

which, whether of to-day or of centuries back, may be taken up and read almost indifferently without finding any appreciable difference.

Of the interior aspect of the monastery, of its various institutions, and of so much of the daily life and occupation of the monks as fell under my notice, there remains still much for me to say. But I am compelled for the present to halt here, and to reserve my description for another chapter.

(To be concluded in our next.)

SUCCISA VIRESCIT.

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

VI.

*(Continued from page 364.)*¹

THE history of the American Benedictine Congregation may be said to date from the 16th of September, 1846, when Father Boniface Wimmer landed in New York. On the 24th of the following month he was put in possession² of the mission property of St. Vincent's in Pennsylvania, and there began to build up the flourishing monastic family which at the present day has spread into almost every state of the American Union. The little missionary party, which had received so cordial a welcome, consisted of one priest, Fr. Wimmer, one theological student, and three other youths who had accompanied him from Bavaria for the purpose of engaging in the monastic state in America, and fifteen craftsmen and labourers who had offered their services to the new Benedictine colony in the quality of lay brethren. If any one of the party had supposed that the establishment of a monastery in the half-cleared forests of Pennsylvania was likely

¹ By an error in our last number Fr. Michael Pembridge, O.S.B., was said to have been the author of a book entitled "The Whole Duty of Man," an anonymous work, concerning the authorship of which there has been considerable discussion. Fr. Pembridge's work was "The Whole Duty of a Christian."

² The formal transfer of the property, however, did not take place till the 15th of February, 1847.

to prove an easy task, he would have been quickly undeceived. The history of their early labours as it was made known to their fellow monks in Europe,¹ shows plainly enough that, like all great works undertaken for God, its foundations had to be laid in the cross. It was well for the generous young Bavarians who had left their homes to devote themselves as monks to the service of their fellow men in a strange land, that they did not expect to find in the backwoods of America those conveniences and comforts of civilization, to which they had been accustomed in their distant fatherland. Instead of the stately churches and ample cloisters of the German monasteries, they found a mission chapel of the simplest character, 84 feet by 50; a smaller building adjoining it destined by its builders for a school; and, to complete their accommodation, a log hut, more picturesque than useful. The mission house to which they were entitled served at that time as a residence for some sisters of mercy, so the monks were obliged to make the best of the schoolroom and log hut till a new abode could be provided for the nuns. St. Benedict in his rule requires that a monastery should be complete in itself, but it may be doubted whether he ever contemplated such completeness and compactness as was exhibited in the Sportsman Hall schoolhouse in the infancy of St. Vincent's. The said school contained a suite of two apartments: one of which served as kitchen, refectory and workshop for the lay brothers, the other as the sole dwelling of the superior and choir postulants and the English priest whom they had found in charge of St. Vincent's, and who, "worthy and unselfish man" as he was,² remained with the community to instruct them in the English tongue. Yet even this very limited accommodation seems to have surpassed the most sanguine expectations of the colonists.

Fr. Wimmer was not a man to lose any time, and accordingly on the very evening of their arrival at St. Vincent's, (October 24, 1846,) he gave the habit of St. Benedict to the postulants, choir and lay, whom he had brought with him, and resumed with them the monastic observance as practised in the mother abbey of St. Michael at Metten. All rose at a quarter to four a.m., and assembled in the chapel for matins, lauds and meditation. At six o'clock the morning Angelus called them together again for prime and conventual mass; breakfast and studies took up their time from seven till nine o'clock, when tierce and sext

¹ See the "Album Benedictinum," 1869, pp. 53-60.

² "Homini bono atque propriae utilitatis haud cupido," says the "Album."

were recited. Another spell of study for two hours, and a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament completed their morning's work. The afternoon was equally well filled up: from eleven a.m. to one p.m. was devoted to dinner, none, and recreation, and the evening studies from one to five were only broken by the chanting of vespers with such solemnity as their circumstances allowed, at three o'clock. An hour's spiritual reading or conference preceded the six o'clock supper, and after again assembling for recreation the day was brought to a close by the singing of compline at half-past seven.

While the choir novices were thus busy with their studies, the lay brothers were not idle. What with gardening, tree-felling, brick-making, and building, they were fully occupied, and under their zealous care the vast hideous barrack-like structure of St. Vincent's abbey began to grow into its present ugliness. For there was no time for the cultivation of architectural æstheticism, and, even if there had been the opportunity of doing so with any probability of success the necessary funds were not forthcoming, and accordingly the pioneers of American monasticism were content with the most uncompromisingly practical building which the brain of monk or layman had ever conceived. And in this preference of the useful to the ideal, they were doubtless not very unlike their forefathers who had civilized Europe; probably Croyland and Corby, Fulda and Iona were hardly more beautiful in the primitive beginnings than the rising abbeys of Northern America as revealed to us in the pages of the *Album Benedictinum*.

The various bands of workmen were reinforced in August, 1847, by sixteen new hands who accompanied Dom Peter Lechner, a monk of Schyren in Bavaria, to America for the purpose of receiving the habit at St. Vincent's; and though the presbytery had been vacated by the good nuns who had formerly occupied it, and who had been provided with a new residence two miles away, the accommodation was far from sufficient; and so, to the temporary detriment of farm and garden, all the lay brothers were turned into makers and layers of bricks and mortar, and were busy from St. Michael's day, 1847, till the middle of the following January in raising the walls and roofs of the monastery. What with the expenses thus incurred, and the high price of everything needful for the outer man, it was with no small difficulty that both ends were made to meet. Yet hard as was the labour of providing his numerous and rapidly increasing religious

family with food and clothing, Dom Boniface Wimmer was not unmindful of the more serious task which he had set himself to fulfil. The souls of men—not bricks and mortar—were his first care, and the crying spiritual needs of the thousands of German immigrants were not likely to make him forget or forego his purpose. He set to work almost single handed to train up in the studies and discipline of the religious state all who seemed called to that high vocation, and soon his monastery was filled with youths from all parts of Europe and America who came to put themselves under his guidance; and in this way the college of St. Vincent, which now reckons over three hundred students, began its career of usefulness.

With that practical prudence which distinguished him, Father Wimmer's aims were not confined to the single monastery of St. Vincent, but extended to the whole field of missionary and educational work which it had been from the first his desire to labour in. Thus, even from the beginning of his labours, he had devoted no small share of the alms forwarded to him from Germany to the purchase of land in various parts of America for the purpose of establishing centres of religious activity among the German immigrants. The greater number of these smaller foundations began as mere missions, and have gradually grown, some into regular priories with five or six priests and a few lay brothers; others into "exposituræ" or missions, where it seems probable that in course of time a further development of the Order will be possible. In many of the properties thus acquired, as well as at the mother house, farming operations on a large scale, and with all the scientific appliances of modern agriculture, have been undertaken—the labours of the lay brethren proving thus the main support of the whole family.

But before the present prosperous state of things was brought about the community had frequently to endure the pinch of actual want, and to depend on the charity of the faithful for the necessaries of life. So real was their distress, and their cause so deserving, that the Munich Ludwigs-Verein—if such be the original vernacular of the *Societas Ludovicena* of the Album—then under the presidency of Cardinal Reisach, came to their aid with an annual grant of 2,000 florins for twenty years. This munificence was supplemented by the generous gifts of the abbots of Metten and Schyren, and the Bishop of Linz, Dr. Gregory Ziegler, O.S.B.; but the chief benefactor of the new monastery was King Lewis of Bavaria, who in that same spirit of royal generosity which

had done so much for the Benedictines at home, gave their American brethren more than one noble proof of his sympathy and affection.¹

Not the least of his favours was the active part he took during his residence in Rome, in procuring the canonical erection of St. Vincent's monastery into an abbey, thus placing it on the normal footing of all the greater houses of the Benedictine Order. When Pius IX. granted this favour by his Apostolic Letters of August 24th, 1855, the little household which Fr. Wimmer had assembled together scarcely nine years previously had grown into a great people, and reckoned on its rolls thirty-four professed choir religious, twenty-three novices and scholastics, and over a hundred lay brothers. Some of the colonies which it sent forth were already in fair working order; thus the priory of St. Benedict at Carrolltown, eighty miles distant, counted its three priests and eleven lay brethren. A like number were settled in the priory of Our Lady, in the town of St. Mary's, one hundred and twenty-five miles away; and so in other places.

Such a remarkable development naturally called for a more perfect system of government and organization than had been required in the early days of the institution, and accordingly the same Pope Pius IX. formed the American monks into a separate congregation of the Order, and gave them a code of laws for their internal administration closely resembling the constitutions which had been granted to the Bavarian Benedictines by Innocent XI. in 1681. The abbot-founder, Fr. Boniface Wimmer, was, in the first instance, appointed President of the Congregation and abbot of St. Vincent's for a term of three years only; but, after the expiration of that period, he was confirmed in both offices for life at the unanimous² request of his spiritual children. At the present time St. Vincent's Abbey holds within its walls a community of 64 professed choir religious, a well-filled noviciate, nearly 80 lay brothers, 126 postulants for the habit, and a school of 300 boys;³ and, scattered among the numerous priories

¹ Thus, in 1857, he presented Abbot Wimmer with 4,000 florins. A few years later he devoted a sum of 3,200 florins towards the establishment of the Benedictine nuns in America, and gave besides an annual grant of 1,200 florins for the support of St. Vincent's Abbey.

² Or, to be strictly accurate, "Suffragiis sex et quadraginta ex duo de quinquaginta," as the oft-quoted *Album* has it.

³ By an Act of Legislature, of April 28th, 1870, St. Vincent's Abbey was incorporated, with power to confer degrees.

and missions¹ which the abbey has founded and governs, the remaining 65 priests and 30 or 40 lay brothers who have been professed at St. Vincent's carry on the work of the apostolate² and of labour and of education which the children of St. Benedict have ever been engaged upon.

The two other abbeys of the American Congregation were both commenced in 1856. As the history of their development bears so close a resemblance to that of their mother house we need not say much about it. The first of these houses, the Abbey of St. Lewis of the Lake, in Minnesota, or, as it is now more commonly called St. John's, was founded in the middle of the year 1856, and owed its erection to the generosity of King Ludwig of Bavaria. Dr. Cretin, first bishop of St. Paul's in Minnesota, begged for some of the monks of St. Vincent's to establish a house of this Order in his vast diocese. Fr. Demetrius, once better known by his Tyrolese title of Count of Marogna, was put at the head of the little band of four—two clerics and two lay brothers—which was sent forth at the bishop's request. In ten years' time the monastery was erected into an abbey—Fr. Rupert Seidenbusch, prior of St. Vincent's, being appointed its first abbot. On his elevation to the episcopacy as vicar-apostolic of Northern Minnesota, in 1875, the present abbot, D. Alexius Edelbrock, succeeded. The monastery has grown considerably of late years. Since the 5th of March, 1869, it has been empowered by the legislature to confer all university degrees; similar powers of conferring the doctorate have been granted by the Holy See; the students of the abbey number over one hundred; the professed monks are half that number; and the missionary labours of the fathers are being rapidly extended among the native tribes which "civilization" has not yet succeeded in extirpating.

The Abbey of St. Benedict, in Atchison City, Kansas, founded in the same year as St. Lewis of the Lake, was only erected into an abbey in 1876. Under the priorship of D. Lewis Fink, now bishop of Leavenworth, and successive superiors, it had gradually been firmly established, and at the present time counts almost thirty members, and a school of eighty boys.³

¹ See the Appendix at the end of this paper.

² Considerably over 300 priests, Benedictine and secular, had already been educated at St. Vincent's in the first thirty-three years of its existence.

³ This abbey enjoys the distinction of possessing the finest Benedictine church in America—a handsome structure in the style common in the Rhenish churches of the 10th and 11th centuries. At St. John's Abbey a new church in the same style has lately been begun.

The only other foundations of this congregation which call for special mention are the Irish Priory of St. Malachy, in Creston, Iowa, which has recently been started (1879), the College of St. Elizabeth in Rome, and the Industrial and Agricultural School lately established in Skidaway Island, in Georgia, for the education of poor negro children.

A few words about the Benedictine nuns in North America will fittingly conclude this notice of the progress of St. Benedict's children in the United States. Later on, perhaps, we may return to America to relate the introduction of other congregations of Benedictines into the same part of the world.

Feeling the want of suitable instruction for the numerous children thrown upon his care by the growing missionary works of the Order, the worthy founder of St. Vincent's requested the nuns of the Benedictine monastery of St. Walburga at Eichstadt to come to his assistance. The three who were sent settled at St. Mary's, Elk County, in Pennsylvania, in 1852, and are now represented by fifteen greater and thirty-five smaller communities in various parts of these States, containing a total of about 500 nuns. Besides their ordinary choir duty as Benedictines, they are chiefly engaged in the education of children, and have under their charge fifteen boarding schools for the upper classes, and forty-eight elementary schools for the children of the poor.

APPENDIX.

THE AMERICAN BENEDICTINE CONGREGATION.

I.—THE ABBEY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL IN PENNSYLVANIA, founded A.D. 1846, has under it the following Priors and Missions:—

PRIORIES.

1.	St. Benedict's Priory, Carrolltown, Pennsylvania.....	Founded	1849
2.	St. Mary's " St. Mary's, Elk Co., " 	"	1850
3.	St. Mary's " Newark, New Jersey	"	1857
4.	St. Joseph's " Covington, Kentucky	"	1857
5.	St. Mary's " Erie, Pennsylvania	"	1859
6.	St. Joseph's " Chicago, Illinois	"	1860
7.	St. Mary's " Richmond, Virginia	"	1860
8.	St. Mary's " Allegheny City, Pennsylvania...	"	1870

MISSIONS.

	Founded
1. St. Joseph's, - - - Johnstown, Pennsylvania.....	1854
2. The Blessed Sacrament, - Greensburgh, ,,	1854
3. St. Henry's, - - - Elizabeth City, New Jersey.....	1863
4. St. Benedict's, - - - Newark, ,,	1864
5. The Sacred Heart of Jesus, Wilmington, Delaware	1873
6. All Saints', - - - Baltimore, Maryland.....	1874
7. The Sacred Heart of Mary, Washington Heights, Illinois	1874
8. The Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Mary's, Pennsylvania	1875
9. St. Wenceslaus, - - - Allegheny City, ,,	1875
10. Our Lady of Help, - - - Gaston County, North Carolina	1876
11. St. Michael's, - - - St. Florian, Alabama	1876
12. St. Benedict's, - - - Skidaway Island, Georgia	1877
13. St. Wenceslaus, - - - Omaha City, Nebraska.....	1877
14. The Visitation, - - - Huntsville, Alabama.....	1877
15. The Sacred Heart of Mary, Tuscombua, ,,	1877
16. St. Peter's, - - - Covington, Louisiana.....	1877
17. St. Mary's, - - - Crown Point, Indiana	1878

II.—THE ABBEY OF ST. LEWIS OF THE LAKE (now commonly called St. JOHN's), founded A.D. 1856, in Stearne's County, Minnesota, has under it the following Priors and Missions:—

PRIORIES.

	Founded
1. The Assumption, - - - St. Paul's, Minnesota	1870
2. St. Gabriel, - - - Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin	1877
3. The Immaculate Conception, - St. Cloud, Minnesota	1856

MISSIONS.

	Founded
1. St. Joseph's, - - - Stearne's County, Minnesota.....	1857
2. SS. Peter and Paul, - - - Richmond, ,,	1857
3. St. Mary's, - - - New Munich, ,,	1858
4. Our Lady, Help of Christians, St. Augusta, ,,	—
5. St. Martin's, - - - Stearne's County, ,,	—
6. St. John's, - - - Mayer's Grove, ,,	—
7. St. Joseph's, - - - Minneapolis, ,,	—
8. St. Boniface, - - - East Minneapolis, ,,	—
9. St. Boniface, - - - Hastings, ,,	—
10. St. Martin's, - - - St. Wendel, ,,	—
11. Our Holy Redeemer, - - - White Earth, ,,	1878
12. St. James', - - - Cold Spring, ,,	—

III.—ST. BENEDICT'S ABBEY, ATCHISON CITY, KANSAS, founded A.D. 1856, has under it the following:—

MISSIONS.

	Founded
1. St. Benedict's, - - - Doniphan County, Kansas	1856
2. SS. Peter and Paul, - - - Seneca, ,,	1857
3. St. Benedict's, - - - Nebraska City, Nebraska.....	1857

IV.—ST. MICHAEL'S PRIORY, CRESTON, IOWA, founded A.D. 1871, has the care of ten Missionary Stations in the neighbourhood.