slower, in consequence of his many beautiful, though melancholy thoughts. Here he no longer proceeds from year to year, or from month to month, or even from day to

day, but each hour even has its own meditation, and each act of the final tragedy furnishes him with matter for pathetic contemplation. Lastly, he proposes a plan by which to reduce these holy thoughts to practice, and to this end he distributes them so that the time between Monday and Wednesday shall embrace the whole Life of the Saviour, and from Thursday to Sunday inclusively, each day is consecrated to the mystery which the Church, in the Holy Week, has assigned to it. It is thus that, as many others have done, he extends over the whole year, the solemn commemorations of the Holy Week, achieving, in the interests of individual piety and sanctification, that which the Church has done for the public good.”¹

¹ Conferences on the Offices of Holy Week.

CHAPTER XVI.

St. Bonaventure nominated to the See of York— Franciscan Missions.

“Quanto magnus es, humilia te in omnibus, et coram Deo invenies gratiam.”—ECCLES. iii. 20.

BONAVENTURE became every day more dear to Christian hearts. The great ones of the earth loved him as a wise guide ; the faithful venerated him as a Saint whose virtues revived the Church of God ; the Popes considered him to be a chosen vessel which the Holy Spirit had filled to overflowing with His sacred gifts ; the Franciscans were attached to him as to a father whose love is continually increasing, and whose tenderness knows no bounds. Alexander IV. had approved his election to the dignity of Superior-General while still quite young ; he had admired his conduct during the disputes of his Order with the University of Paris ; and till his death he had maintained the highest opinion of his

sanctity and of the wisdom with which he governed the children of St. Francis.

Urban IV. had succeeded Alexander IV. in 1261, and during his pontificate, which only lasted three years, he had taken the same interest in St. Bonaventure and in the members of his Order as his predecessor had done. Clement IV. had been the next to fill the Holy See. He was an intimate friend of St. Louis, and he shared the feelings of his sovereign for the Mendicant Orders. He always took great pleasure in reading the works of St. Bonaventure, and devoted to them all the spare time that the care of all the churches allowed him.

But while Clement admired the pages written by one whom he considered a great genius, and also the wisdom which Bonaventure displayed in the government of his Order, he resolved that so bright a light should not be left to occupy only a subordinate rank.

In 1265, the See of York became vacant by the death of Geoffrey de Kinton, and a difficulty having arisen about the nomination of a successor, the Pope interfered. He had been the Legate of the Holy See in England before his elevation

to the pontificate, and he continued still to perform the functions of that office. After he had cancelled the nomination of the Chapter of York, he sought a man for the vacant See, who should by his great works be capable of serving as a model to others, and who should be, in his position of chief pastor of that Catholic flock, a burning torch that should direct wandering souls to the port of salvation. After long and mature deliberation Clement thought no one more fit than Bonaventure to carry out his desires; and he therefore nominated him to the See of York, by a Bull dated 8th December, 1265, in which, while praising the pious General of the Franciscans, the good Pope manifests the beauty of his soul, and, all unawares, speaks in his own praise.

“Under these circumstances,” says the Sovereign Pontiff, “we have unreservedly referred all our desires to the Lord, and have commended to His will the care of this nomination, and trusting alone in the hope of His grace after consulting our brothers, and by their advice, we have turned our thoughts towards you, our longings are satisfied in you, and our spirit rests with firm resolution on you. Indeed, when we

find in your person the austerity of religion, the brightness of life, the innocence of manners, the sublimity of science, a careful circumspection, and a gravity of bearing ; when we consider how, for many years, you have governed your whole Order, in such a praiseworthy manner, as Minister-General, fulfilling all your duties with fidelity, prudence, and care, for the greater advancement of the Order ; when we consider how you have endeavoured without fail to lead a pure life under the observation of your Rule ; how you have kept peace everywhere, and have won the love of all the world, we have a sure hope that we shall find in you all that we ardently desire for the good of the Church, and of the See of York, in which we are now interested, and of the kingdom itself. This is why we, by our Apostolic authority, provide for the need of this Church by your means, and appoint you to be its Pastor and Archbishop."

The Pope enclosed letters that were equally flattering, for Bonaventure to send to the Chapter, the Clergy, and the vassals of the Archdiocese of York. In them he spoke in loving terms of the virtues of the new Archbishop,

commanding them to render him honour, obedience, and respect, as a worthy shepherd of souls.

On reading this letter from Clement IV., the Saint was filled with consternation. His first act, as after his election to the Generalship, was to prostrate himself before the Lord, and to beg Him to have pity on him in such a painful circumstance; then, without losing a moment, he went and threw himself at the feet of His Holiness and prayed him with tears not to remove him from the life of a Franciscan, to consider his weakness, and to spare him so crushing a burden. Clement IV. had a compassionate heart, and the sweet voice and abundant tears of Bonaventure touched him, and he answered him in these words of Holy Scripture: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them".* These words of the Sovereign Pontiff sounded like music in the ears of the Saint, he rose up consoled, happy, and full of hope. But these words after all were not prophetic, for death was

* 2 Tim. iii.

not to find the good religious working humbly among his brethren ; another voice was to speak afterwards in firmer accents, and the interests of the Church were to compel his humility to yield to its supreme authority, and to cause him to resign himself without offering any excuse.

Bonaventure hoped that his example of self-renunciation would have an advantageous influence over his Order, for since he had governed it he had often been distressed to see the brothers called by the Chapters and populations to high dignities in the Church, though the religious who were thus raised to the Episcopate had not anticipated such promotion. The honours to which they were destined had come to search them out among their humble duties, and their virtues lost none of their lustre by being removed to a wider sphere. But Bonaventure feared to see ambition intruding its evil influence among his brethren, and he therefore besought Alexander IV. to keep the Minor Friars as much as possible from the Episcopate, and he persuaded the Pope to decree that they should not be made Bishops or Archbishops without the consent of their Superiors.

Clement had tried to draw St. Thomas of Aquin also from his life in religion, and to raise him to similar honours by nominating him to the Archbishopric of Naples ; but, like his holy friend in the Order of St. Francis, he too had recourse to the Pope, and by his earnest supplications prevailed on him to leave him to pursue his chosen labours in peace. While St. Thomas, now happily delivered from the fear of unwelcome dignities, was building up his magnificent edifice of the *Summary of Theology*, Bonaventure was travelling over the world in the ardour of his love. He went through Italy to visit his brethren, and then he went to France, and gave all the houses of his Order an opportunity of seeing him and hearing his voice.

But beyond the Catholic countries, there were others which lay in the shadow of death, and where, though there might be here and there a few scattered worshippers of the Lord, His Name was almost entirely unknown. Francis and Dominic had contemplated these unhappy lands with bitter sadness, and it had been their noble ambition to bring them under the dominion of Christ.

These missions, confided to the Seraphic Order, interested St. Bonaventure in the highest degree. His ardent soul turned often to those distant regions, where his most devoted children were spending themselves in the midst of unheard-of labours, without terrestrial consolations, without human succour, always a prey to new tribulations, always exposed to fresh perils. When he sent some new apostle to these unhappy people, he never saw him depart without envying him his fate, and regretting that the burden of the government held him back from labours he would have loved to share. On their departure he would bless them with the greatest tenderness, imploring the favour of Heaven on their enterprise, and saying to them, like the old Tobias, "May your journey be fortunate; may God be with you on your way, and may His angel go with you".

The Superior always rejoiced when any of his brothers expressed to him a desire to go and preach the Name of the Lord in heathen lands, but he was cautious in giving his consent to their designs; for he knew that a merely human thought can appear to the heart of man under a

veil of piety, and that delusion is easy in regard to heroic actions, when their dangers are only seen from afar, surrounded with an aureole of glory, and the triumph of victories won. He was therefore careful to examine the foundations of such vocations, and he urged all the Ministers of the Order to use great prudence on such occasions. "The ministry of missions holds the chief rank, because it exposes those who embrace it to martyrdom, or to incessant hardship and fatigue; consequently Superiors should never impose this work on those under their care, as an obligation of obedience, but wait till they ask to be allowed to enter upon it. When such a request is made, it is their duty to see whether the idea originated in natural impetuosity of character, in impatience of the yoke, and the thought of escaping from discipline, or merely in a passing impulse of fervour. . . . Afterwards, they must consider whether these brothers who sigh for foreign missions have the requisite qualifications: whether they are robust in body, whether their faith is immovable, their virtues above proof, and their life quite blameless."

Thus St. Bonaventure joined prudence to his zeal, and it guided him in all difficult questions. The brothers who had been thus carefully chosen went forth to console the Church by exhibiting to the eyes of the heathen nations the most sublime virtues; they caused the name of Christian to be honoured even by its mortal enemies, and if their success did not always equal the desires of their hearts, or the harvest was less abundant than they had hoped, they were none the less, in the eyes of the Catholic world, true heroes, who had proved themselves worthy of the noble cause which they had been called to defend.

During the government of St. Bonaventure, the work of missions of the Order was largely extended. In the year 1258, Franciscans were sent to no less than twenty-three infidel nations. "Before the death of Brother Giles, who was the last of the twelve companions of St. Francis," says Gorres, "Alexander IV. could write to his well-beloved sons, the Brothers of the Order of Minors, in the countries of the Saracens, the Greeks, the Bulgarians, the Cumans, the Ethiopians, the Syrians, the Iberians, the Alanis, the

Goths, the Jacobites, the Nubians, the Gregorians, the Armenians, the Indians, the Tartars, the Hungarians, and other nations of the East." And this movement continued to grow from year to year, long after the time of St. Bonaventure, as we find from the record of Bartholemi de Pisa, written a hundred and twenty-five years after the death of the Saint, in which are enumerated all the houses possessed by the Order, at that time, among heathen nations. The Order of the Minor Friars had then seen eighty-seven of its members shed their blood for the Gospel in heathen lands, and its missionaries had penetrated to all parts of the world, from Maroc to the borders of the Euphrates, from Norway to the centre of China. As to the results of these missions the same writer says: "In the vast regions of Tartary, emperors and empresses, kings and queens, princes, and innumerable multitudes of their subjects, have received Baptism; churches have been built, hospitals founded, and convents established. In Georgia, the inhabitants have come to the light; the Armenians have sent envoys to the council of Florence; the Greeks

have been brought there by Brother Albert of Sartiano, who also succeeded in persuading the Jacobites, and John, King of Abyssinia, to send ambassadors there."

If now we wish to complete this incomplete enumeration of their missionary works, we must advance to the discovery of the New World, and see the children of St. Francis crossing the ocean to win new victories there ; for soon they were to be found in Mexico, and Peru, in Yucatan, Guatemala, in New Grenada, in Chili, Nicaragua, Brazil, and the West Indies, in Paraguay, and amongst the most barbarous nations of the newly discovered world. At their side the sons of St. Dominic had their houses, their labours, and their martyrs, from the time that St. Francis and St. Dominic united together to achieve the conquest of the world, until the time when other apostles, sons of St. Ignatius of Loyola, came out to share their triumphs and tribulations, in this field of the Lord.

Centuries have rolled by since the time of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Bonaventure ; but the Minor Friars are still to be seen in many of the

countries which from the first they have occupied. They still have missions in Moldavia, in Turkey, in Cephalonia, in Anatolia, in Syria at Jerusalem, in Mesopotamia at Agra, and in many provinces of China. They are in Abyssinia, in Upper Egypt, in Tunis, and Tripoli, and in many other places. Everywhere that they go they extend the knowledge and praise of the Lord, as in the ancient days; they convert souls, and console the Church, in her pilgrimage through the world.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Worship of Mary—Writings of St. Bonaventure in Honour of Mary.

“ Matrem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi indicibili complectebatur amore, eo quod Dominum majestatis fratrem nobis effecerit, et per eam simus misericordiam consecuti. In ipsa post Christum præcipue fidens, eam sui ac suorum advocatum constituit.”—LEG. SANCTI FRANCISCI.

WHILE the zeal of St. Bonaventure embraced the most distant heathen nations, and provided for their needs, it watched with equal care over the Catholic people of Europe, and over his brethren in the Order of St. Francis, to promote those virtues which raise our souls above this earth and make them to be acceptable sanctuaries of God. We have spoken of the sermons of the Saint, his writings on the religious life, his efforts to encourage piety at the Court of France, and to guide the daughters of St. Clare to the full perfection of their sublime institution ; but

in the wide field of the life of our illustrious Saint, there still remain many sweet flowers for us to gather, and many delicious fruits to taste. We have said nothing hitherto of his works in honour of Mary, and yet he has written magnificent pages on the Blessed Virgin, in which he leads his children to bless her name, and to invoke her powerful aid ; he declares her greatness to the world, and teaches all to seek in her protection, a safe refuge against the dangers of the present and the fears of the future. We have also still to consider the mystic writings of St. Bonaventure, his poems and expositions of the Sacred Books. In his noble life there was time for everything, in spite of his numberless occupations, and divine love was the unchanging motive of all that he did.

Devotion to Mary, which was born in the cradle of Christianity, and is inseparably connected with the worship rendered to the Saviour of men, has grown from age to age, more keen and fervent, among all Christian people. Like an ineffable fragrance, her sweetness has penetrated wherever there were sorrows to calm, bitter griefs to console, hopes to raise, great

designs to establish, successes to ensure. All the great men of the Christian world have looked with confiding trust to Mary, and with her blessing they have fearlessly undertaken the gigantic enterprises to which they were inspired by their zeal.

But it was especially in the Middle Ages that this sweet devotion reached its height. The nations then seemed to rest on Mary as on an immovable foundation, the chiefs of the Religious Orders submitted their pious families to her patronage, Doctors offered her the homage of their learning, Saints contemplated her as an infallible guide in the way of Christ, the defenders of the Truth looked to her to obtain their triumphs, kings consecrated their crowns to her service, cities all over the world raised in her honour huge basilicas and temples, where piety displayed itself in the magnificence of art, and all the earth seemed full of the praise of Mary.

St. Francis and St. Dominic, the two most famous personages of the thirteenth century, had vowed a special love to Mary. St. Dominic, in all his laborious missions, looked for the conversion of heretics by means of her tender love

for sinners, and the fruits of his confidence are well known. Of St. Francis we are told by St. Bonaventure that he "had for the Mother of Jesus Christ an unspeakable affection, because the Lord of All Majesty has, by her, become our brother, and because we have, by her interposition, obtained mercy. Therefore after our Lord and Saviour, he put his confidence in her, and chose her to be his advocate and that of his children."

Thus we see that devotion to Mary was a tradition in the Franciscan Order, and St. Bonaventure ardently tried to increase its fervour. At the Chapters of Narbonne, of Pisa, and of Assisi, he made several regulations with regard to it. The most important of these is that which obliges the brothers to recite every evening, at the sound of the bell, three times the Angelic Salutation, in memory of the blessing of the Incarnation, in which Mary took so admirable a part; and the religious in their sermons were urged to lead their people to adopt this pious use. Already many holy persons had been in the habit of practising such an act of devotion, even at the beginning

of the century, but St. Bonaventure was the most ardent promoter of it. It afterwards, as we know, extended throughout the whole Church ; and soon everywhere, three times a day, the sound of the bell invited the faithful to honour the most glorious of the privileges of Mary, the privilege of her Divine Maternity, united, as it was, to that of her Virginity.

St. Bonaventure also revived an ordinance previously given by St. Francis to his children, that of singing a solemn Mass every Saturday in honour of the Blessed Virgin ; and since his time, this practice, like that of the “Angelus,” has become a recognised custom in the Church.

On one occasion the Blessed Virgin appeared to St. Bonaventure, and fixing her eyes earnestly on him, she said to him : “O my dear son, *write*,” and then the vision passed away. This was enough for the Saint. He understood at once what was the will of God, and set himself to write out a Rule for those who wished to show her special honour, giving to this pious association, as a distinctive mark, a red and white cross, which each member was to wear on his shoulder. This was at the time of the

Crusades, and it was well understood that in spiritual, as well as in terrestrial, warfare, all soldiers should be enrolled under the standard of Christ. This association took the name of the "Confraternity of the Holy Standard": the cross worn by its members, by its whiteness, was to recall the purity of Our Lady, and by its red colour, the love which burned in the Soul of Jesus, when He offered Himself as a sacrifice for the salvation of the world. This society, being regarded as the mother of all other associations formed since then, in honour of Mary, has since been created an Arch-confraternity.

How often in his sermons did St. Bonaventure, while praising the Divine Son, the Saviour of the world, speak in thrilling accents the praises of His holy mother Mary, and when he spoke of her, his language became so tender and so sweet that it won the hearts of his hearers to greater confidence and love.

To these discourses the Saint added many writings, intended to promote devotion to his Sovereign Lady. He became a poet in singing of her, and paraphrased the Psalter of David.

He also composed the *Office of Compassion*, and a work called the *Mirror of the Blessed Virgin*.; and in many of his writings we find her treated of in a truly celestial spirit.

It is only possible to give a few extracts from these works, which convey but a feeble idea of their beauty and their merit.

“As I desire, for the glory and honour of Jesus Christ our Lord, to write something for the glory and praise of His glorious mother, I have thought it well to take for my subject the ‘Salutation’ which we address to her. But I do not hesitate to confess my total insufficiency for such a work, whether because of the immense difficulties which surround so great a subject, or because of the extreme feebleness of my knowledge, the dryness of my language, the utter unworthiness of my life, or, lastly, because of the boundless praise which she is worthy to receive, whose honour I undertake to celebrate. . . .

“Praise is not beautiful when it comes from the lips of a sinner; how, then, shall a miserable man like me dare to raise his voice in honour of Mary? . . . Assuredly my holiness and my eloquence are too feeble to enable me to praise the blessed

and glorious Virgin in a suitable manner. What, then, is the good of adding a drop of water to the ocean? Mary has been exalted by the words of God and of His angels, what more, then, can my weak efforts contribute to her glory? . . .

“Yet, O Mary, my kind Sovereign, be pleased to accept the present which thy poor friend offers thee. It is with this little work on thy ‘Salutation’ that I salute thee; that, prostrate on the earth, I salute thee with heart and lips, and, bowing my head, I cry: ‘Hail Mary’.”

The Doctor then proceeds to dilate on the privileges, the graces, and the virtues which all men admire in Mary. He regards her as the Virgin exempt from the curse of original sin, from the curse of actual sin, and from the curse of hell; the Virgin who is justly called the “Star of the Sea” and the “Sovereign Queen”. She is the Virgin who is blessed because of the greatness of her Son, and because of the plenitude of grace bestowed on her. She is blessed because of the Fruit of her Womb—that Fruit in which the world finds a remedy for all its evils, and the source of all happiness in time and in eternity.

In another of his works, he initiates us into the most sublime mysteries of the Passion of our Lord, and on the way to Calvary he meets the Mother of Jesus, and waits to offer her his compassion, and to ask that he may share her woe.

“Close to the Cross of Jesus stands His Mother. O my Sovereign Lady, where were you? Not only near the Cross, but extended on it, with your Son. There were you crucified in heart; His wounds afflicted all your body, and were all united in your heart. There, O my Queen, that heart was pierced by the lance, crowned with thorns; there was it wounded by cruel mockings, opprobrium, and injuries, and fed with vinegar and gall. O my Queen, why didst you thus sacrifice yourself? . . . O my Sovereign Lady, I desire to contemplate your heart, but there is nothing left of it but myrrh, absinthe, and gall. . . .

“Either take away my life, or wound my heart, for I am covered with shame and confusion when I see Jesus, my Lord, thus murdered, and you, my Queen, wounded by His pains, while I, the most unworthy of your

servants, am free from the least suffering. Ah ! I know what I will do: prostrate at your feet, I will pray unceasingly, with tears and groans; I will lift up my voice, and my importunity at last shall make you grant my request. . . .”

But sometimes the Saint writes in a different tone, for tears and sadness are not the only possessions of the Saviour's friends, nor is their love always tinged with bitterness. We have from his pen a paraphrase of the Angelic Salutation, and another of the “*Salve Regina*,” in which are expressed all the feelings which fill the souls of Saints—confidence, joy, hope, love, sorrow, and humility: in them are to be found expressed all the pious emotions of which a pure and devoted heart is capable, and almost one fears to choose a passage from them, when, as a whole, they are so full of beauty and of grace.

“O Clemens, O Pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria: O Virgin, you are clement to those who are poor, tender to those who pray, sweet to those who love you! O Virgin, kind to those who repent, tender to those who advance in goodness, sweet to those who contemplate you! . . . O Virgin, clement in your consolations, tender

in your caresses, sweet in your embraces! O Virgin, kind to those who are subject to you, tender towards those who are trying to correct their faults, sweet to those whom you love! O clement, O tender, O sweet Virgin Mary. Amen."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Poetry of the Middle Ages—The Praises of the Cross.

“Carmen pertinet ad sanctos, qui ad Dei canticum provocantur.”

THE age in which lived St. Louis, St. Bonaventure, and St. Thomas of Aquin was not only an age of profound thinkers and great theologians, of gigantic monuments of piety and humble devotion, but also it was an age of beautiful poetry. Since the period which has been derisively called that of the “Renaissance,” the world has looked disdainfully on the Catholic age. Because, in the Middle Ages, Christians esteemed their treasures too great to need to borrow from paganism its terrestrial inspirations and tastes ; because they thought their flower-strewn fields sufficiently fragrant, without reaching out their hands to gather the withered blossoms of earth ; because they felt themselves too strong to need foreign

support—they have been accused of weakness : injury and contempt have been lavished upon them, it has even been declared that faith is incapable of furnishing genius with the noble inspirations of poetry. But in our days men who hold their holy faith dear have cleared it from the imputation of having been sterile in the days of its greatest triumphs, or like a field which is destitute of flowers. One such writer says : “Never has poetry played so important and so popular a part as in the thirteenth century. Europe then seemed to be a vast *atelier* of poetry, whence issued every day some new work. . . . Epic poems, odes, satires, elegies, the drama itself, were as familiar to the poets of that period as to those of the time of Augustus and of Louis XIV. And when we read their works with the sympathy induced by the religious faith which was their inspiration, with the impartial appreciation of a society where the soul governed matter in so high a degree, with an indifference very easy to be conceived for modern versification—one asks, What has been invented by the writers of more modern times, and what have thought and imagination gained in exchange for the pure

treasures which they have lost? For, if only we knew it, every subject that is worthy of literary honour has been sung by those despised poets, and made glorious in the eyes of their contemporaries by their songs. . . . There is no secret of the soul which they have not penetrated, no mine of deep feeling which they have failed to explore, not one fibre of the human heart which they have not touched, not one chord of the immortal lyre which they have not waked to melody.”* But it is not the province of this volume to dilate on the poetry of the Middle Ages, except incidentally, in describing the part which the object of this memoir took in such work. In his poetry, as in his other writings, St. Bonaventure has maintained his position on the sublime heights to which his genius had raised him. He does not sing of the world, with its passions, its vain hopes, its frivolous and humiliating desires; but his heart being absorbed in a more noble love, he does not waste his affections on things of earth, which abuse and soil the soul. The Saviour of mankind, the Cross, the spotless Virgin Mary, are the keynotes of

* Montalembert.

the melody he makes. Like St. Francis of Assisi, who was his master and his model, divine love made him a poet, and the music of his canticles was divine.

The first of his poems he called "Philomel". Its object is to recall the benefits of God in the works of Creation and Redemption. The soul also contemplates in this poem the sorrows of the Saviour, and weeps over "the tender Lamb, the Lamb without spot, crowned with thorns, wounded, covered with blood," and at last, overcome with tears and sorrows, it dies to the world, and the poet thus celebrates its death.

"O holy Soul! O tender Rose, Lily of the Valley, precious stone, you who always have abhorred the flesh, happy indeed is your end, inestimable the manner of your death."

In this manner in the Catholic age, the friends of the Saviour celebrated His gifts to them, and if in our day we speak in finer language, at least we shall not exceed the spirit of love which inspired their words. The poets of that time would have thought their work imperfect, if, after having celebrated the Saviour's praise, they had not associated with Him in their songs, His

blessed and venerated Mother, and many were the hymns in which pious hearts expressed their tenderness for her, to whose prevailing prayers they looked for hope and consolation. St. Bonaventure's works occupy a distinguished place among these holy songs, for no man has ever shown a more filial love to Mary, or sung of her with more enthusiastic joy. In the *Praises of Mary*, he speaks of her under the figures by which she is represented in the Holy Books. A few passages will show the tenor of the whole.

“Tender Virgin, you are incomparable, you have deserved to hear the voice of the Angel, and to conceive the Son of God, by the sacred operation of the Holy Spirit. A virgin before your conception, you remain a virgin still. . . . In this uncertain world deign to console those who serve you.

“The Law has shown you to us in its figures; the holy pages of the Old Testament have declared you to us by numerous types; and the Incarnation has made you great among women, and raised you far above all creatures.

“Before the beginning of the world the Lord

chose you, when in His wisdom He laid the foundations of the heavens.

“ Rejoice, O Virgin ! O Mother, rejoice ! Mingle the accents of your joy with those of Heaven. . . . Your glory is beyond all praise. . . . ”

St. Bonaventure also consecrated his poetic vein to celebrate the sign of our salvation.

“ Remember the holy Cross, O you who are leading a perfect life ; and at all times seek your happiness in it.

“ Remember the holy Cross ; let it be the subject of your thoughts ; meditate on it incessantly, and never tire.

“ Let your heart be on the Cross, and let the Cross be in your heart ; so that it may be without stain, and that peace may reign within it.

“ Let the Cross be in your heart, that it may be in your mouth, that it may make you taste its sweetness. . . .

“ In the midst of tribulations of every kind, in afflictions and calamities, the Cross is the sovereign cure.

“ The Cross is the gate of Heaven, the Saints have trusted in it, and have conquered.

“ The Cross is the salvation of souls ; it is the

true and shining light, the balm which fills all hearts with joy.

“The Cross is a magnificent tree, which is watered with the Blood of Jesus Christ, and abounds with every kind of fruit. . . .

“Seek the Cross then, bear the Cross, contemplate the Cross of Jesus Christ, till you faint with love.

“O Christians, weep over the death of Jesus, weep day and night, and let it be your chief happiness to mourn for Him.

“Let us weep and sigh ; let us lament and mourn from the depth of our hearts, as men lament over an only son. . . .”

Good Christians, at His word, did weep for love of their crucified God ; they wept and they embraced heroic sacrifices. When men like Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure, and Thomas of Aquin became poets, the world seemed to have returned to the days of David, while in their songs they celebrated the marvels of the power and love of God. Alas ! such men are but rarely seen on earth ; and Poetry, the daughter of Heaven, too often forgets her noble vocation, and, by uniting herself to the sons of earth,

allows her beauty to be destroyed, her innocence defiled, and her sublimity abased, so that her charms no longer attract souls to heavenly contemplation, but rather draw them down to meretricious earthly joys.

CHAPTER XIX.

Mystic Writings of St. Bonaventure.

“Dedit mihi Dominus linguam mercedem meam; et in ipsa laudabo eum.”—ECCLES. li. 30.

THE most religious men have always been the most fruitful in good deeds. The soul that is purified by constant contact with Heaven becomes capable of actions that are strong, persevering, sublime, and truly great. Everything great in this world depends on the spirit of sacrifice, and this spirit is most powerful where the divine breath is most strongly felt. St. Paul, St. Bernard, St. Francis Xavier, and all the glorious Saints whose journey through this world has left so deep an impression, were men who were animated by divine thoughts and guided by celestial desires. Their works were great, because there was in them nothing that was earthly; and because, as the Apostle said, “neither life, nor death, nor present nor future things, could separate them

from the love of Jesus Christ". They had, therefore, reached the summit of evangelical perfection, and their works were really the works of God.

When we examine closely the lives of such men, we see in all their efforts an intense desire to make the world such as they themselves are. St. Paul wrote to all Christians letters which are full of counsels of detachment, of mortification, of tender and devoted charity. He proportioned his words to the feebleness of those to whom he wrote, and the instructions that he gave them filled with admiration and enthusiasm the most lofty minds. St. Bernard had among his children men of all ranks, and yet he explained to all the ineffable mysteries of the *Canticle of Canticles*; to all he related the most abstruse operations of Divine love, and he never seemed to fear lest his instructions should be above their understanding or unsuited to their needs.

For, in fact, the first need of the heart of man is the love of God; detachment, abnegation, poverty, humility, obedience—in a word, all the virtues—are only means to attain to this love, to increase its intensity, to give entire freedom to

its action. So, when a heart is pure, nothing is so dear to it as the love of God; and, if all men had arrived at such purity, their only language would be the language of love, the language of the blessed country above. We have a striking example of this truth in the death of St. Thomas of Aquin. When the Saint lay in his last illness, the children of St. Benedict, among whom he died, begged of him, as the greatest boon, that he would explain to them the *Canticle of Canticles*, the book of love.

To lead men to the love of God, and to detach them from the things of earth, to raise them to the full height of their divine vocation, is the foundation of the teaching of all the mystic authors, and of St. Bonaventure in particular. At first sight, their writings appear obscure and unintelligible, but they are only so to unreflecting and ignorant souls, especially when these authors have been men of sublime virtue, who have written of things that they have experienced themselves. The science of such men is a science of profound meditation—a science that is based on an intimate knowledge of souls and of their needs, of creatures and of their supernatural

end, of God and of the irresistible attraction of His love to us.

This science of experience has never been more clearly made known in the Church, than in the thirteenth century. Till then it had seemed to be the possession of only a few privileged souls of some fervent communities, but the sweet whispers of these favoured ones hardly were heard beyond the cloister walls. St. Bernard was the first to make it known more widely than before. His grave and powerful voice had more strength, and his writings made by degrees many disciples whose thoughts carried them to celestial heights, and whose ambition was, to be more closely united to God. The Orders of St. Francis and St. Dominic extended this knowledge in the world, and the echo of their preaching was expressed by the words of the Prophet: "Taste and see how gracious is the Lord".

St. Bonaventure was the principal representative of the mystic school in the thirteenth century. That which St. Thomas was for theology, he was for the direction of souls in the higher regions of spirituality. As a faithful

disciple of St. Bernard, he earnestly studied his doctrine, and he so strictly embraced all his ideas, that the voice of St. Bernard seems to speak again from his lips. His books on the *Seven Roads of Eternity*, the *Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, the *Five Festivals of the Child Jesus*, the *Seven Degrees of Contemplation*, &c., are pure and lovely specimens of mystic works. In some of these books he leans constantly on the support of his masters, but in others he seems, so to speak, to forget his great learning: he leans on no one, and they are simply the effusion of a heart entirely given up to love. At other times his words seem to belong more to the intelligence than to the will, and he appears to be building up one stone upon another of the edifice on which he is engaged. In these works he advances by degrees, but from the beginning it is easy to see that his heart is burning, that even his science is incandescent with love, and that the building which he has begun on earth will only receive its crown in the highest regions of Heaven.

His system is that of the Gospel—that of the Apostles. He never forgets what man is by

nature, and what he can become by grace. Sin ought to be restrained without mercy, not as a work of perfection, but of justice. Imperfections are sicknesses of the soul. They never entirely disappear, and to the end they cause even saints to exclaim, "Unhappy man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. vii.). He shows that these imperfections may be diminished, however, by applying the faculties of the soul to the practice of all the virtues, and that each of these virtues has its special end. Union of the soul with God is the end of all mystical science, as it is the end of the Gospel. In this life such union must always be imperfect, but it will find its consummation in eternal bliss.

Even when the soul has reached the most sublime heights, it is not dispensed from the necessity of practising the virtues. On the contrary, it is the more obliged to exercise them, the more highly it is favoured. Thus, when the Lord left His holy conferences with His Heavenly Father, it was to apply Himself to preaching and to all the works of charity, and the Apostles constantly passed from the active to

the contemplative life, and afterwards returned to active work again. So in our human life, labour prepares us for repose, and repose disposes us to toil. The virtues are the life of the soul, and if only one of them grows feeble, it has a fatal effect on the rest.

The way that leads to these sublime heights is no other than ardent love for Jesus crucified. This love is reached by desire, and the desire is kindled by prayer and contemplation. Reading is useless without unction; consideration is of no avail without devotion; research, without admiration; application, without joy of heart; cleverness, without piety; science, without charity; intelligence, without humility; application, without grace; light, without the inspiration of divine wisdom. We must begin by flying from all terrestrial dignity, by abhorring all ostentation of science and all vainglory, and in utter poverty, incessantly seeking the love of God, in prayer and meditation.

It is false to attribute to mystic authors the systematic intention to encourage raptures and ecstatic affections of the soul. These are the works of God, and not of men. The mystic

authors only desire to lead men to love, and to make their love burn more brightly, because they recognise it to be the consummation of all virtue. "I endeavour," says St. Bonaventure, "to excite all men to love, and to the most ardent love." The Saint treats of these extraordinary ways, in the book entitled *Spiritual Advancement of Religious*, and in it we can discern with what wisdom the mystic authors pursued their teaching, how salutary are their counsels, and how safe it is to obey them.

It was under the influence of the mystic life, that poetry took its distinctively religious tone, and became the truest and purest expression of the emotions and needs of the soul. Where can we find anything more divine and more poetic than the "Dies iræ" of Thomas Celano, the "Veni Sancte Spiritus" of Innocent III., the "Lauda Sion," and the other hymns of St. Thomas of Aquin? St. Francis of Assisi surpasses, in his canticles, all the lyric poems in the world; and James Toda, also a child of the Franciscan family, has written many good and holy songs. The Church has, in

every age, seen in the mystic authors men who had been admitted to more intimate knowledge of the secrets of God ; and she has loved and praised their works. St. Theresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis de Sales, have left writings which are dear to her heart, but she has spoken of none with more tenderness than of the mystic works of St. Bonaventure, of none has she spoken with higher praise. "God," she says, "has covered him with honour and glory in the eyes of all the people, and his memory is blessed by them ; for he has written in such a manner of the things of God, that the Holy Spirit seems to speak by his mouth". *

* Bull of Canonisation.

CHAPTER XX.

Works of St. Bonaventure on the Holy Scriptures.

“Sapientiam omnium antiquorum exquiret sapiens, et in prophetis vacabit.”—ECCLES. xxxix. 2.

WE have already considered St. Bonaventure as a theologian, a director of souls, as a mystic writer, a zealous preacher, a sweet poet, and as the invincible defender of the Religious Orders ; we have yet to consider his works as a commentator on the Holy Scriptures. The chief glory of the Doctors of the Church is that they have penetrated more deeply than other men, into the spirit of the Divine Books which have been given by Heaven to human weakness, to guide and console mankind among the dangers of their exile ; and that they have contemplated the truth with more clearness than others, and have communicated its precepts with greater illumination and power to the world. St. Bonaventure walked in the footsteps of these

illustrious men ; like them, he studied the Holy Scriptures with indefatigable perseverance, sounding their mysterious depths with pious curiosity, and ever gathering new treasures from their exhaustless store. With his own hand he twice copied the whole Bible, in order the more firmly to impress on his mind its form of words, and to testify his reverence for the Sacred Book ; and when he explains to us its celestial secrets, we may in all confidence receive what he says, more especially as the Church has honoured his words with her meed of praise.

The first work of the Saint on this subject was written to prove the excellence of the Scriptures. He speaks of them as the “ river of living water ” in the Apocalypse, whose waters, clear as crystal, come from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Of this river he says that its abundance is inexhaustible, its value inappreciable, its beauty inviolable, and its extent without limit and without end. It is a river that abounds in pleasures, a bright and luminous river, a stream whose impetuosity no obstacle can impede. It proceeds from the garden which was

planted by the Hand of God, in order that it may water the paradise of the faithful soul and of the Church Militant, and is divided into four branches, according to the different senses of the divine text. At the side of this river is the tree of life, bearing twelve different fruits, and this tree is Jesus Christ, Who is the end of both the Old and the New Testament.

St. Bonaventure has left commentaries on the Psalms, on Ecclesiastes, on Wisdom, on the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the Gospel of St. Luke, that of St. John, an abridgment of that same commentary, an explanation of the Lord's Prayer, and twenty-one discourses on the work of the Six Days. He also wrote explanations of other books of Holy Scripture, but these last works were lost before the invention of printing.

His book on the Psalms is a work of immense labour, on which the Saint lavished the riches of his genius and piety. He loved to meditate, and he exhorted his brethren to meditate, on these divine canticles, because, as he said, in the Psalms, Jesus Christ appeared more perfectly and with more clearness than in the other books of the Old Testament, and also, because

in them the heart finds expressed a great hope of pardon. In these explanations, St. Bonaventure had in view the needs of his brothers ; he knew that the family confided to his care would be great before God and before men, if piety reigned in it, and hence he endeavoured to provide for their souls a strong and substantial food.

The commentary on St. Luke has always been considered one of the most perfect works of St. Bonaventure. It is scripture explained by scripture : all the texts he requires seem to come naturally as he wants them ; he invokes the inspired Apostles and writers, and makes them once more give their testimony to the truth. For the Gospel of St. John, he not only wrote a commentary, but he also wrote on the same Gospel ninety-one "Conferences" for the use of the young students of his Order. In this second work he supplied them with inestimable treasures for their meditations, but, in order to enjoy and appropriate them, they would have, in their turn, to apply themselves to the work of developing the thoughts of their master, and penetrating the hidden meaning of his words. No one knew better than the Saint, what was required by the

mind of youth, and how to proportion his instructions to their needs, and the Franciscan Order, for long years after his death, has experienced the benefits of his discretion in the government of minds and in the direction of souls.

Twenty-three discourses he consecrated to a grave and solemn consideration of the work of creation. The beginning of all our discourses ought, he says, to be Jesus Christ, because He is the Mediator between God and man. The end of our discourses ought to be in the fulness of wisdom, and wisdom has its origin in divine grace; while grace comes to us through the Word Incarnate, the Word Crucified, the Word Inspired. The object of grace is to cause us to advance in goodness, but it must be used faithfully, courageously, and liberally. The effect of grace is the remission of sin, the fulness of justice, the consummation of bliss. Grace which heals us is given in the practice of the seven works of mercy, grace which confirms us in the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, grace which consummates our happiness in the seven Beatitudes.

But the Saint was stopped in the middle of this course of instructions, and it was not given him to conclude them. Of these discourses Bonaventure wrote but seven; the others he delivered verbally to a crowd of men, who hung on his words, and were transported out of themselves as they listened to the utterances of his genius. A hundred and sixty brothers were present. Many wrote down carefully the words of the Saint, and it is to one of them that we owe the sixteen last discourses of this immortal work.

St. Bonaventure had laboured incessantly to increase the study of the Holy Scriptures in the Order which he governed, and when the members of the University asked him the reason for this, he replied: "As the office of preacher and confessor is attached to our Order as a regular part of its work, this office requires a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, which sometimes need explanation; and if we are not to teach error for truth, it is necessary that we should give ourselves up to the study of these holy Books, and that we should have masters to instruct us in them. And such science is not only useful for the instruction of others, but also for our

own; it teaches a man to govern himself, to discern virtue from vice, to have a clearer knowledge of God and of future rewards, to live with more prudence, and to produce more abundant fruit. Thus the Apostle exhorted Timothy to give himself to such study; and we frequently hear praises of the zeal with which the saints have meditated on the Sacred Writings. It is from the Holy Scriptures that we gain the truth of the faith and holiness of life, without which it is impossible to attain to salvation. Besides, as heretics have found the source of so many of their errors in the misinterpretation of these Books, it behoves us, by profound and diligent investigation, to fit ourselves to overthrow their subtleties, to arm the faithful against their frauds, and to reveal their hidden snares. Hence these words of St. Jerome: 'A holy ignorance only serves itself, but, as far as it might edify the Church by a good example in its life, so in the same degree it is hurtful to her, if it is unable to oppose those by whom erroneous doctrines are spread'."

CHAPTER XXI.

Second Chapter at Pisa—St. Bonaventure nominated to the Cardinalate.

“Nemo lucernam ascendet, et in abscondito ponit, neque sub modio; sed supra candelabrum, ut qui ingrediuntur lumen videant.”—S. LUKE xi. 33.

THE Franciscan Order continued to progress with fervour and fidelity under the direction of St. Bonaventure. The Brothers edified the world by their virtues, they sanctified it by their examples, and succeeded in silencing envious tongues. The good Superior, always vigilant and zealous, watched unceasingly over his beloved family, without allowing himself to succumb under the weight of his ever-increasing labours. The repose he most valued was that of seeing this almost innumerable family of religious employed in various ministrations all over the world, and perseveringly working for God, without a thought of earth. Such a happy result

had not been attained without much cost to him who held the reins of government, but he had never looked for a reward in this life. St. Francis of Assisi had only lived in his children, and his successor found in their welfare the crown of his hopes and desires.

But the year 1270 brought many sorrows for the tender heart of Bonaventure. He had not only to lament the death of Louis IX. and of Bela, King of Hungary, the brother of St. Elizabeth, both of whom were sincere and powerful friends of his Order, but many others of his friends were also removed by death. Among these was Rufino, who had been one of the best loved companions of St. Francis, and after his decease no fewer than twenty others of the religious passed away from earth; and though these men were to be envied, in that they had exchanged the bitter trials of their exile, for the joys of their blessed country, their Superior and father could not part with them without much tribulation and sorrow of heart.

However, in spite of losses and trials, the Order continued to prosper, as we have seen, and to extend far and wide, till it had embraced

the whole world. The houses were multiplied, and they brought the blessing of Heaven on the countries in which they were placed; and wherever opportunities of encountering greater difficulty and suffering presented themselves, there the brothers seemed to be attracted by an irresistible vocation. Missions to the heathen daily received new workers; distance counted for nothing, or the difficulties of travelling, or ignorance of the language, or the prospect of innumerable privations, or the thought of a cruel death and the most atrocious tortures: these things only served to increase the ardour of their love. And not only in the battlefield of infidelity and paganism were these religious to be found, but in the less brilliant conflicts with pain and sickness they took a ready part. They were to be found in all the hospitals and among the lepers, lavishing their tender cares on the afflicted bodies, while they ministered sweet consolation to the souls, of the poor sufferers. Among these workers Bonaventure was constantly to be seen, and the same hand which had given so many learned and melodious writings to the Church, was ever ready to dress

the wounds, and minister to the bodily comfort, of the sick. It is not surprising that under his wise and fatherly sway, the Order of St. Francis should have become the admiration of the world, or that he himself should have been loved and venerated as a Saint.

In spite of the deep humility of St. Bonaventure, which always induced him to withdraw from any prominent position, he was yet ever ready with wise and prudent counsel, when his advice was asked ; and it was now by his wisdom that the Church was rescued from a position of great difficulty in the choice of an occupant for the Holy See. The Cardinals assembled at Viterbo had not been able to agree upon a successor to Clement IV., and the interests of the Church were beginning to suffer from the long delay. The Saint, who was at this time in Viterbo, advised the delegates to give their votes to Theobald, Archdeacon of Liège. This advice was acted upon, and the nominee of St. Bonaventure was unanimously elected under the title of Gregory X.

Theobald was at St. Jean d'Acre, where he had joined the crusade, when the envoys of the

Sacred College brought him the news of his elevation to the pontificate, and he could not imagine why the Princes of the Church should have turned their eyes on a poor priest like himself, to raise him to so great dignity ; but he submitted himself to the will of God, and prepared at once to leave the Holy Land, and to proceed to Italy. On his arrival at Viterbo his first care was for the Holy Land, which was so dear to his heart. He induced the cities of Pisa, Genoa, Marseilles, and Venice, to send out each three armed galleys, and himself presented nine thousand ounces of gold, to help to defray the expenses of the war.

During this same year, 1272, which saw the beginning of the pontificate of Gregory X., Bonaventure, for the second time, held a General Chapter of his Order at Pisa. He regarded these assemblies as a time of rest, where he met many of his brethren ; and, being occupied with the care of all his children, he found the burden of government less heavy when assisted, as he then was, by the counsels and experience of old and wise men, and cheered by their reports of the pro-

gress of the work of salvation in the different places from which they had come.

At this Chapter, he made a regulation which was well worthy of his love to God and man. The children of St. Francis had now become numerous as the stars of the firmament, and every day saw their numbers increase. He could not forget that they had left parents in the world, whom they tenderly loved, and who died without the beloved presence and consolation of their sons. The Saint, therefore, made a regulation that on the first Sunday in Advent every year, a Solemn Service should be celebrated in all the houses of the Order, for the repose of the soul of their parents who had died; and this regulation has ever since remained in force.

St. Bonaventure also, at this same Chapter, made known to his brethren the permission he had received from Pope Gregory X. to celebrate, on the 25th day of August, the anniversary of the death of St. Louis, who had been so kind and faithful a protector to the children of St. Francis; and thus was taken the first step towards the canonisation of the holy king.

Some months later, Bonaventure was called on to settle an affair which is only important because it proves his earnest desire to preserve the peace, so strongly enjoined by Francis of Assisi on his sons. A contest had arisen between the Canons of St. Marie de Blois and the Minors, and the Provincial of Touraine had intervened, and had settled the dispute by ceding to the Canons certain possessions which had been the cause of the litigation. Bonaventure, as soon as he heard of the matter, wrote to the Canons, to confirm the cession which had been made by the Provincial. "I have always ardently desired, and I still desire," he said in his letter, "to see all the causes of troubles, as far as possible, disappear in the Lord, which have seemed to give you reason to complain of our brothers at Blois. I desire that these brothers submit to you in all humility, as is right ; and as formerly they were united to you by ties of friendship and devotion, I also desire that fraternal love should be maintained between you, without the slightest alteration, so as to preserve that peace of Christ which surpasses all other sentiment. . . .

“Believe, I pray you, that we consider you as our fathers in the Lord, as our friends and our masters ; that we desire, at all times, to be at peace with you.”

But while thus occupied in the cares and interests of his Order, St. Bonaventure was thrown into great alarm by a report which grievously troubled his soul. The new Pope had come to recognise the aptitude of the Saint for business, his dexterous management of difficult questions, his rare prudence under all circumstances ; and he desired to show his appreciation of the great qualities which he admired in him by raising him to the dignity of a Prince of the Church, in order that he might keep him near his person, and profit by his wisdom and prudence for the general good.

As soon as St. Bonaventure heard what was proposed, he fled, hoping so to escape the honour, of which he felt himself to be unworthy, and whose burden of obligations he dreaded to incur. He went to Paris, where he had formerly spent some years of his life, and for some months he hoped he had been forgotten, while in silence and solitude he devoted himself to his work on the

Creation. But Gregory had irrevocably resolved that such a man should not be buried for ever in the obscurity of a cloister, for he too well understood the importance of the services he would undoubtedly render to the Church. Therefore, about the time of the Feast of Pentecost, the Pontiff wrote to announce to him that he had raised him to the dignity of a Cardinal, and had nominated him to the Bishopric of Albano, and insisted on his immediate return. "Since the day of our elevation," the Pope wrote, "all our care and the desire of our heart has been to restore peace and serenity in the Church, which, with keen sorrow, we see now to be shaken by tempests. All our sighs and prayers are employed to entreat of the Heavenly Spouse to gather together the stones of Zion, to beautify them, to arrange them in order, and to build its walls, to found them in justice, and for ever to keep far from it injury and harm, fears and alarms. . . . Hence, being as much moved by the excellence, as terrified by the responsibility, of our ministry, we do not cease to entreat, by night and day, the God, in Whose interests alone we

live, to open the eyes of our understanding, to cause His light to shine upon us, so that we may only confide His cause to worthy hands, and may only associate with us in our functions, by means of the Cardinalate, men whose pure and innocent life may be, for all the people of God, as a light that is set on a hill, while for us it is a pledge of divine mercy; men whose teaching and knowledge may remove doubts and strengthen our steps. . . . This is why, after long and mature deliberation on your account, with our brethren, and in consideration of the rare virtues which show us in part with what riches God has adorned your soul, we have thought that you ought to be raised to the Cardinalate and to the Bishopric of Albano . . . enjoining you, by these presents, to acquiesce in all humility and submission to the Order which calls you, and to come to us at once, without allowing yourself either excuse or delay."

Such was the formally-expressed will of the Pope; and his well-known firmness prevented St. Bonaventure from entertaining any hope that he might relent as Clement IV. had done. He was therefore obliged to resign himself with

a groan, and to accept this new burden, which he felt to be too great for his strength. Then ensued for him a moment of great anguish, and being full of fear, he wept and prostrated himself before God, Who is the Consoler of all who are in affliction, entreating Him to increase his strength, his light, and his wisdom ; and when he had become more calm, he assembled his children of the house in Paris, and informed them of the contents of the letter of the Pontiff.

A touching spectacle ensued. The good Superior, full of grief, seemed to implore their pity, while the religious shed bitter tears. This elevation involved for them the loss of a tenderly-cherished Father, a venerated Doctor, a Master of consummate experience ; and they deplored, as a calamity to their Order, the honours which the merits of their beloved Superior had gained for him. They conjured him not to leave them, but to continue to be their Father in the purple, as he had been to this day, in the poor and humble habit of a Minor Friar.

The heart of Bonaventure could not fail to be touched by their appeal, and he consented to

keep his position of Superior-General of the Order of St. Francis. The Pope was quite ready to consent to this decision, as he did not wish, while gaining the valuable assistance of so clever a man, to deprive his children in the Order of his fatherly care.

St. Bonaventure started for Italy, however, with a heavy heart. At each of the Franciscan houses which he encountered on his journey, he was received with the same evidences of affection, and everywhere he left an example of deep humility and renunciation of self. He eagerly betook himself to the humblest work, as in the days of his novitiate, and seemed as if he could not sufficiently humiliate himself, in order to atone, by these acts of self-abnegation, for the honours which he looked upon as so dangerous to his soul.

Meanwhile Gregory X. had sent two legates to meet him and to present him with the Cardinal's hat. They met him at the little convent of Migel, near Florence. When they arrived the Saint was occupied in washing the dishes after the manner of the Community, and he refused to interrupt his occupation in order to

receive them; but he ordered the hat to be hung up on a tree in the garden, which he pointed out. When he had finished his work he assembled his brethren, and said to them, with much sorrow: "I have fulfilled my duty as a Minor Friar; I am about to try an employment which is very much more difficult. Believe me, my brothers, the first of these two offices is much the more salutary and more safe, for great honours are heavy and dangerous cares."

When he had spoken these words, he went to the envoys of the Pontiff, and welcomed them with the sweet amiability which always characterised him, even among the most serious troubles and pain.

The Pope himself started from Orvieto, and came to Florence in his desire to enjoy the society of the Saint; and he would not allow anyone else to perform the ceremony of his consecration. He himself called down on the new Bishop the benediction of Heaven, touched his forehead with the holy oil, and received his confession of faith. It was a joyful occasion for the Pope, and his heart was filled with hopes for the future, while he blessed the Lord Who had

guided him to choose so good a man. Alas ! he little knew how short a time the Saint would possess the new honours just conferred on him : in less than a year death was to remove him from all earthly dignities, but yet how much was he to accomplish for the Church in that brief time !

The Cardinals shared the joy of their venerated Pontiff. Bonaventure alone was sad and full of fear ; he alone did not share the happiness which filled all hearts but his. At this solemn time he spoke only by sighs and supplications, but heavenly grace descended all the more abundantly upon his soul, because the sense of his own unworthiness was so great. St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of his Order, had judged himself to be unworthy of the priesthood at the time when the voice of Heaven and of the whole world declared him to be the most holy of men. St. Bonaventure, partaking of the spirit of his father, had bitterly lamented his elevation to the rank of Superior-General of his Order, and now he was plunged into the deepest sorrow, because the Church had proclaimed her sense of the merit of his learning and his virtue. All that was

passing around him seemed to him as a dream, and he asked himself again and again, what the world could possibly see to admire in a poor religious like himself. Happy, indeed, is the family in which such men as he deny themselves and sacrifice themselves, without imagining that their self-abnegation is anything sublime! Heaven has crowned it with benedictions, and its fruits have been fruits of life and salvation to the earth.

CHAPTER XXII.

Death of St. Thomas of Aquin—Illness of St. Bonaventure—His Death.

“In medio Ecclesiæ aperuit os ejus, et implevit eum Dominus spiritu sapientiæ et intellectus.”—ECCLES, xv. 5.

GREGORY X., when he had raised St. Bonaventure to this dignity, wished immediately to make known to the world the rare gifts of him whom he had chosen. A Council had been convoked at Lyons to consider and to provide for the needs of the Holy Land, and to consummate the union of the Greeks with the Church, and the active efforts of the Pope were well seconded by his ministers. From the commencement of his pontificate he had requested both the Franciscans and Dominicans to continue to preach in favour of the Crusade, as they had begun to do under St. Louis, and they readily responded to the desire of the Pontiff. Bona-

venture had received an order to go to Lyons, and Gregory told him all that the Church expected from him on that occasion. Among the favoured personages who were summoned to the Council was St. Thomas of Aquin, the prince of theologians. Honours and dignities had tried to draw him away from the ecstasies of contemplation, but the will of the Pontiff was not so imperious for him as for Bonaventure. God granted the prayer of Thomas ; he died a simple religious, and he had no earthly glory, except that of his genius and his holy life. The Pope had summoned him to Lyons, and he accordingly had left Naples, where he had resided for many years, carrying nothing with him but the treatise which he had formerly written against the Greeks, at the request of Urban IV. This was at the end of January, 1274. St. Thomas fell ill on his way, and was obliged to stop at the Convent of Fossanuova, in the Diocese of Tenacisco. As he entered the convent he pronounced these words of the Psalmist : "Here shall be my rest for ever". The religious surrounded him with the tenderest cares. The Abbot gave up his room to him, and lavished on

him the most delicate attentions. But all their efforts were in vain, for the time had come when St. Thomas was to enjoy the sight of Him, the thought of whom melted his heart in love. Before his departure from Naples, he had seen in a dream, a brother of his Order who had lately died, and he had asked him whether the vision of God was what books had described it to be. "We see Him in a far more noble manner," the religious had answered, "and you will soon know it for yourself."

St. Thomas remained for a month ill at Fossanuova. His longing for the celestial country increased every day, and the end did not come as quickly as he hoped. When the Holy Viaticum was brought to him, he insisted on being laid on ashes, in order to receive Jesus Christ with more respect. At the sight of the Sacred Host he exclaimed: "I believe firmly that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, is in this august Sacrament. I adore Thee, O my God and my Saviour! I receive Thee, O Thou Who art the price of my redemption, and the viaticum of my pilgrimage! Thou, for love of Whom I have studied, laboured, preached, and taught! I

hope that I have taught nothing that is contrary to Thy Divine Word, or, if, through ignorance, I have done so, I now publicly retract it, and I submit all my writings to the judgment of the Holy Roman Church." He was often heard to repeat: "Soon, soon the God of all consolation will put the crown to His mercies, and will fulfil all my desires. Soon I shall be satisfied in Him, and I shall drink of the torrent of His delights. He will fill me with the abundance of His house, and will make me contemplate the true Light in His Presence, Who is the Source of Life."

Those who watched by the Saint were bathed in tears, but he consoled them by assuring them that for him death was a gain. P. Renaud, his travelling companion and his confessor, having expressed a regret that he should not be at the Council to see the triumph won over the enemies of the Church, he answered: "I have always asked God, as a rare favour, to let me die as a simple religious, and I thank Him now for His goodness in granting my request. In calling me to rest, in my early age, He has shown a favour to me which He has refused to many of His

servants. Do not mourn, then, over the fate of a man who is full of joy."

He expressed his gratitude to the Abbot and religious of the Monastery for all the acts of charity they had performed in his behalf, and then—in answer to a brother who had inquired what he ought to do in order to remain always faithful to grace—he said: "Whoever continues in the presence of God will be always ready to render an account of his actions to Him, and will never risk the loss of His love by consenting to sin". These were the last words of the Saint. Soon after he had uttered them, he quietly slept in the Lord, on 7th March, 1274, being then only forty-eight years of age.

When the news of his death reached Lyons, it caused the most intense grief. Everyone deplored the loss of so celebrated a man. Bona-venture, above all, was filled with grief; for he had hoped, at Lyons, to have met and embraced the great Doctor once more, and to have profited by his counsels at so solemn an epoch of his life. More than ever he felt his own nothingness, and acknowledged himself to be an unprofitable servant, as he saw that brilliant torch ex-

tinguished at the very moment when its light promised to illuminate the world.

Meanwhile, the Bishops and Prelates of every Order, and the Deputies of a great number of Princes, assembled at Lyons, in reply to the invitation of Gregory X., and so imposing a gathering had never before been seen in the Church. More than five hundred Bishops met there, seventy Abbots, and a thousand Prelates of every Order.

The Pope, who had arrived some months before, with Bonaventure, had been actively occupied in preparing for this huge assembly, which was opened on May 7, in the Metropolitan Church of St. Jean. It had been preceded by a fast of three days. Before the time of Mass, the Pope descended from his apartments, conducted by two Cardinal-Deacons, and seated himself on an arm-chair in the choir. After having been attired in his pontifical robes, as if he had been about to celebrate the Mass, he advanced towards the Throne, and sat on it, having a Cardinal for Priest-Assistant, one for Deacon, and four other Cardinal-Deacons. James, King of Arragon, sat next the Pope on the same seat.

In the middle of the Church raised seats had been placed, and there were to be seen the two Latin Patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch, the Cardinal-Bishops, of whom Bonaventure was one, the Cardinal-Priests, the Primates, Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, and other Prelates, the Master of the Hospital, and the Master of the Templars, with some Brothers of their Orders, the Ambassadors of the Kings of France, Germany, England, and Sicily and many other Princes, the Deputies of the Chapters and Churches.

Everything passed with admirable order at this first session, in spite of the great number of people. The Pope made the sign of the Cross over the Prelates who were placed in front of him. The prayers chosen for the celebration of the Council were said, and then Gregory addressed the assembly, taking for his text the words of the Lord Jesus—"With desire, I have desired to eat this Pasch with you" (St. Luke xxii. 15). He explained the motives of this general convocation of Christianity, namely, the succour of the Holy Land, the reunion of the Greeks, and the reformation of manners. Finally, he fixed the

second session for the following Monday. In the interval, the Pontiff had private interviews with the Archbishop, joined with a Bishop and an Abbot, for each province. He opened his heart to them, and asked them to come to the help of the Holy Land, which was the object of his predilection; he spoke to them of its tribulations, which he himself had witnessed, the dangers to which it was daily exposed by the fury of the infidels, and he succeeded in obtaining a tenth of the ecclesiastical revenues for six years, to be employed to succour the faithful in the East.

The second session was held on the appointed day, and the Pope again spoke on the same subjects as before. After this the Constitutions regarding the Faith were published. The Deputies of the Chapters, the Abbots, and the unmitred Princes were then dismissed, and the third session of the Council was fixed for 28th May. The first point of the Council, for which it was important that so many should meet, was settled, and, as the city of Lyons was hardly able to contain this multitude of Prelates, with their suites, the Pope only detained for the third

session those men whose rank in the Church gave them a claim to be heard in Council, or whose brilliant talents were likely to be of special use to the assembly.

The greater part of all the work fell on St. Bonaventure. The Pope had appointed him President of the Council, and his daily experience convinced him that the fame of the new Cardinal fell short of his real claims to confidence and esteem. But all these added cares and responsibilities did not combine well with the government of the Franciscan Order, and it became every day more difficult for the Superior to fulfil its duties with those which the Cardinalate imposed on him. Therefore he spoke to Pope Gregory, and told him that he contemplated the resignation to other hands of the care of his beloved family. The Pope gave his consent, and, on the 20th May, St. Bonaventure held a General Chapter of the Order.

There he represented to his brothers the impossibility of his directing them properly under his present circumstances, as the spirit of their Institution required; he pleaded the innumerable labours which his new position

imposed on him, the will of the Sovereign Pontiff, the danger to the Order of losing its fervour under a Superior whose mind was distracted by other affairs. He therefore invited them to elect a new guide who should be better able to care for their needs. On his part, though he placed in their hands the government which he had held for eighteen years, he should not less continue to be the child of St. Francis and their brother.

This proposal was received with great sadness, for, at that moment, the thoughts of all were full of the merit and virtue of this great man. His pure and holy life since his entrance into religion, his wisdom, his affectionate charity, his rare prudence, his indefatigable labours since his elevation to the Generalship—all these virtues which had made him appear to them like a new Francis, seemed to them, at this moment, to shine more brightly than ever, and now the Order was to be deprived of its incomparable Father! But it was impossible to hesitate about an act imposed by duty, and approved by a Pontiff, whose virtue equalled that of Gregory. The Chapter, therefore, consented to choose

another Superior-General, and their choice fell on Jerome d'Ascoli, who was at that time in Constantinople ; and about the same time that he was being elected to this new dignity, he wrote to inform the Pope that he had succeeded in his mission, and that ambassadors were to be sent from Constantinople to Lyons.

The third session took place on 7th June. The Archbishop of Lyons preached on these words of Isaiah : " Lift thine eyes around, O Jerusalem, and look ; all these gather themselves together and come from far " (Isa. lx. 5). This session of the Council was occupied with the reform of manners, and it published constitutions on the election of bishops and the ordination of clerks. Then they retired without settling the time of the fourth session, because they wished to wait for the arrival of the Greeks.

During the interval between this session and the next one, a historical event occurred in which Bonaventure took an active part. Rodolph of Hapsburg, who had been elected king of the Romans in the preceding year, had sent an ambassador to the Council, to

swear in his name obedience to the Pope, and fidelity to the Roman Church. Gregory, by the advice of the Cardinals, received the allegiance of Rodolph as king of the Romans, on 6th June, 1274.

Meanwhile the long-expected Greek deputies arrived on the day of the Festival of St. John the Baptist, and their arrival caused great joy. The Sovereign Pontiff received them standing, accompanied by Cardinals and Prelates, and gave them the kiss of peace. They presented him with letters from their master, sealed with a gold seal, and those of the thirty-eight Bishops who had consented to the reunion; and they declared that they had come to render unreserved obedience to the Roman Church, to profess its faith, and to recognise those points which had been controverted by the Greeks—*i.e.*, the Primacy of the Pope, the insertion of his name in the prayers, and the appeal to the Holy See.

The Emperor Palæologus, in this letter, said, among other things: “We believe that the Holy Spirit is truly God, and that He proceeds from the Father and the Son. . . . The

Holy Roman Church possesses the full and supreme primacy and the principality of the whole Catholic Church. She has received this principality from the Saviour Himself in the person of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, of whom the Roman Pontiff is the successor. All questions about the faith ought to be decided by his judgment. . . . To this Church should be referred all ecclesiastical causes ; and to it the chiefs of all the Churches owe obedience and respect. We know to be true, holy, Catholic, and orthodox, we accept and confess with heart and mouth, the faith which is kept and faithfully taught, and preached, by the Holy Roman Church. We promise to keep inviolably this profession, to persevere in it at all times, and never to forsake it in any way, or to entertain any sentiments but those which are held by her. . . .”

The letter of the bishops also recognised the position of the Pope as the first and Supreme Pontiff of all the Churches, and promised to acknowledge no other than he. It mentions the efforts that had been made by the signatories to bring the other bishops to sign it, and

the difficulties which they had brought forward as a reason for refusing to do so.

The contents of these despatches caused great joy to Gregory X., and he charged St. Bonaventure to confer with the Greeks on several points connected with the abjuration of their schism. As soon as the Eastern ambassadors and bishops came in contact with the Saint, they were subjugated at once, and consented to all that he demanded of them. The Pope, to commemorate this happy event, himself celebrated the Mass on the Festival of St. Peter and St. Paul, on which occasion the Epistle and Gospel were chanted both in Latin and in Greek. Bonaventure, although attacked with illness, mounted the pulpit and spoke in praise of the teaching of the Roman Church, which he so dearly loved and enlarged on the advantages of this union with the Greeks, a union that had been so long desired, and so eagerly pursued, and which now seemed to be on the eve of being accomplished. After the sermon the Creed was sung, first in Latin, and then the Greek Patriarch Germain chanted it in Greek, accompanied by the Greek Archbishops and two Religious, one Dominican

and one Franciscan, who were well versed in that language. The clause, "Who proceedeth from the Father and from the Son," was repeated three times, slowly and piously; and then the Pope continued the Holy Sacrifice in presence of all who had assembled on this solemn occasion to praise and bless God.

On 4th July the city of Lyons was the scene of another most impressive spectacle. This was the arrival of sixteen deputies from Tartary, sent to the Pope by the Khan Abaqu, to form an alliance against the Turks. The Pope and all the assembly received this embassy with ineffable joy, which St. Bonaventure shared in a very high degree. How gladly would he have sacrificed all that remained to him of life, in order to bring into the bosom of the Church those nations who were still in the darkness of infidelity; and he lovingly contemplated the Religious who came from the farthest extremities of the earth with these foreign ambassadors as angels who had been employed to lead these barbarians to the centre of the Catholic world!

The fourth session of the Council was held on 6th July. There were read the letters from

the Emperor and the Bishops, of which mention has been made, and afterwards Georges Acropolite, Grand Chancellor of the Emperor Palæologus, pronounced, in the name of his sovereign, the oath of abjuration in these terms : “ I abjure the schism for my master and for me ; I believe in my heart, and I profess with my mouth, the Catholic, Orthodox, and Roman faith, which has just been read ; I promise to follow it for ever, and never to forsake it. I recognise the Primacy of the Church of Rome, and the obedience which is due to her. I confirm all by my oath, on the soul of my sovereign and of my own.” The Bishops also made a like profession.

Then the Pope intoned the *Te Deum*, and shed tears of joy. The union so much desired was accomplished, and the great longing of the Pontiff was fulfilled. After the song of thanksgiving was ended, he addressed some words to the assembly, on the happy event of the day. The Creed was then sung in Latin and in Greek, and the passage was repeated twice in which the Holy Ghost is declared to proceed from the Father and the Son. A short time after the

Pope wrote himself to the Greek Emperor to express to him the happiness of the Holy Church in the return of her children to the house of their mother.

“O my son,” the venerable Pontiff wrote, “if only it had been given you to contemplate the transports of joy with which your return is welcomed by the Church! Oh! if you had heard with your ears the sound of the holy canticles, in which all, and principally the Prelates, praised God, prostrate on the earth, with uncovered heads; if you had seen their tears, you would have recognised in these tears the signs of a grief which is ended, and a joy which is to come. You would then have understood how joyful for us was the arrival of your ambassadors, how gladly we received them, and, above all, what rejoicing was caused to all hearts by their profession of faith. Then, O my son, leap for joy, and rejoice in Him who is the splendour of eternal light, the emanation of the divine glory, in Him whose light has shone on your spirit, and who has judged you to be worthy, not only to return to the truth, but also to be the chief and guide of others to bring

them to such a return. Rejoice, then, and be glad, now that you see that your efforts have been crowned by so brilliant a success. . . .”

But at the time that the Pope was writing these words, and shedding tears of joy at the fulfilment of his hopes, other tears of bitter sadness were very near his eyes, for at this time he who was truly the man after his heart, the glory of the Council and of the Church—Bona-venture—was dead, and it only remains for us now to relate the manner of his death.

On the day after the fourth session, the Saint was attacked by severe illness, and he did not again appear at the Council. He soon came to understand the gravity of his state, but it did not disturb his mind. For a long time he had looked death in the face, with a calm and steadfast mind, for his years had been passed more in meditation on the sufferings of Christ, and the joys of Heaven, than in the things of earth. Like St. Bernard, in the midst of the most absorbing occupations he never lost sight of the Presence of God, and now he was reaping the fruit of these holy meditations. The days of his sickness were days of prayer and of sacred retreat,

days of repose, in which, in his solitude, he could leave his spirit free to rise to thoughts of Heaven.

“There,” he said, “we shall see Him Who is blessed in all ages, we shall love Him, we shall converse with Him, we shall praise Him during all eternity. There God will be the abundance of peace to our will, the crown of light to our reason, and eternal perseverance to our memory. He will be our all in all, when all error shall have been removed from our reason, all sorrow from our will, all fear from our memory, and when we shall possess that which we have hoped for: admirable serenity, divine gladness, eternal salvation. There we shall have a Brother whose sonship is most glorious, whose riches are infinite, whose charity is boundless, whose tenderness is ineffable; a Brother in all things like ourselves, but of inexhaustible kindness, wisdom, and goodness, a Spouse of incomparable beauty, of unspeakable sweetness, of immeasurable love. There we shall enter into the joy of our Master. I will rejoice and be full of gladness in my Lord. I will give Him thanks for His immense benefits to me. My lips shall be full of joy

when I sing His praises, and so will my soul, that He has so gloriously redeemed, at the price of Himself. Praise thou the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise thy God, O Sion! Let the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that lives, celebrate His praise. Henceforth let us sing Alleluia! in all the places of Jerusalem. Praise thou the Lord, O my soul! Yes, I will praise my God during my life, and I desire that all creatures, with me, shall praise Him."

But while the Saint thus made of his sick-bed, a sanctuary of supplication and praise, the whole city was filled with consternation and dismay. The Fathers of the Council trembled for fear of losing him, and the anxiety and sorrow of Pope Gregory knew no bounds.

There was a house of the Franciscan Order at Lyons, and many Religious of the Order had assembled there in consequence of the Council. Jerome d'Ascoli, their new Superior-General, had come there with the Greeks, and some of their missionary brothers had accompanied the Tartar embassy. There were also among the Bishops many who were children of St. Francis. All were now filled with anxiety and sorrow, for

in the holy Cardinal who now lay on his death-bed, they were to lose a Father whose tenderness they had experienced, and one who had been the faithful protector of their Order—its rampart and its shield. Therefore, it was only natural that his devoted children should be in deep affliction, while they prayed and besought the God of Heaven, to be propitious to their supplications.

But the sickness continued to increase, and soon the news spread that St. Bonaventure was near his end. Then the Pope announced that he would himself confer on the Saint the last consolations of religion. His Holiness had consecrated him as a Bishop, and he wished now to give him one last evidence of his paternal love. He, therefore, came in person to anoint him with the holy oil, and to encourage him in this last supreme crisis of a laborious life, which had been entirely consecrated to the glory of the Church. The condition of the sick man did not, unfortunately, permit of his receiving the Holy Viaticum. This caused him much affliction; but, being full of resignation and love, he patiently submitted to the will of God, only requesting that the Divine Host might be laid on his breast,

so that he might once more experience the ineffable emanations of divinity hidden in this august Sacrament. The great mercy of God, however, gave to His servant more than he had dared to hope for, for, by a miracle, the Saint was enabled to receive the Most Holy Eucharist, and he was thenceforth overwhelmed with joy. He burst into fervent thanksgiving, and praise, and tender sighs of love, which never ceased till his soul parted from his body, and went to continue in Heaven, the canticle of praise, which, in gratitude for the wonders of divine charity, it had begun on earth.

St. Bonaventure died on Sunday, 15th July, 1274, not having yet completed his fifty-third year. His funeral took place the same evening in the Church of the Franciscans. The Pope Gregory X., and all the Sacred College, were present at it, the five hundred Bishops of the Council, the Abbots and Prelates of every Order, and the entire city of Lyons, so that the Church could not contain the multitude who desired to gather round the coffin of the Saint. After the sacred chants were ended, the Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia, a friend of St. Bonaventure, ascended the

pulpit to pronounce the funeral oration. He took for his text these words : "I weep for you, Jonathan, my brother" (2 Kings i. 26). Love made him eloquent, as in this discourse, with a voice half stifled with emotion, he enlarged on the empire which the Saint had held over all hearts, the graces which God had lavished on him, the singular prerogatives with which He had enriched him, and the virtues with which He had adorned his soul. The assembled multitude responded to his words by their sobs, especially at the moment when—in fervent lamentation over the death of the Saint—he exclaimed that he knew no one in the Church of God who could be compared with him, or who could occupy his place.

On the day after the funeral, the fifth session of the Council was held, and after the business of the meeting had been concluded, Pope Gregory spoke of St. Bonaventure, and endeavoured to console his own grief by calling on the Bishops to share it. He spoke in touching accents of "this inestimable man, this faithful counsellor, this invaluable assistant," and added that though he believed him to be now

in possession of glory, he requested the Bishops and Priests who were present to say a Mass for the repose of his soul, and another for all those who should have died during the Council, or in coming to it. Among these was St. Thomas of Aquin, the other great light of the Church, whom the Pope desired now to reunite, in tender commemoration, to his illustrious friend. Alas ! Gregory X. himself, the great and holy Pontiff, was soon to join those whom he so loved and honoured, in the better life. He also was soon to leave the earth, and with him ended one of the grandest periods of the history of the Church—the age of St. Louis, of St. Bonaventure, and of St. Thomas of Aquin.

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