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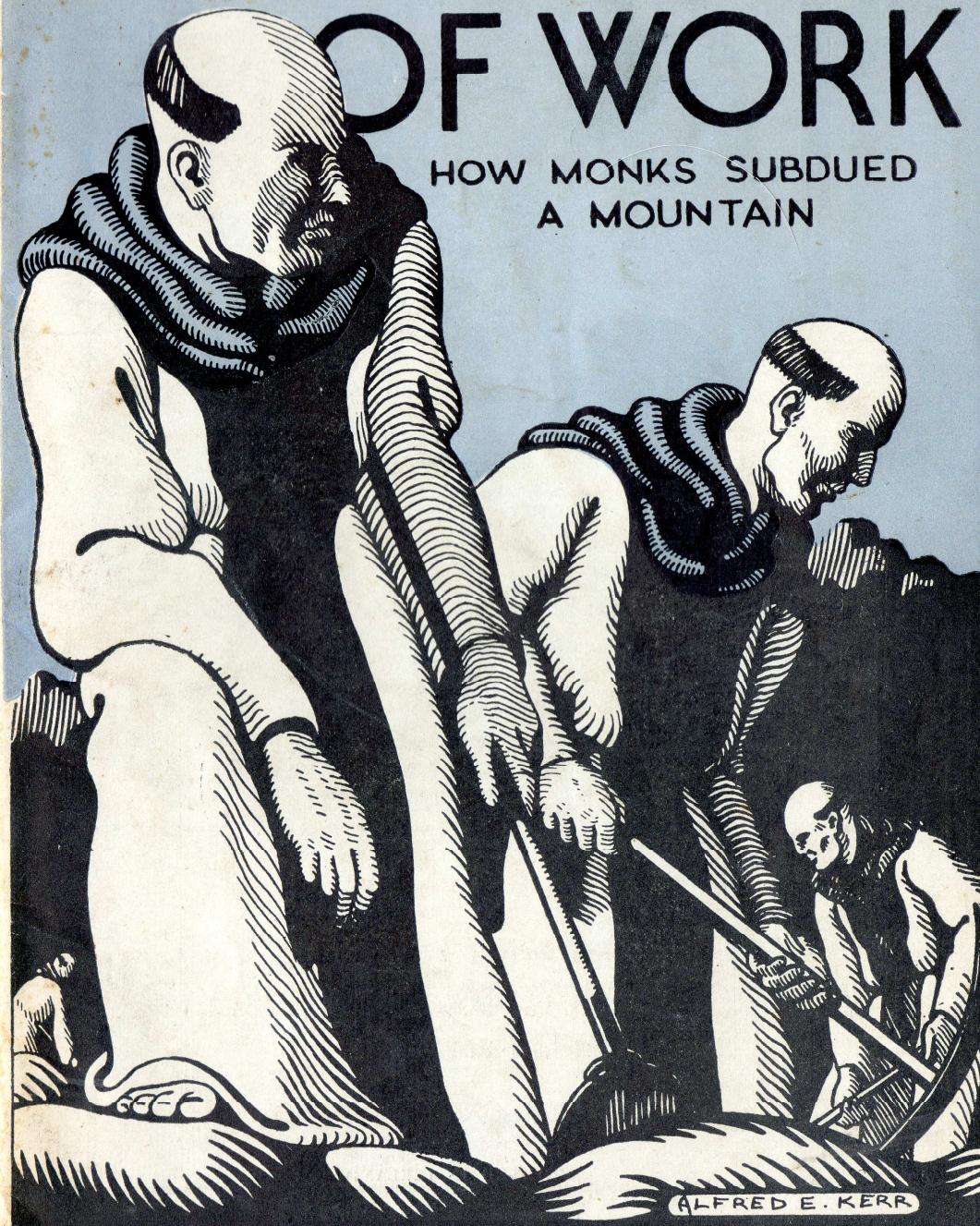
THE CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY OF IRELAND

VERITAS HOUSE,

7 & 8 Lower Abbey Street, Dublin.

A MIRACLE OF WORK

HOW MONKS SUBDUED
A MOUNTAIN



A MIRACLE OF WORK AND PRAYER

[How Monks Subdued a Mountain to Tillage and
Pasture]

THE WHITE STONE

ON a day in the spring of 1832 Father Vincent Ryan, a Cistercian prior, and Sir Richard Keane rode up the pine-scented road from Cappoquin till they reached a stretch of land on the southern slopes of the Knockmealdown mountains about three miles from the town. It was a bleak and barren stretch, covered with heather, furze and rushes, without road or wall or house except one—the dilapidated hut of a herd. Its name was Scrahan, i.e., “the coarse land.”

Of this place, as well as of much more, Sir Richard was landlord, and he was now offering it on reasonable terms to the prior, as the site of a monastery for the seventy Cistercian monks, mostly Irish, who had been lately expelled from France, and who were at present temporarily in Rathmore, Co. Kerry.

To an ordinary person it would not have appeared a suitable site, wild and desolate as it was. But some place had to be got, and this one was no worse than the forest of Citeaux which had been the cradle of the Cistercian order more than seven centuries before. Besides, the Cistercian monk loves solitude, silence, labour, in which to devote his life to God, and here, certainly, were these three requisites. So the terms were agreed to, and the spot where the monastery was to be built marked, appropriately enough, by a white stone. For there lime-white walls were to rise, and white-robed monks, heirs to the glories of Mellifont, Jerpoint, and Holy Cross, to labour and pray.



WHO THEY WERE

The monks who arrived in Ireland from France bore an ancient and storied name, a name which they owed to the marshy forest of Citeaux (Cistercium) in France, to where in the year 1098 the first group of Cistercians, then Benedictine monks, retired with a determination of restoring the original rigour, gravity and simplicity of St. Benedict's rule. And there, shortly afterwards, the young order was in danger of extinction for want of postulants till the young nobleman, Bernard of Fontaines, with about thirty others appeared at its gates and filled its cloisters. From that on the order developed rapidly; many new monasteries were founded, among them St. Bernard's own monastery of Clairvaux.

It was at Clairvaux that our own St. Malachy called in on his way to Rome and was so moved by the saintly lives of the monks that his first petition to the pope was permission to enter and remain there. This, however, was not granted. So Malachy determined to bring Clairvaux into Ireland and left four companions, priests and clerics of his own diocese, to be trained up in the Cistercian observance under St. Bernard, between whom and the Irish bishop a wonderful friendship had sprung up. After a few years the four Irish monks, with French companions, returned to Ireland and founded the first Irish Cistercian monastery which was called Mellifont ("Honey Fountain"), about five miles from Drogheda. It was built after the model of Clairvaux. Before Malachy's death, Mellifont itself had sent forth three offshoots—Newry, Bective and Boyle; and before long Ireland was dotted with Cistercian monasteries, each of which was school, dispensary, hospital and alms-house in its district, and to all of which the country was indebted for many things—agricultural training, education, architecture, culture—and the example of holy lives. The Dissolution put an end to all this. In 1539, soldiers and Kings Commissioners marched into Mellifont and its hundred and fifty white-robed monks with

fifty lay brothers and dependants were turned out. On the Eve of the Blessed Virgin's Assumption, 1585, forty monks and their abbot were beheaded at Mainister, near Limerick. There were similar martyrdoms at Craigue-namanagh, Co. Kilkenny, St. Mary's, Dublin, and other places.

Meanwhile the order had spread rapidly in Europe. One of the new monasteries was Melleray, in Brittany. The year Melleray was founded, 1134, was about the beginning of the whole order's Golden Age which lasted to 1342, or thereabouts, when, owing to various causes, relaxation set in, and passing over the vicissitudes of the order's history from that on—persecution, division into branches, various reforms including the one in 1634 by Abbot de Rancé in La Trappe—we come to the year 1790 when Melleray was suppressed as a result of the French Revolution. After some interesting wanderings a monastery was founded in Ludworth, Dorsetshire, England. But this was later abandoned, and the monks again took possession of Melleray in 1817. Not long after this there was another outburst of revolutionary fury, and Melleray was again suppressed in 1831. The Irish and English monks were put on board a warship which the English Consul at Nantes had demanded for them, and sent to Ireland where, in Rathmore, Co. Kerry, Fr. Vincent Ryan had made whatever temporary provisions he could for them. Thus it was that sixty-four Cistercian or Trappist monks, nearly all Irish, arrived at Cobh on the battleship Hebe, December the first, 1831. In Ireland they were to continue the traditions of Melleray and to revive those of Mellifont.

BETHLEHEM

On May 30th of the same year, Fr. Vincent Ryan again climbed up the mountain slope, this time on foot, and in heavy rain. When he reached the herd's cottage, he unlocked the door, saying aloud, "In nomine Domini," entered, and sat down to take stock of his surroundings. He was extremely poor, and in delicate

health, yet on his shoulders was the chief responsibility of building in this place a monastery for about seventy brethren. He trusted entirely in God, and that same day a token of God's provident care came in the form of a cheque for £100 from the Duke of Devonshire. This was at once expended in the erection of some necessary out-offices and a temporary wooden chapel. On the next day he said Mass at an improvised altar, attended by several of the neighbours; and he announced that the cottage should be known for the future as Bethlehem, and Scrahan as Mount Melleray, after the Monastery from which they had been expelled in France.

The brothers transferred from Rathmore came in batches until there were, altogether, twenty-one at Bethlehem. To accommodate them a loft was put up in a stable that was near the hut, but even then they were congested, suffering in summer from the heat and unwholesome air, and in winter from the cold, rain and snow; those in the stable were often drenched in their straw pallets, while the water, rising up from underneath in the cottage, inundated the little flock there.

Their food at this time consisted of potatoes and sour milk, which they took twice in the day. Sometimes, however, a little sweet milk and butter came to them from a friend, and occasionally they had a little bread. Yet, despite extreme hardships, their rule was cheerfully attended to from the getting up at 1 or 2 in the morning, through the long hours of watching, prayer and labour, till they went to bed, dressed as they were, at 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening, according to the season. As they wore at this time the ordinary dress of the secular clergy—the penal laws forbade the wearing of the religious habit—even their rest in it cannot have been very comfortable.

HOSTINGS ON THE HILLSIDE

The first great task they had to face was the erection of fences around their land, about a square mile in area.

Rumour of their great labour had spread, and, after some time, stirred up great sympathy and enthusiasm among the people. This resulted in a series of expeditions to their aid from the parishes around. The men of Modeligo were the first to come. On Sunday, July 16, their curate, Fr. Queally, spoke to them about the monks; so early on the following morning, 400 of them, equipped with spades, set out, four abreast, for the Mount, headed by a band. They joined the brothers at the fences and worked steadily during the day, directed and encouraged by their priest. That night they went home in triumph.

An example had now been given and a noble rivalry was stirred up. On July 24 came 800 of the men of Cappoquin, and, a week later, Fr. Queally of Modeligo equalled this number and soon afterwards actually led 1,000 men to the work. But Cappoquin, nearest neighbour to the monastery, was not to be surpassed; so early in August came from it a procession of 1,500 men, 200 women, and as many children as could help, with bands playing and banners flying, led by a cross made for the occasion by Master Leopold Keane and decorated by his mother, and followed up by carts of provisions. They were joined at the work by 300 more from the Western side of the same parish.

Fr. Power of Lismore led 200 men to the Mount on August 20, and soon afterwards that number was doubled by the same parish. 250 of the Knockenore men came on one occasion, 270 on a second, and 1,000 on a third. Newcastle on the Suir twice sent large contingents over the mountain.

From Clasmore, twelve miles away, men came three times, never arriving later than 6 a.m. From Ballynoe, fifteen miles away, came 150 men, who were commencing work at four o'clock in the morning. The last band, numbering 1,000, came from Tullow towards the end of September. Smaller numbers came from various other places, so that in all, about 10,000 had the privilege of assisting to found a great monastery.

THE PREPARATORY HOUSE

Late in the summer of 1832, work was begun on the building of a more commodious dwelling-house. Mud cement was used as there was no lime; and the brothers were helped by the masons of Lismore and Cappoquin, who were content with the prayers of the community for remuneration. All the expenses were met by money collected by Fr. Norbert Woolfrey in England. In its final shape it was 120 feet long, by sixteen in breadth, and it stood near the spot marked for the new monastery, to which it was a preparatory house.

When it was roofed and slated some of the brethren asked permission to transfer their beds to it, scarcely dried as it yet was; which, after some hesitation by their anxious superior, was granted. So, after the celebration of solemn High Mass and the singing of all the canonical office there on November 19, some of them took up their abode in it. They were joined early in the following year by the others, and Bethlehem was then abandoned.

Around this preparatory house a high enclosure was next erected, and near it a small lodge for the entertainment of strangers. The wall is now the only surviving part of the original buildings, as the preparatory house was later pulled down to make way for a more imposing building, and the lodge replaced by the present more substantial one.

WORK ON THE LAND

To establish a self-supporting monastery in the shadow of the mountains, the barren land had to be reclaimed and cultivated. This was no easy task. At first the monks tried to use the plough, but, on account of the huge boulders, it was more of a hindrance than a help. So they had to resort to the more primitive method of crowbar and spade. The ground was loosened by the crow, the stones thrown up on the surface to be carted away later, while the peat and heather were buried under a thick layer of red clay. After a few months'

hard work, about twenty-five acres were thus prepared for cultivation.

In the Spring of 1833 they began to cultivate this land. Potatoes and grain crops were planted; an extensive vegetable garden was laid out to the East of the residence; and, for shelter, about 17,000 young trees, mostly pine and larch, were planted around and across the farm. A lime-kiln was also built, and long afterwards used; but a new brick-kiln was unsuccessful on account of the insufficiently baked condition of the products.

The results on the land were found by 1837 to be incommensurate to the great toil expended on it. For though the brothers, coming with their flocks and herds from Rathmore in that year, saw with joy the fences, the young groves, and the extensive piece of land under cultivation, yet, so bleak was it still that all their sheep died next winter. Even for the cows which they brought it was very difficult to provide fodder.

But skill and perseverance at length bore fruit. More land was cultivated, the products growing better in quality and quantity. Cattle thrived and multiplied; the groves grew higher, and, to the joy of the monks, when sheep were again introduced, they lived on. Many sounds were now heard on the hillside that were strange to it before, the chanting of monks and the minstrelry of birds in the new grove, the lowing of cattle, bleating of sheep and sounds of human labour in the fields. And soon there was to be the cheering of school-boys on its lawns. The influence of the monks' example was felt all over the country, especially in their own neighbourhood, where the small farmers endeavoured to improve their little holdings and to reclaim plots of heathery waste.

At the present day, as a result of years of patient labour, the farm and farm-yard at Mount Melleray are models of perfection in many respects, and among the finest in Ireland. An extensive portion of the land is cultivated with the help of up-to-date machinery, and

in the newly-constructed farm-yard are splendid ranges of cow, and horse, stables. The monks have now their own dairy as well as their own bake-house; and a pond, constructed for the purpose to the north of the monastery, works the machinery in the farm-yard as well as the electricity power-house.

ABBAY AND ABBOT

The work on the land gave the monks an abundance of stones; sand was available in a stream south of the farm; and in the community itself were several good masons and carpenters. So it was decided to go ahead with the building of the monastery itself, and the 20th of August, Feast of St. Bernard (1833), was fixed upon for the laying of the first stone. The honour of laying it was conferred on Sir Richard Keane, their good-natured, Protestant landlord.

On the appointed day, in the presence of about 20,000 people, including some thirty priests, the Bishop of Waterford blessed the stone and the whole site of the proposed building. The stone, with a relic of the True Cross underneath it, was placed in position by Sir Richard. It was on this day that the monks wore their own white and brown habits for the first time in Mount Melleray.

The building was now begun by three brother-masons under the supervision of a skilful architect, Nicholas Murphy of Wexford, who afterwards joined the community as a lay-brother. (He died on the ocean going to assist in the American foundation.) Progress was slow at first, but later on, when a little more money came in from his collectors, Fr. Vincent was enabled to engage three secular masons, and to buy a plentiful supply of building materials. At the same time the monks were reduced to extreme poverty, subsisting on a little coarse food, and with threadbare habits in bitter cold. "Yet," Fr. Vincent himself wrote, "everything went forward: the walls rose higher day by day, the heather and rushes and gorse were daily yielding ground to the conquering

crowbar and spade, and, best of all, the community were making steady progress in the ways of the spirit. The most exact regularity was maintained. All was peace, order and charity."

The buildings were planned in the traditional square, with the church to the south; guest-house on the west; chapter-house, library, and sacristy on the east; and on the north, the dormitory, refectory, etc. As was natural enough in the circumstances, there was little ornamentation and no distinct architectural style, except for the square Gothic tower and lancet windows. When the monastery was almost completed, the monks decided that the time was come to petition the Pope to elevate Mount Melleray to the dignity of an abbey, with Father Vincent, canonically elected, as its first Abbot, which petition, after the preliminary enquiry and consideration, was fully granted. Mount Melleray was placed, as regards rights and privileges, on a level with Cistercian Abbeys elsewhere, and some local modifications of the Trappist observance were sanctioned.

The Abbot-General of the Cistercian Order was next communicated with about the Solemn Blessing of the Abbot-elect. This venerable Superior sent two letters. One, full of tender sympathy, congratulation and encouragement, was for the community. The other was for the Abbot-elect, conferring on him "all the privileges and honours, powers and prerogatives, possessed by other Abbots of the Order, as well as the plenitude of abbatial jurisdiction"; and it delegated the Bishop of Waterford and Lismore, Dr. Abraham, to perform the solemn ceremony of the Benediction. The 14th of May, feast of St. Carthage, was fixed upon for the ceremony in Waterford Cathedral.

As it was the first ceremony of its kind in Ireland since the dissolution of the monasteries, it was expected to arouse great interest. No expense was spared in the preparations for its public performance in Waterford Cathedral with fitting pomp. The monks actually went into debt for this purpose: it was hoped that there would

be generous contributions from those present after the function itself. But all these hopes were doomed to disappointment. The enemies of religion, it was found, were on the watch for an excuse for an anti-Catholic outburst, and such a public ceremony would suit them well. So it was decided, at the last moment, that the ceremony should be performed privately in the Bishop's own chapel, with only a few present. And so it was performed on the appointed day. Monasticism was thus restored, as if by stealth, to Ireland.

A BEAUTIFUL GARDEN

During all the tremendous labour of thus founding a monastery, the most perfect order and regularity prevailed. The more destitute they were, the blacker the outlook, the more necessary it was, according to Father Vincent, to appeal to God, begging their daily bread of Him, placing in Him all their trust. The place was indeed a nursery of saints, justifying Father Vincent's comparison of it to "a beautiful garden in which sweet-smelling flowers of every variety flourish in the highest perfection," and other words of his: "notwithstanding the many hardships and privations which met the religious at every step, no impatience, no discontent was ever manifested by any individual. Resignation to the Divine Will kept them calm and steady in their painful course. The most profound silence was observed, broken only by the singing of the Divine praises and the varied sounds of human labour."

There were many postulants at this time, at Rathmore as well as Mount Melleray, young and strong men, qualified in every way to succeed in the world. They choose stark self-denial and precarious existence in one or other of the two places, and, apparently, found that peace and happiness which Dr. Ullathorne perceived to be reflected in the chanting at Mount Melleray: "The sweet accents, with solemn pauses of silence, of that never-tiring rise and fall, under which the ever-varying sense of the psalmody advanced, seemed to express the

acquisition of an unchangeable peace and patience of soul; whilst the whole of the changeable movement was interior and contemplative. It seemed to realise the sentence of St. Augustine: 'Join thyself to eternity and thou shalt find rest.'"

Naturally enough the holiness of the place, the humble and mortified lives of the monks, and their peace, had a profound influence on visitors. Even among the Religious Orders of Ireland the foundation of Mount Melleray was described by a Superior of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate as "a fresh impetus to fervour and regularity."

ROOFING AND FURNITURE

When the masonry of the monastery was completed—thanks mainly to the pennies of the Irish poor—means had to be found to roof it. With childlike simplicity Abbot Vincent wrote an order for material to Mr. Keating of Dungarvan, stating frankly that he had neither money nor any sure prospect of it, but that according as Providence would enable him, he would pay. With a generosity equal to this simplicity, that noble Catholic gentleman accepted the security, and the material was sent. Not only that, but happening to hear of the straits in which the monks were endeavouring to pay him, Mr. Keating, touched with compassion, sent a receipt for the balance of what was due—a sum of £900.

The monastery was thus roofed and slated in 1836. A tower of brick and stones was built, and a steeple of planks, sheeted with copper. A gift from a wealthy French gentleman who entered the community enabled the Abbot to proceed with work on the interior. The brothers arriving in 1837 from Rathmore further helped it on, and it was hoped that the church would be ready for dedication before the beginning of August, 1838, when the people would be at leisure to attend the ceremony, and when, too, the great O'Connell was to come on a week's retreat to the monastery.

However, this proved impossible. O'Connell came and went, a little earlier, indeed, than he had at first

arranged, but it was not till October that the church was sufficiently ready to allow of the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries. On the afternoon of October 21, the Blessed Sacrament was brought in procession, with joyous psalms, and after Solemn Benediction, placed in triumph in the tabernacle of a temporary altar. This, indeed, was a triumph for the worn-out monks in their new stalls. On the following day the Abbot celebrated a Pontifical High Mass of thanksgiving, intoning a *Te Deum* which was chanted alternately by the two choirs, after the Communion.

THE UNEXHAUSTED BIN

The year 1839 was one of great distress in Ireland. The crops were bad, large numbers unemployed, and, around the monastery the small farmers, having to part with their little holdings, were reduced to a state of beggary.

The Abbot was sorely grieved to see the condition of the people who had helped him so generously. And although the blight had worked havoc on the monastery farm, the monks being destitute, yet, trusting in Divine Providence, he took a large number of the neighbouring peasants into his employment, sending them to help the community within and without the monastery. As a mark of Divine pleasure it was at this very time that contributions to the monastery abounded, so that not only was he able to buy the necessary building materials, but he was also able to pay his workers a reasonable wage.

After the Easter of that year the Abbot had to make the canonical visitation of Mount St. Bernard, the English monastery. Before going he purchased a supply of meal and potatoes which he left, together with whatever little money he had, with the Prior, ordering him that as long as a morsel remained, no poor person was to be sent away hungry.

From the beginning of the year a few mendicants used to come to the gate. But from April onwards the num-

ber increased so that an average of from seventy to eighty men, women and children, even from distant places, were daily relieved. And they got clothing as well as food, when needed. One poor person, so ill from hunger that he could not take coarse food, was taken into the monastery and tenderly nursed back to health.

After three months the Abbot returned with a substantial sum of money, the result of an appeal in Dublin. He immediately enquired about the store of provisions and marvelled to learn that what should, in the circumstances, have been consumed in one month was not only not used, but was apparently not lessened at all. And his own eyes soon confirmed what he was told. For although the crowds increased at the gate there was no reduction in the quantity of the supplies. The bin in which the meal was kept on this occasion is still preserved in the monastery.

THE SCHOOLS

When the other monastic buildings were completed, the Abbot turned his attention to the education of the neighbouring children. There used to be a hedge-school in the district, and for the past few years, a Mr. and Mrs. Kenny had set up a free school in the abbey lands. But the accommodation in this was not very great: besides, boys and girls were taught together. To remedy this, the Abbot caused one of the out-offices in the farmyard to be converted into a school-room for boys in the summer of 1843, placing it under the charge of Father Clement Smythe, with Brother Xavier Melville for his assistant.

The numbers increased in this after some time, especially when Latin and Greek were taught to the more able pupils. Additional accommodation had to be found, and it was decided to build a new school (on the site of the present Exhibition Hall) the first stone of which was laid on June 19, 1845. When it was completed, it was divided by a high partition into two sections, one for primary scholars, the other for those

studying the classics. Latin and Greek were here very thoroughly studied, though the other secular subjects, mathematics and modern languages included, were rather neglected.

Boys who came from distant parts to the classical school were boarded and lodged in neighbouring farm-houses selected by the president, Father Clement. As far as possible the seniors and juniors were lodged apart, and rules were drawn up for their conduct out of school. To 8.30 Mass those little heroes came every morning, wet or dry, over the pathless mountain; after that they went to class for the day in a schoolroom that was not at all free from draughts and cold. To cope with increasing numbers the staff was increased, and the curriculum was also extended to embrace elocution and vocal music. The building itself was extended towards the east in 1854 until it was about double its original length.

In or about 1862 a day-school was erected for the little mountain boys about 100 yards to the east of the classical school. It was and is a beautiful little school and, when Lady Gilbert wrote the following lines, it must have been the ideal of a rural school: "Into this school they walk every morning, up a path between blooming flower-beds, the schoolhouse being situated in a garden, with the exquisite neatness of which not one of the pupils would dream of interfering. It (the school) is more like a combined greenhouse and aviary than the ordinary dull apartment of desks and forms. Brother Augustine has accustomed his children to live with and to love Nature, and it is his proud boast that not one of his wild little mountaineers would rob a bird's nest or harm the petal of a flower. As they write and spell, the birds that live in the room hop about their feet or fly from cage or perch to alight on their teacher's shoulders, and the good children are rewarded by a special permission to be feeders of the pets for the day." (In 1932 this primary school was made subject to the National Board.)

In 1867 was begun the erection of houses of residence for the boys. They were built under the direction of Fr. Ignatius, according as the money came in, one after another, rather irregular in appearance, and certainly not in the best possible site. Students now came into residence, paying an annual pension of £26, a moderate sum, as the monks were now able to provide, with no great expense, the necessaries from their own dairy, bake-house, and farm. The students were thus placed in comfort and a home-like atmosphere, where more regular discipline was possible.

The curriculum was extended, too, and the prestige of the seminary grew. Students were gladly adopted as subjects by bishops in the English-speaking countries, and they sat for the entrance examinations of the Catholic University and All-Hallows. On one occasion there were no fewer than seventy Melleray candidates for the Logic class of the latter college.

Under Abbot Carthage the classical school was renovated and enlarged. The roof was taken down, the walls raised to a height of forty feet, and a second storey added. It was also extended in length. All the new or renovated classrooms were large, well-lighted, well-ventilated and equipped, and heated with hot-water pipes. The Exhibition Hall was refurnished, and a new science hall erected.

When the practically new school was opened in September, 1902, it was a beautiful sight with the brightly coloured mountains at its back, and, in front, beyond its evergreens and flashing fountain, the wide, patch-work plain that stretches to the Blackwater. The staff was increased, two priests of the community took charge of the discipline as resident deans, and the students from this on had to sit for the Intermediate and University Examinations.

At present not only have the boys their own comfortable school and residence, with all their facilities for study, but they have also a fine chapel of their own. The stones for this were brought from the military

chapel of Fermoy; its foundation was laid on June 16, 1932, and it was brought to completion on August 20, St. Bernard's Day, 1932.

The present girls' school in Mount Melleray is on the abbey lands and was built at the expense of the community, who are also responsible for its upkeep. But it is under the management of the parochial clergy and the National Board, though the monastery had the right of patronage and attends to the needs of the pupils.

THE MONASTIC HIVE

Abbot Vincent was the pioneer and laid the foundations of the monastery; under his successors, especially Abbot Bruno, the monastic hive was developed, improved and extended in all its branches; the stones are actually piled up for important buildings under the present Abbot, Dom Celsus O'Connell. Side chapels were built so as to bring the number of altars up to thirteen in all; a new sacristy superseded the old one; small metal crosses replaced the less durable wooden ones in the cemetery. A large library and a museum have been built up; an infirmary established; and excellent cottages for farm-workers erected. A detailed account of these improvements, as well as of many others, will be found in Fr. Ailbe Luddy's history of Mount Melleray, lately published, which, with the same author's other books, the philosophical works of the late Abbot, Dom Stanislaus Hickey, and other publications from the monastery, are among the most considerable of its tangible fruits. An accurate account of the whole Cistercian Order; of the holy men who guided the Mount Melleray branch of it; of the filiations from Mount Melleray in Leicestershire, Roscrea, Dubuque (in America), of the invitations to found in other places and the disappointment in Sardinia; of the bringing of the Cistercian Nuns to Glencairn, Lismore, by Abbot Maurus;—all this and more are in Fr. Ailbe's book, in which, needless to say, all the information of the present brief account was found.

A Visitor's Impressions of Mount Melleray

THE TWO WORLDS.

A broad and level road climbs upwards from Cappoquin to Melleray; up over the stream where sand was found for the Preparatory House, past the farmyard of the Agricultural students and on to the entrance gates. Immediately inside there are the students' residences, dormitories, recreation and study halls, and so on; rather irregular but homely buildings. Near them is the recently erected student's chapel past which the wide avenue leads up to the primary school for boys, secluded among flowers and shrubs, the farmyard, the seminary, with its fountain in front, the outer guest-house, the monastery itself, and comes to an end at the gentleman's guest-house. Inside the narrow gate of this we are in the world whose citizens are white and brown robed monks and brothers; a peaceful world, as if it were thousands of miles distant from the bustle of the nearest city.

The change from the outside world strikes one at once. This place of the piercing spire, narrow lancet windows, cloisters and bells, monks in peaked hoods, some of them bearded like Apostles, perpetually silent:—there is something medieval about it all. So much so that, did a companion of St. Bernard's return after all the centuries, whereas he would find himself bewildered in a modern city, he would here be quite at home. A Cistercian monastery, it seems, is as much as possible out of time and in eternity.

These outer changes are but tokens of the inner difference. After all it is of the very essence of a Cistercian monastery to have abandoned the world and all it implies, to have gone apart from it, loving what it hates and hating what it loves. The monks have assumed the white garments of innocence and joy, a new name, with a new scale of values. We in the world—most of us—shirk solitude

and silence, pain and inconvenience, humiliation and lowly position as much as possible. But after these very things the monk is supposed to aspire.

IN THE CHAPEL.

Bell-ringing, psalm-chanting and St. Patrick's crooked staff—these were the things which (according to the poets) Oisín seems to have taken most stock of about St. Patrick and his followers. In Mellerey no one can be deaf to the bells; and if we follow one of their calls to the chapel, we find there the Abbot's staff and hear the white-robed monks chanting in their stalls. For this solemn celebration of the liturgy is the monk's chief employment, the very blossom and flower of his life. To quote Fr. Ailbe Luddy, O. Cist. :—

“But the monks' chief employment is the celebration of the liturgy, the ‘work of God,’ as St. Benedict calls it, to which nothing must be preferred (ch. 43). Including the High Mass it occupies about six hours a day; we might indeed affirm that it occupies the whole day, since all other exercises are made subservient to it. For this reason alone the Cistercian life can be called a contemplative life, because it is a liturgical life, reflecting the life of the Church, the mystical Bride of Christ, rejoicing in her joys, grieving in her grief, exulting in her triumphs.”* And he adds further on: “Their prayer is the liturgy: that it their vocal prayer, their mental prayer, their contemplation.”

So acquaintance with the liturgy is precious to understand the Cistercian life. In the Missal they, white-robed and choosers of the “white martyrdom,” recognise their affinity with the pure, immaculate, white Host, immolating themselves with It. There are in the Psalms lines which express the deepest yearnings of a monk: they tell of the pantings of his heart, more eager than the thirsty deer for the fountains of water, to be in the Sanctuary of the Lord, to walk in His halls; of the rest that the soul has under the

* “The Order of Citeaux,” by Rev. Ailbe J. Luddy, O.Cist.

shelter of His wings, guarded as the apple of His eye. They are full of praise, thanksgiving and love. Then there are readings from the Gospels and other parts of the Scriptures; from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church; the Church's wisdom and poetry and drama. What wonder that the monk should be one with the Church, “rejoicing in her joys, grieving in her griefs, exulting in her triumphs.”

Immersed thus in the mind of the Church, one with it, it is a happy day for the monk when he can say that he no longer lives but that Christ lives in him; when the “old man” has been dropped off like a worn-out garment, and the new assumed. Then he has passed to “a new and more capacious life, the life of the Spirit Whose fruits are charity, joy and peace.” Then, one would imagine, his burdens—heaviest one of all, self solicitude—become light, and his yoke sweet indeed.

As well as his actions, all things connected with him have then to conform and shape themselves to Christ living in him. They have to become thoroughly Christian. Even Cistercian architecture is marked with Cistercian austerity. An authority on it writes: “For rigour and boldness of design, for excellence of proportion and for simplicity, elegance, and purity of treatment, they—the Cistercian abbeys—are unsurpassed by buildings of any age or country; and a complete study of their numerous excellences cannot fail to exercise a beneficial effect on modern designs by checking exuberance of ornamentation and by the cultivation of a purer taste, delighting rather in form and outline than in colour and surface decoration.

Cistercian music, too, is simple and austere, as remote from luxurious softness as it is from rustic vulgarity, satisfying the ear only so as to soften the heart, consoling sadness and quieting anger: these were St. Bernard's desires as regards to it. And the very deportment of the early Christians in the catacombs cannot have been much different from that of the monks here: their meekness and humility in dignified habits, their processional order, their deep bows and genuflections. The monks thus seeking first

the kingdom of God, attending to the things of the spirit, attain also to those other things: whereas many of us, after diligent study of Grecian, Roman, Renaissance, models, and after careful perusal of etiquette manuals, find the results puny enough, indeed.

Then, even for one unable to read the Missal or the Psalter, there are the externals of the liturgy: the soft light of tapers, odour of incense, vestments of many colours, decorated maybe with ears of wheat or vine branches, all symbolic:

“Thou, whose dry plot for moisture gapes,
We shout with them that thread the grapes.
For us the vine was fenced with thorn,
Five way the precious branches torn;
Terrible fruit was on the tree
In the acre of Gethsemane;
For us by Calvary’s distress
The wine was rackèd from the press,
Now in our altar vessels stored
Is the sweet vintage of Our Lord.”

There is, too, the rythm, beauty and symmetry of the ritual, of the whole Cistercian life, all revolving round the Blessed Eucharist.

It was to such things as these, lighted altar candles, psalm-singing, and chanting of Te Deums, that the Irish poet, Owen Rua O’Sullivan, looked forward out of darkness of penal days; these were his symbols of happiness. And it was a poet who had been steeped in such things that could write of the day, drawing his imagery from the Liturgy as he did in other poems, thus:

“Lo, in the sanctuaried East
Day, a dedicated priest
In all his robes pontifical exprest
Lifteth slowly, lifteth sweetly,
From out its orient tabernacle drawn,
You orbèd sacrament confest,
Which sprinkles benediction through the dawn;
And when the grave procession’s ceased,
And earth with due illustrious rite

Blessed,—ere the frail fingers featly
Of twilight, violet cassocked acolyte,
His sacerdotal stoles unvest—
Sets, for high close of the mysterious feast,
The sun in august exposition meetly
Within the flaming monstrance of the West.”

And so a monastery such as Mount Mellary is a fount of inspiration to the Catholic writer, permeating his imagination, just as it is a source of strength and courage to the worker, a sanatorium to ailing souls, and, through the prayers and penance of its members, a power-house in the whole Church.

In the choir, too, whether the trees shed their leaves or bud again on their farm, the monks have seasons of their own, seasons of the Liturgical year. There is indeed much of the ordinary seasons in them; much of winter’s bleakness in penitential times; of spring’s resurrection at Easter and after it; of summer’s violet, lily and rose, even if only in the vestments; most of all, perhaps, of the golden fruitfulness of granary-filling Autumn:

“Thou that on sin’s wages starvest,
Behold we have the joy of harvest:
For us was gathered the first fruits,
For us was lifted from the roots,
Sheaved in cruel bands, bruised sore,
Scourged upon the threshing floor;
Where the upper mill-stone roof’d His head,
At morn we found the Heavenly Bread,
And on a thousand altars laid,
Christ our Sacrifice is made.”

The monastery itself is indeed the “*very fruitage* of the spirit of contemplation.”

ON THE FARM.

When the monk lays aside the thurible, lectern, or Psalter, and takes up spade or hoe or other implement of labour, his mind has been saturated with what he has seen, heard or chanted in the chapel; it is nourished for his task and, as it were, sheds a dew on its dryness, whereas the task it-

self helps, not hinders, meditation. Mind and body are in harmony. Thus he returns refreshed from fields or labour to the choir, just as he goes rested in body and nourished in mind from choir to work.

Besides, however much we regard manual labour as a penance, it must be a comfort for the monk to be working in some remote corner of the farm, among the birds and animals; or in the mellow light of a workshop; or in the warmth of the kitchen, dairy or bake-house. He is all the closer to the Carpenter of Nazareth for his contact with dumb, lowly things. St. Bernard, of course, understood the wholesomeness of such companionship with the things one labours among. He says: "Believe one who can speak with experience: you will find more instruction in woods than in books. Trees and rocks will teach you what you can learn from no human master. Do you think it impossible to 'suck honey from the rock and oil from the hardest stone' (Deut. xxxii, 13)? Is it not written that 'the mountains shall drop down sweetness and the hills shall flow with honey and milk' (Joel. iii, 18), and 'that the valleys shall abound with corn' (Ps. lxiv, 14)?"

Needless to say, the saint himself did not shirk his tasks. There is a moving account in his Life of his achievement as a reaper.* One day in the harvest season the whole community was busily at work with reaping-hooks. Bernard strove desperately to keep up with his companions, but his wrists, unused to such labour, became numb from fatigue. When he was told to rest himself by his superior, he fell upon his knees, beseeching God to make him a good reaper. His prayer was heard. He became so expert with the hook that long afterwards he used playfully to boast of his skill in it. But it was seldom afterwards that he was allowed to do work of this kind. While his brethren were engaged in sowing or saving the crops, his task used to be chopping wood, weeding the garden or sweeping the cloister.

The material effects of the monks' patient labour are to be seen in the monastic hive itself, in the farmyard, and in the farm. In the farm with its regular fields of re-

* "The Life and Teaching of St. Bernard," by Rev. Ailbe J. Luddy, O.Cist.

claimed land, drained, fenced, and sheltered with groves; its tilled lands and pastures for herds and flocks. In the huge farmyard of little arches and turrets, with its hay, straw, granaries, and stores; its stalls of bulls, cows, calves, and horses; its pigsties; its workshops staffed by monks as well as laymen; the odd things here and there that strengthen the same impresion of self-sufficiency—the saw-mills, the new crane, the steam-roller. A little to the side of the main farmyard are the poultry-farm and bee-hives. And then there are the bake-house, the dairy, the kitchens that make ready this bountifulness for the mouths of poor, scholars, guests, and the community.

COMMUNITY LIFE.

In the community itself all things are in common. They all sleep, even the Abbot, in one long dormitory, each in his own little partitioned cell. They all eat in one large refectory from the well-scrubbed, scrupulously clean, but uncovered tables, sitting on little timber stools. Together, one after another, they go to work and assemble again for lectures and prayers. Thus the monk has to sink the desire for personal distinction, cutting at the root of pride, and become one of a community. And if this fosters humility, so also it heartens and gives courage: what one's companions achieve is not above one's own powers.

After seeing the common life as it is lived here we understand it as lived by St. Bernard and his companions better (Just as it is interesting to study the simple plans of early Cistercian monasteries in the light of their modern developments). Adjoining the Church at Clairvaux in the saint's time were the refectory and kitchen. These had bare, damp floors, and were lighted by little windows the breath of a palm. The dormitory was overhead, reached by climbing a ladder. In it were plank beds with straw or dry leaves for covering. St. Bernard's own cell was in a corner at the ladder's top, under the rafters of a sloping roof, dark and inconvenient. The only seat was a ledge in the wall, under the low, slanting roof; there was an opening for air and light, through which wind and rain also

came in. The bed was by the wall, a frame-work of planks with a block of wood for pillow. And this was the place where he composed some of his great works; "this was the apartment for which he pined when detained, an honoured guest, in the gilded palaces of pontiffs, kings, and emperors."*

Being such a lover of community life it was natural enough that St. Bernard should encourage community spirit in the country people around the monasteries. He loved to go amongst these people, "speaking to them of God, and of their ordinary humble occupations as one of themselves. He exhorted the country people to the practice of mutual charity and co-operation. He recommended them to assist each other in their wants, so that if a family ran short of provisions, the neighbours should cheerfully give out of their abundance, each confident of receiving the same assistance whenever the need should arise. He instructed them also in what related to good morals, reminding them of the duty of gratitude towards God, the Source of all blessings. Nor did he fail to insist on the obligation of paying rent and taxes to their temporal lords, and tithes to their pastors: if they proved unfaithful to this duty, He Whose power created the earth and Whose benediction made it fruitful, might refuse to bless their toil, and so they might lose everything." As a remedy for impatience he gives the thought that "He Who was infinitely wealthy became poor for our sakes and the poor are His chosen people."

Such a system of social science as St. Bernard outlines is quite applicable in country districts even at the present day. This one realizes by taking a walk through the purple heather and golden furze around Melleray, to where spirals of turf-smoke indicate a mountain farmer's homestead. There one finds something resembling a miniature monastery, white-walled out-houses arranged cloister-wise around the dwelling, the kitchen of which is at times like a little chapel, its people psalming together in their very Gaelic salutations, with appropriate prayers for every occasion

* "The Life and Teaching of St. Bernard," by Rev. Ailbe J. Luddy, O.Cist.

and perhaps even little ceremonies. They assemble at night for the Rosary, and there are Irish night-prayers which remind one of Compline, while Gaelic music is supposed to be closely akin to Gregorian.

Old people around the Monastery still speak Irish in the beautiful dialect of the Decies. The monastery itself has done (and is still doing) good work for the Irish language revival. Dom Maurus O'Phelan, of the princely Deise family, who was Abbot till a few years ago, was an enthusiastic Irish scholar and writer. Among other things he wrote a lovely song about the brimful lakes, bright streams, and branchy woods of his native hills, the Comeraghs. He rejoices among their peaks, cliffs and waters with a child-like delight, making a melodious litany of names. His song has the notes of genuine Gaelic poetry: love of places and place-names; lucid descriptions of nature; simple catalogue-like structure; even the suggestion of exile. It places Dom Maurus on a line with Father Geoffrey Keating and Donnadh Rua MacConmara both of whom were authors of exile poems about their native hills and plains, and both of whom also lived a good part of their lives within sight of Knockmealdown and the Comeraghs. This is the first stanza of the six in Dom Maurus' song:

"Mo bheannacht ó chroidhe do d'thir is dod' shleibhtibh,
A Chomaraigh aoibhinn ó,
'S dod mhúintir shuaire ar dúal dóibh féile,
A Chomaraigh aoibhinn ó.
Do shrutháin gheala as do choillte craobhach',
Do ghleanta meala's do bhánta leire
O grádh mo chroidhe iad súid le céile,
A chomaraigh aoibhin O."

SALVE REGINA.

"Hesperus," says Sappho, addressing the evening star, "thou bringest back all that daylight scattereth, thou bringest the lamb and the goat to the fold, thou bringest the infant to its mother." Twilight or dusk brings the Cistercian monk after the labours, prayings and watchings of the day to his Mother, Mary. This resignation of him-

self to her is expressed in the beautiful prayer, "Salve Regina," generally chanted after Compline, before the monks retire to sleep.

Canon Sheehan, the novelist, tells in one of his books* how moved one of his characters was by hearing the *Salve Regina* chanted in Mount Melleray. And a great French music-critic has a similar account of his own experience in a French Cistercian monastery. According to the latter, the prayer represents the three stages of life: happy and candid childhood, caressing and coaxing with affectionate little words a mother: "*Hail! holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail our life, our sweetness and our hope.*" Then comes an awakening and experience when the soul has to sob for help: "*To Thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.*" Last, old age comes and with it torment over lost graces, neglected counsels, and dread of the Judge's eternal verdict: "*Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy towards us, and after this our exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*" And to this "essence of prayer" in inimitable prose, St. Bernard added the triple cries of love: "*O Clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.*" After this analysis of the beautiful prayer it is interesting to read Canon Sheehan's description of it as he heard it at Mount Melleray on a summer evening:

"There was a pause, and the first notes of a fine organ, hidden away under hanging curtains, floated along the air. Then for the first time I heard that marvellous *Salve Regina*, which never leaves the mind or memory of those who have once listened to its solemn strains. Since then I have heard great cathedral choirs interpreting the masterpieces of the inspired composers of Italy and France; I have heard every human invention dragged into the service of music and harnessed to her triumphal car; I have heard the silver trumpets in St. Peter's, and more wonderful still, the awful *Miserere* on the nights of Holy Week—but

* "The Triumph of Failure." There is a powerful chapter in this novel on Mount Melleray.

all have faded from my memory. Yet clear to-day as twenty years ago, the slow, measured chant of those Trappists comes back to me, and is it hyperbole to say or a phantasm that makes me think that it is the highest achievement of Christian art? But away that word and that thought! What has art to do here to-night as the benign Mother bends down over her white-robed children, and dearer to her than whole symphonies of angels comes up that cry of adoration, of love, of beseeching prayer? . . .

"Analyse the music as we may, and our own sensations, and our surroundings, the spell on our senses will not depart. It holds us with chains that neither reason nor incredulity can break. Science can destroy most of the magic illusions that enchain our senses under the name of poetry and art; and that terrible engine of modern science, the analysis of ideas and emotions, may unravel and explain away many of those profound and awful sensations that hold our souls in bondage. But no one with a soul that has not as yet become a mere negation, could dare penetrate behind the magic that enchained us that night, and the soft images of heaven that came down into our souls to abide there. I could not resist the pathos and sublimity that lingered over every pause and swell of that antiphon; and when the organ and voices rose in a piteous cry at the words:—

*Eia, ergo, Advocata nostra
Illos tuos misericordes oculos
Ad nos converte—*

I uttered a prayer and it took the form of a tear.

"But it was not a tear, it was an emotion of terror that burst from me when the antiphon, having sunk down in a deep whisper at the name of Jesus, and the pleading words, *nobis post hoc exilium ostende*, rose up again, pitiful, sorrowful, despairful at the conclusion. If ever souls in hell could pray, surely it would be in such tones and words. If ever a soul, deep down in the agonies of remorse for almost unforgiveable sins, could grasp at one last hope and put the energies of one last despairing prayer into human language, as a rift appeared in the black, frowning face of

heaven and the sweetest face that ever shone on the blackness of the world looked through—surely it would cry as those monks cried, there in the placid beauty of the summer evening:

O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.”

CONCLUSION.

So in Melleray we find order, the only true order, where God is first and over all and all other things for Him. The added things follow from this: a self-sufficing community, well-tilled fields, flourishing schools, shapely buildings, etc. What Archbishop Healy said of the Cistercian monks in Ireland before the Dissolution is true of the monks here: “Then all these men did their work, not for money, but for God, and hence they did it so thoroughly, so grandly, so beautifully, that their labour in those far-off days still puts to shame even the greatest achievements of our boasted civilization.” Living here still is the principle that was behind the glory of the middle ages; wonderful age when, as Maritain remarks, doctors and artists lovingly taught the poor, and the poor hearkened to their teaching, because they were all of the one family, born of water and the spirit. And what is peculiarly interesting in Mount Melleray as an Irish Cistercian Monastery is, perhaps, that it is situated here on a hillside where the Gaelic tradition, which is akin to the medieval tradition, still survives among the Irish-speaking inhabitants. Some of these could probably yet quote stanzas from the “Adventures of Death,” a long sustained, imaginary conversation between Death and the Sinner. This was composed in Irish by Padruig Denn, a humble, devout schoolmaster of Cappoquin, and it is not at all unlike that delightful pre-“Reformation” morality play “Everyman.” So the atmosphere and surroundings of Melleray are good for the Gaelic revival and for the gathering in of the fragments of folk-lore that are left in the district.

*Permissu Ordinarii Dioec. Dublinen, die 22 Februarii
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