

SUCCISA VIRESKIT.

A STUDY OF THE BENEDICTINE HISTORY OF THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS.

II.

WE closed the first portion of our history of the movement for the restoration of the Benedictine Order after the calamities which had overtaken it during the social and political revolutions which marked the end of the eighteenth and the opening of the nineteenth century, by recounting the first steps taken in Bavaria to re-establish the ancient Abbey of Metten. Before we proceed with the subsequent history of that foundation, we must give some account of the establishment of the Abbey of St. Stephen at Augsburg, an abbey destined by its royal founder, King Louis, to be the head house of the Benedictine Order in his dominions.

By a royal decree of December 20th, 1834, the Black Monks were authorized to re-open their long-closed houses in the kingdom of Bavaria, and this with a view to their members being employed both in the religious instruction and education of youth, and in the labours of the pastoral office. Anxious to give effect to his decree, King Louis assigned to the monks certain conventual buildings in Augsburg, namely, the Church and adjoining house, which of old had belonged to the noble Canonesses of St. Austin. Here, then, was St. Stephen's Abbey to be established as the chief house of the monastic order in Bavaria; Metten, then springing into new life, was to be dependent on it; so likewise was to be the new Priory of Ottobeuren, which the same King Louis designed to establish amid the vast quadrangles of the suppressed abbey there. One of the former monks of Ottobeuren, Dr. Barnabas Huber, was selected for the first Abbot of St. Stephen's. Since the dispersion of his former brethren, Dr. Huber had resided with Prince Fugger of Babenhusen, and it was probably from this connection that his rare merits had become known to the King. The new abbot was blessed on Easter Monday, April 20th, 1835, in the Church of the Holy Cross, at Augsburg, by Albert de Riegg, bishop of that city.

As there were not many monks left in Bavaria, and those there were, were too advanced in years to undertake the important works which the royal founder wished to entrust to the religious of St. Stephen's, Abbot Huber had to seek abroad for the necessary supply of men; so, in company with the bishop, an ever-generous friend and patron of the monks, he set out on a round of visits to the chief Benedictine abbeys of Austria and Switzerland, and in due time returned home with a train of fifteen or twenty religious whom he had gathered around him in his travels. These formed the first Community of St. Stephen's, and, in course of time, when that house had grown strong enough to bear its own burdens, they returned to their several abbeys.

On the 5th of November, 1835, possession was taken of the renovated church and convent, and the ceremony of installing the abbot was honoured by the presence of bishop and chapter, of Prince Wallenstein, then minister of the kingdom, of the clergy of the city, and of all the great people of the neighbourhood. The monks immediately commenced their labours in the Royal Lyceum, the Catholic Gymnasium, and the Seminary, which had been committed to their management; and, under the present abbot, Dr. Raphael Mertl, they continue their useful work, and have under their charge in the two first of the above-named institutions, about five hundred boys and young men whom they instruct in the humanities and philosophy. The Royal Seminary of St. Joseph with its eighty pupils, and the college of nobles, are also directed by the monks. To certain members of the community of St. Stephen is entrusted the care of the Royal Observatory at Augsburg; in a different sphere, those who reside at the Priory of Ottobeuren have the care of an extensive parish, and an industrial school of sixty or seventy orphans whom the lay brothers instruct in various useful trades. While³ thus the monks of Augsburg carry out the noble aims of their founder in promoting learning by the instruction of the young in every class of life, their active charity when occasion calls for its manifestation is not less marked. Their energy and devotedness in the service of the wounded soldiers during the Franco-Prussian war was rewarded by the Government, who bestowed on the abbot the Cross of Merit, and created him a Knight of St. Michael of the highest grade.

In concluding our notice of this abbey, we may remark that the intentions of the founder as to its being the chief house of the Bavarian Benedictines have, for excellent reasons, doubtless,

never been carried into effect. The real centre of the monastic movement was the Abbey of Metten, which, as we shall see, soon became the founder of several other religious houses, and in course of time the chief house of the restored Bavarian Congregation; when that union was brought about, the monastery of St. Stephen at Augsburg still retained its original exemption.

Metten, as we said in our former paper, commenced its new life under the fostering care of the two old monks, Dr. Romanus Raith and Dr. Ildephonsus Nebauer. Little by little their work prospered. They were able in 1837 to open Latin schools in their monastery, so numerous had the convent grown; and the next year a colony of monks was sent to refound the venerable Abbey of Our Lady's Assumption at Scheyern in the diocese of Munich. There, on the spot consecrated by the disciples of St. William of Hirsau in 1119, the monks of Metten settled down. Again was the song of prayer and praise heard in the church seven times each day; once more were the cloister schools filled with the young to be instructed by the monks in all the learning of the age. A sad interest is attached to the memory of the last of the old line of abbots. When the suppression was decreed in 1803, and the monks forced to leave their sacred home, Abbot Martin refused to depart; and, after four years of a sad life spent amid the desolation of his once illustrious house, passed away, struck down, not so much by old age, as by grief at the destruction which had overtaken all that he held most dear.

The good work recommenced at Scheyern in 1838 still prospers. The members of the community, which includes eighteen priests, are engaged in parochial work in a parish containing two thousand four hundred souls, and, besides, have the care of the Archbishop of Munich's seminary, with its hundred pupils. The mother house at Metten was raised to the dignity of an abbey in 1840, the then prior, Dr. Gregory Scherr, being appointed the first abbot. He continued in this post till, in 1856, he was appointed to the archbishopric of Munich.

The establishment (in 1842) of the Priory and School of St. George at Weltenburg, a spot noted for its great natural beauty and fertility, and celebrated in ecclesiastical annals as the site of the most ancient religious house in Bavaria, was another mark of the prosperity of Metten and of King Louis's love for the monks of that house. Of the next event in its history, the opening of the Benedictine missions in the United States, we shall have more to say later on: for the present we will confine ourselves to

home affairs, and so must chronicle the enlargement of their schools, which took place in 1847. These, divided into upper and lower lines, contain at the present time nearly three hundred students, exclusive of the episcopal seminary attached to the abbey, which thus forms the third department of this extensive educational centre.

The piety and munificence of King Louis of Bavaria was not yet satisfied. He had been long engaged in the erection of the noble Basilica of St. Boniface at Munich, a church known to all the artistic world as containing some of the finest frescoes of modern execution. Everyone who has visited Munich, that metropolis of modern German art, must have seen St. Boniface's, a magnificent structure designed by Ziebland in imitation of the Basilica of St. Paul's at Rome, and decorated by Hess and his disciples with paintings illustrative of the life of the Apostle of Germany, and with copies of those traditional portraits of the popes which are so marked a feature in the interior of its Roman prototype. St. Boniface's Church and Monastery is a kingly monument of King Louis's devotion to his wife Queen Gertrude. On the 25th of October, 1835, the day of his "silver wedding," the King determined on the erection of this thank-offering, and his private purse supplied the ten hundred thousand florins which the noble pile of buildings is stated to have cost. The works went on for fifteen years, and it was not till the 24th of November, 1850, that Archbishop, afterwards Cardinal Reischach, consecrated the abbey-church. Dr. Paul Birker, of St. Stephen's, Augsburg, held the office of abbot for four years. His successor, Dr. Haneberg, was in 1872 made Bishop of Spire, but not before he had established a cell at Andech, as a dependency on his abbey, where a hundred poor boys are supported and instructed. Like the other monasteries of the Bavarian Benedictines, St. Boniface's labours at its twofold vocation. Two flourishing colleges and a parish of forty thousand Catholics afford ample scope for the ability and zeal of the community.

The priory of St. Denis at Scheftlarn, founded on the 18th of May, 1866, was in the commencement an offshoot of the Munich community. Its first superior was Dom. Benedict Zanetti, who after six years of rule at Scheftlarn was recalled to the mother house, over which he now most worthily presides.

The erection of the Bavarian Congregation, to which we have already once or twice alluded, was brought about in 1858 by the influence of Dr. Otto Lang, who had succeeded Dr. Scherr as

Abbot of Metten two years previously. By this act, one of the many benefits which the Order owes to the fatherly care of the late Pontiff, the crown was set on the good work commenced at Metten more than a quarter of a century before.

The restoration of the French Benedictines must now engage our attention. The unsettled condition of France subsequent to the Great Revolution prevented the establishment of any houses of religious men for several years, and death was gradually lessening the number of those monks whose profession had been made before the great catastrophe which deprived their Order of its ancient homes. Of one of the last of the Maurists, Dom. Martin Leveaux, whose name has already appeared in the pages of this Review, we may be allowed to say a few words. He was already a priest, and advanced in years, when persecution drove him and his brethren adrift on the world; but, more fortunate than his fellows, he found a new home among the monks of St. Gregory's during their stay at Acton Burnell. Among them he renewed his religious profession on the 22nd of August, 1798, and soon became of great service to his adopted community. As novice-master, and subsequently as professor of Philosophy and Divinity, and, finally, as sub-prior of St. Gregory's, Dom. Leveaux earned the esteem of all who knew him by "his learning, his zeal for monastic observance, and his personal asceticism." While at Acton Burnell, "he laboured from morning to night, and the fruits of his labours were apparent in huge piles of manuscript, which have unfortunately not been preserved."¹ After removing with the community to Downside, and celebrating in 1815 the jubilee of his religious profession, Dom. Leveaux resigned his office of sub-prior, and was allowed to return to France to assist in the restoration of the famous congregation of St. Maur. He was, in all likelihood, one of those devoted men who, in 1817,² endeavoured to revive at Solesme, near Le Mans, one at least of the many monasteries which had formerly flourished in France. On the failure of his praiseworthy enterprise, the saintly old man withdrew to Senlis, near Compiègne, where he lived, like a true hermit, on the alms of the faithful, and on Sundays attended the parish church in the capacity of sub-deacon.

This worthy monk, the disciple of Montfaucon, passed to his reward on the 3rd of June, 1828; but before his death there had arisen one who was destined in the counsels of God to bring to a

¹ "Dublin Review," January, 1869, p. 259.

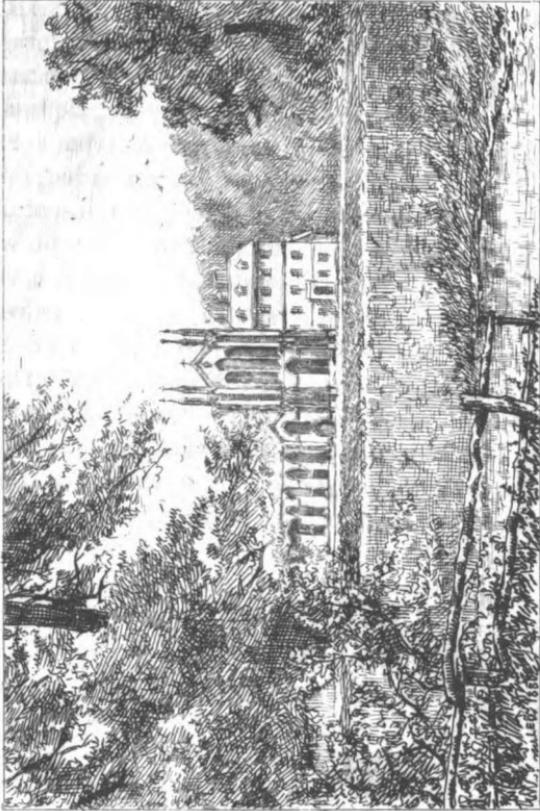
² "Album Benedictinum," p. 212.

successful termination the arduous work which Dom. Leveaux had had so much at heart. Prosper Louis Paschal Guéranger, to whom we are alluding, had on the very day of his ordination (October 7th, 1827) bent his steps to the ruins of the famous Abbey of Marmoutier, there to pour out his prayers to God and to offer his whole life and energy for the restoration of the Benedictine Order in his native country. As the career of Abbot Guéranger is not generally known in England, we will endeavour to supply some account of that illustrious man.

Dom. Prosper Louis Paschal Guéranger was born at Sablé on the 4th of April, 1805, and from his early childhood gave evident signs of a calling to a priestly life. His worthy parents placed him at Angers for his education; and what manner of child he proved to be is best told in the words of his constant friend, the late Bishop of Poitiers:—"What Sulpitius Severus wrote, in his life of St. Martin," he said, "seems as though it were a history of the youthful years of Dom Guéranger: 'It was wonderful how thoroughly he was intent on the divine service; his soul was ceaselessly thinking about monasteries or the Church, and he, whilst yet a boy, was planning what he afterwards so generously carried into effect.'" ¹ A love of the prayers of the Church was born with him; so, too, was an eagerness for anything that savoured of olden times. The little Prosper would sit for hours near the old men of those days, and would ask them question after question about bygone days. These cloisters, and church, and choir of Solesmes, he was never tired of visiting them, and his young fancy would people them with monks. What we read regarding a saintly propagator of the monastic life (St. Bernard of Tiron), who dwelt in a solitude of this part of the country during the latter half of the eleventh century, is also word for word what the schoolfellows of the abbot tell us about him. "Though anything but an enemy to cheerful recreation, he used to prefer serious occupation to games, and was a close student, especially in what regards sacred science, so far so, indeed, that his fellow-students (at Angers) playfully surnamed him 'the monk,'—a surname which was well merited by his exemplary conduct, his love for the ceremonies of holy Church, and his insatiable ardour for reading."

"Simultaneously with his course of classics successfully and

¹ "Funeral Oration of the Right Rev. Father Dom. Prosper Guéranger, Abbot of Solesmes," delivered by Monsignor Pie, Bishop of Poitiers, p. 5. Dublin: Duffy, 1875.



rapidly completed, he had read every book of the library of the college chaplain, and by his peculiar power of mental assimilation and excellent memory, he could tell you the contents of those books. They who were at college with him tell us, that when he had finished his course, he had given to himself by his own readings a far better education than the one he had received from his professors. The same was true of the years he spent at the seminary; in more senses than one, the student by his talents and his stock of information, surpassed his masters; and, even at that early period, the monk was visible in the seminarist." The first idea of Dom. Guéranger was to embrace the monastic life at Monte Cassino, but Claude de la Myre, the venerable Bishop of Le Mans, with whom he for some time resided, opposed his wish, and it was not till his earnestness and devotion had been proved by many trials in his own country, that he was allowed to proceed with some companions to Rome, and there with them after due probation, he was professed as a Benedictine monk on the 26th of July, 1837, at the Abbey of St. Paul beyond the walls. In a future number we hope to narrate the history of his wonderful success in re-establishing the Order in France; an enduring success, even though during the past month his numerous disciples have been driven from the monasteries of which he was the revered founder.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE MONASTERY AND COLLEGE OF ST. GREGORY THE GREAT.

CHAPTER I.

STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE.

To those who are watching at St. Gregory's the development of the good work on which the Community is engaged—the increase in the number of the students, the extending of its borders, and the gradual growing up of the new buildings and the magnificent church now in progress—it cannot be without interest to listen to something regarding the early origin of the College, and the history of those who had to sow in weeping the seeds, of which the harvest is now being gathered in with thankfulness and joy. Our Catholic colleges in England are now, thank God! great realities. They are flourishing, they are in full vigour, they have