The Coming of the Friars

Augustus Jessopp

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Author: Augustus Jessopp

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THE COMING OF THE FRIARS AND OTHER HISTORIC ESSAYS

BY THE REV. AUGUSTUS JESSOPP, D.D.

Hon. Canon in Norwich Cathedral, Hon. Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford, and Hon. Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge

FOURTEENTH IMPRESSION

TO MY FRIEND AND SOMETIME TUTOR,

FRANCIS WHALLEY HARPER,

CANON OF YORK,

I OFFER THIS VOLUME AS A TOKEN OF MY GRATITUDE

[These Essays have appeared at various times in "The Nineteenth Century," and are now printed with some alterations, corrections, and additions.]

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I.

THE COMING OF THE FRIARS.

Sweet St. Francis of Assisi, would that he were here again!--_Lord Tennyson._

When King Richard of England, whom men call the Lion-hearted, was wasting his time at Messina, after his boisterous fashion, in the

winter of 1190, he heard of the fame of Abbot Joachim, and sent for that renowned personage, that he might hear from his own lips the words of prophecy and their interpretation.

Around the personality of Joachim there has gathered no small amount of _mythus._ He was, it appears, the inventor of that mystical method of Hermeneutics which has in our time received the name of "the year-day theory," and which, though now abandoned for the most part by sane men, has still some devout and superstitious advocates in the school of Dr. Cumming and kindred visionaries.

Abbot Joachim proclaimed that a stupendous catastrophe was at hand. Opening the Book of the Revelation of St. John he read, pondered, and interpreted. A divine illumination opened out to him the dark things that were written in the sacred pages. The unenlightened could make nothing of "a time, times, and half a time" [Footnote: Dan. xii. 7.] ; to them the terrors of the 1,260 days [Footnote: Rev. xi .3.] were an insoluble enigma long since given up as hopeless, whose answer would come only at the Day of Judgment. Abbot Joachim declared that the key to the mystery had been to him revealed. What could "a time, times, and half a time" mean, but three years and a half? What could a year mean in the divine economy but the _lunar_ year of 360 days? for was not the moon the symbol of the Church of God? What were those 1,260 days but the sum of the days of three years and a half? Moreover, as it had been with the prophet Ezekiel, to whom it was said, "I have appointed thee a day for a year," so it must needs be with other seers who saw the visions of God. To them the "day" was not as our brief prosaic day--to them too had been "appointed a day for a year." The "time, times, and half a time" were the 1,260 days, and these were 1,260 years, and the stupendous catastrophe, the battle of Armageddon, the reign of Antichrist, the new heavens and the new earth, the slaughter and the resurrection of the two heavenly witnesses, were at hand. Eleven hundred and ninety years had passed away of those 1,260. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth," said Joachim; "Antichrist is already born, yea born in the city of Rome!"

Though King Richard, in the strange interview of which contemporary historians have left us a curious narrative, exhibited much more of the spirit of the scoffer than of the convert, and evidently had no faith in Abbott Joachim's theories and his mission, it was otherwise with the world at large. At the close of the twelfth century a very general belief, the result of a true instinct, pervaded all classes that European society was passing through a tremendous crisis, that the dawn of a new era, or, as they phrased it, "the end of all things" was at hand.

The Abbot Joachim was only the spokesman of his age who was lucky enough to get a hearing. He spoke a language that was a jargon of rhapsody, but he spoke vaguely of terrors, and perils, and earthquakes, and thunderings, the day of wrath; and because he spoke so darkly men listened all the more eagerly, for there was a vague anticipation of the breaking up of the great waters, and that things that had been heretofore could not continue as they were.

Verily when the thirteenth century opened, the times were evil, and no hope seemed anywhere on the horizon. The grasp of the infidel was tightened upon the Holy City, and what little force there ever had been among the rabble of Crusaders was gone now; the truculent ruffianism that pretended to be animated by the crusading spirit

showed its real character in the hideous atrocities for which Simon de Montfort is answerable, and in the unparalleled enormities of the sack of Constantinople in 1204. For ten years (1198--1208) through the length and breadth of Germany there was ceaseless and sanguinary conflict. In the great Italian towns party warfare, never hesitating to resort to every kind of crime, had long been chronic. The history of Sicily is one long record of cruelty, tyranny, and wrong--committed, suffered, or revenged. Over the whole continent of Europe people seem to have had no _homes;_ the merchant, the student, the soldier, the ecclesiastic were always on the move. Young men made no difficulty in crossing the Alps to attend lectures at Bologna, or crossing the Channel to or from Oxford and Paris. The soldier or the scholar was equally a free-lance, ready to take service whereever it offered, and to settle wherever there was dread to win or money to save. No one trusted in the stability of anything. [Footnote: M. Jusserand's beautiful book, "La Vie Nomade," was not published till 1884, _i.e.,_ a year after this essay appeared.]

To a thoughtful man watching the signs of the times, it may well have seemed that the hope for the future of civilization--the hope for any future, whether of art, science, or religion-lay in the steady growth of the towns. It might be that the barrier of the Alps would always limit the influence of Italian cities to Italy and the islands of the Mediterranean; but for the great towns of what is now Belgium and Germany what part might not be left for them to play in the history of the world? In England the towns were as yet insignificant communities compared with such mighty aggregates of population as were to be found in Bruges, Antwerp, or Cologne; but even the English towns _were_ communities, and they were beginning to assert themselves somewhat loudly while clinging to their chartered rights with jealous tenacity. Those rights, however, were eminently exclusive and selfish in their character. The chartered towns were ruled in all cases by an oligarchy. [Footnote: Stubbs, "Constitutional History," vol. i. Section 131.] The increase in the population brought wealth to a class, the class of privileged traders, associated into guilds, who kept their several _mysteries_ to themselves by vigilant measures of protection. Outside the well-guarded defences which these trades-unions constructed, there were the masses--hewers of wood and drawers of water--standing to the skilled artizan of the thirteenth century almost precisely in the same relation as the bricklayer's labourer does to the mason in our own time. The _sediment_ of the town population in the Middle Ages was a dense slough of stagnant misery, squalor, famine, loathsome disease, and dull despair, such as the worst slums of London, Paris, or Liverpool know nothing of. When we hear of the mortality among the townsmen during the periodical outbreaks of pestilence or famine, horror suggests that we should dismiss as incredible such stories as the imagination shrinks from dwelling on. What greatly added to the dreary wretchedness of the lower order in the towns was the fact that the ever-increasing throngs of beggars, outlaws, and ruffian runaways were simply left to shift for themselves. The civil authorities took no account of them as long as they quietly rotted and died; and, what was still more dreadful, the whole machinery of the Church polity had been formed and was adapted to deal with entirely different conditions of society from those which had now arisen.

The idea of the parish priest taking the oversight of his flock, and ministering to each member as the shepherd of the people, is a grand

one, but it is an idea which can be realized, and then only approximately, in the village community. In the towns of the Middle Ages the parochial system, except as a _civil_ institution, had broken down.

The other idea, of men and women weary of the hard struggle with sin, and fleeing from the wrath to come, joining together to give themselves up to the higher life, out of the reach of temptation and safe from the witcheries of Mammon,--that too was a grand idea, and not unfrequently it had been carried out grandly. But the monk was nothing and did nothing for the townsman; he fled away to his solitude; the rapture of silent adoration was his joy and exceeding great reward; his nights and days might be spent in praise and prayer, sometimes in study and research, sometimes in battling with the powers of darkness and ignorance, sometimes in throwing himself heart and soul into art which it was easy to persuade himself he was doing only for the glory of God; but all this must go on far away from the busy haunts of men, certainly not within earshot of the multitude. Moreover the monk was, by birth, education, and sympathy, one with the upper classes. What were the rabble to him? [Footnote: The 20th Article of the Assize of Clarendon is very significant: "Prohibet dominus rex ne monachi... recipiant _aliquem de minuto populo in monachum,_ vel canonicum vel fratrem," &c.--Stubbs, "Benedict Abbas," pref. p. cliv.] In return the townsmen hated him cordially, as a supercilious aristocrat and Pharisee, with the guile and greed of the Scribe and lawyer superadded.

Upon the townsmen--whatever it may have been among the countrymen--the ministers of religion exercised the smallest possible _restraint._ Nay! it was only too evident that the bonds of ecclesiastical discipline which had so often exercised a salutary check upon the unruly had become seriously relaxed of late, both in town and country; they had been put to too great a strain and had snapped. By the suicidal methods of Excommunication and Interdict all ranks were schooled into doing without the rites of religion, the baptism of their children, or the blessing upon the marriage union. In the meantime it was notorious that even in high places there were instances not a few of Christians who had denied the faith and had given themselves up to strange beliefs, of which the creed of the Moslem was not the worst. Men must have received with a smile the doctrine that Marriage was a Sacrament when everybody knew that, among the upper classes at least, the bonds of matrimony were soluble almost at pleasure. [Footnote: Eleanor of Aquitaine, consort of Henry II., had been divorced by Louis VII. of France. Constance of Brittany, mother of Arthur--Shakespeare's idealized Constance--left her husband, Ranulph, Earl of Chester, to unite herself with Guy of Flanders. Conrad of Montferat divorced the daughter of Isaac Angelus, Emperor of Constantinople, to marry Isabella, daughter of Amalric, King of Jerusalem, the bride repudiating her husband Henfrid of Thouars. Philip II. of France married the sister of the King of Denmark one day and divorced her the next; then married a German lady, left her, and returned to the repudiated Dane. King John in 1189 divorced Hawisia, Countess of Gloucester, and took Isabella of Angouleme to wife, but how little he cared to be faithful to the one or the other the chronicles disdain to ask.] It seems hardly worth while to notice that the observance of Sunday was almost universally neglected, or that sermons had become so rare that when Eustace, Abbot of Flai, preached in various places in England in 1200, miracles were said to have ensued as the ordinary effects of his

eloquence. Earnestness in such an age seemed in itself miraculous. Here and there men and women, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, raised their sobbing prayer to heaven that the Lord would shortly accomplish the number of his elect and hasten his coming, and Abbot Joachim's dreams were talked of and his vague mutterings made the sanguine hope for better days. Among those mutterings had there not been a speech of the two heavenly witnesses who were to do--ah! what were they not to do? And these heavenly witnesses, who were they? When and where would they appear?

Eight years before King Richard was in Sicily a child had been born in the thriving town of Assisi, thirteen miles from Perugia, who was destined to be one of the great movers of the world. Giovanni Bernardone was the son of a wealthy merchant at Assisi, and from all that appears an only child. He was from infancy intended for a mercantile career, nor does he seem to have felt any dislike to it. One story--and it is as probable as the other--accounts for his name Francesco by assuring us that he earned it by his unusual familiarity with the French language, acquired during his residence in France while managing his father's business. The new name clung to him; the old baptismal name was dropped; posterity has almost forgotten that it was ever imposed. From the mass of tradition and personal recollections that have come down to us from so many different sources it is not always easy to decide when we are dealing with pure invention of pious fraud, and when with mere exaggeration of actual fact, but it scarcely admits of doubt that the young merchant of Assisi was engaged in trade and commerce till his twenty-fourth year, living in the main as others live, but perhaps early conspicuous for aiming at a loftier ideal than that of his everyday associates, and characterized by the devout and ardent temperament essential to the religious reformer. It was in the year 1206 that he became a changed man. He fell ill--he lay at Death's door. From the languor and delirium he recovered but slowly--when he did recover old things had passed away; behold! all things had become new. From this time Giovanni Bernardone passes out of sight, and from the ashes of a dead past, from the seed which has withered that the new life might germinate and fructify, Francis--why grudge to call him Saint Francis?--of Assisi rises.

Very early the young man had shown a taste for Church restoration. The material fabric of the houses of God in the land could not but exhibit the decay of living faith; the churches were falling into ruins. The little chapel of St. Mary and the Angels at Assisi was in a scandalous condition of decay. It troubled the heart of the young pietist profoundly to see the Christian church squalid and tottering to its fall while within sight of it was the Roman temple in which men had worshipped the idols. There it stood, as it had stood for a thousand years--as it stands to this day. Oh, shame! that Christian men should build so slightly while the heathen built so strongly!

To the little squalid ruin St. Francis came time and again, and poured out his heart, perplexed and sad; and there, we are told, God met him and a voice said, "Go, and build my church again." It was a "thought beyond his thought," and with the straightforward simplicity of his nature he accepted the message in its literal sense and at once set about obeying it as he understood it.

He began by giving all he could lay his hands on to provide funds for the work. His own resources exhausted, he applied for contributions

to all who came in his way. His father became alarmed at his son's excessive liberality and the consequences that might ensue from his strange recklessness; it is even said that he turned him out of doors; it seems that the commercial partnership was cancelled: it is certain that the son was compelled to make some great renunciation of wealth, and that his private means were seriously restricted. That a man of business should be blind to the preciousness of money was a sufficient proof then, as now, that he must be mad.

O ye wary men of the world, bristling with the shrewdest of maxims, bursting with the lessons of experience, ye of the cool heads and the cold grey eyes, ye whom the statesman loves, and the tradesman trusts, cautious, sagacious, prudent; when the rumbling of the earthquake tells us that the foundations of the earth are out of course, we must look for deliverance to other than you! A grain of enthusiasm is of mightier force than a million tons of wisdom such as yours; then when the hour of the great upheaval has arrived, and things can no longer be kept going!

"Build up my church!" said the voice again to this gushing emaciated fanatic in the second-rate Italian town, this dismal bankrupt of twenty-four years of age, "of lamentably low extraction," whom no University claimed as her own, and whom the learned pundits pitied. At last he understood the profounder meaning of the words. It was no temple made with hands, but the _living_ Church that needed raising. The dust of corruption must be swept away, the dry bones be stirred; the breath of the divine Spirit blow and reanimate them. Did not the voice mean that? What remained but to obey?

In his journeyings through France it is hardly possible that St. Francis should not have heard of _the poor men of Lyons_ whose peculiar tenets at this time were arousing very general attention. It is not improbable that he may have fallen in with one of those translations of the New Testament into the vernacular executed by Stephen de Emsa at the expense of Peter Waldo, and through his means widely circulated among all classes. [Footnote: See "Facts and Documents Illustrative of the History, Doctrine, and Rites, of the Ancient Albigenses and Waldenses," by the Rev. S. R, Maitland, London, 8vo., 1832, p. 127 _et seq._] Be it as it may, the words addressed by our Lord to the seventy, when he sent them forth to preach the kingdom of heaven, seemed to St. Francis to be written in letters of flame. They haunted him waking and sleeping. "The lust of gain in the spirit of Cain!" what had it done for the world or the Church but saturate the one and the other with sordid greed? Mere wealth had not added to the sum of human happiness. Nay, misery was growing; kings fought, and the people bled at every pore. Merchants reared their palaces, and the masses were perishing. Where riches increased, there pride and ungodliness were rampant. What had corrupted the monks, whose lives should be so pure and exemplary? What but their vast possessions, bringing with them luxury and the paralysis of devotion and of all lofty endeavour? It was openly maintained that the original Benedictine Rule could not be kept now as of yore. One attempt after another to bring back the old monastic discipline had failed deplorably. The Cluniac revival had been followed by the Cluniac laxity, splendour, and ostentation. The Cistercians, who for a generation had been the sour puritans of the cloister, had become the most potent religious corporation in Europe; but theirs was the power of the purse now. Where had the old strictness and the old fervour gone? Each man was lusting for all

that was not his own; but free alms, where were they? and pity for the sad, and reverence for the stricken, and tenderness and sympathy? "O gentle Jesus, where art Thou? and is there no love of Thee anywhere, nor any love for Thy lost sheep, Thou crucified Saviour of men?"

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Knocking at his heart--not merely buzzing in his brain--the words kept smiting him, "Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses, neither scrip for your journey, neither two coats, nor yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat!" Once men had changed the face of the world with no other equipment. Faith then had removed mountains. Why not again? He threw away his staff and shoes; he went forth with literally a single garment; he was girt with a common rope round his loins. He no more doubted of his mission, he no more feared for the morrow than he feared for the young ravens that he loved and spake to in an ecstasy of joy.

Henceforth there was "not a bird upon the tree but half forgave his being human;" the flowers of the field looked out at him with special greetings, the wolf of the mountains met him with no fierce glare in his eye. Great men smiled at the craze of the monomaniac. Old men shook their grey heads and remembered that they themselves had been young and foolish. Practical men would not waste their words upon the folly of the thing. Rich men, serenely confident of their position, affirmed that they knew of only one who could overcome the world--to wit, the veritable hero, he who holds the purse-strings. St. Francis did not speak to these. "Oh, ye miserable, helpless, and despairing; ye who find yourselves so unutterably forlorn--so very, very far astray; ye lost souls whom Satan has bound through the long weary years; ye of the broken hearts, bowed down and crushed; ye with your wasted bodies loathsome to every sense, to whom life is torture and whom death will not deliver; ye whose very nearness by the wayside makes the traveller as he passes shudder with uncontrollable horror lest your breath should light upon his garments, look! I am poor as you--I am one of yourselves. Christ, the very Christ of God, has sent me with a message to you. Listen!"

It is observable that we never hear of St. Francis that he was a sermon-maker. He had received no clerical or even academical training. Up to 1207 he had not even a license to preach. It was only after this that he was--and apparently without desiring it--ordained a deacon. In its first beginnings the Franciscan movement was essentially moral, not theological, still less intellectual. The absence of anything like dogma in the sermons of the early Minorites was their characteristic. One is tempted to say it was a mere accident that these men were not sectaries, so little in common had they with the ecclesiastics of the time, so entirely did they live and labour among the laity of whom they were and with whom they so profoundly sympathized.

The secret of the overwhelming, the irresistible attraction which St. Francis exercised is to be found in his matchless simplicity, in his sublime self-surrender. He removed mountains because he believed intensely in the infinite power of _mere goodness_. While from the writhing millions all over Europe--the millions ignorant, neglected, plague-stricken, despairing--an inarticulate wail was going up to God, St. Francis made it articulate. Then he boldly

proclaimed: "God has heard your cry! It meant this and that. I am sent to you with the good God's answer." There was less than a step between accepting him as the interpreter of their vague yearnings and embracing him as the ambassador of Heaven to themselves.

St, Francis was hardly twenty-eight years old when he set out for Rome, to lay himself at the feet of the great Pope Innocent the Third, and to ask from him some formal recognition. The pontiff, so the story goes, was walking in the garden of the Lateran when the momentous meeting took place. Startled by the sudden apparition of an emaciated young man, bareheaded, shoeless, half-clad, but--for all his gentleness--a beggar who would take no denial, Innocent hesitated. It was but for a brief hour, the next he was won.

Francis returned to Assisi with the Papal sanction for what was, probably, a draught of his afterwards famous "Rule." He was met by the whole city, who received him with a frenzy of excitement. By this time his enthusiasm had kindled that of eleven other young men, all now aglow with the same divine fire. A twelfth soon was added--he, moreover, a layman of gentle blood and of knightly rank. All these had surrendered their claim to everything in the shape of property, and had resolved to follow their great leader's example by stripping themselves of all worldly possessions, and suffering the loss of all things. They were beggars--literally barefooted beggars. The love of money was the root of all evil. They would not touch the accursed thing lest they should be defiled--no, not with the tips of their fingers. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

Beggars they were, but they were brethren--_Fratres (Frères)_. We in England have got to call them _Friars_. Francis was never known in his lifetime as anything higher than _Brother Francis_, and his community he insisted should be called the community of the lesser brethren--_Fratres Minores_--for none could be or should be less than they. Abbots and Priors, he would have none of them. "He that will be chief among you," he said, in Christ's own words, "let him be your servant." The highest official among the _Minorites_ was the _Minister_, the elect of all, the servant of all, and if not humble enough to serve, not fit to rule.

People talk of "Monks and Friars" as if these were convertible terms. The truth is that the difference between the Monks and the Friars was almost one of kind. The Monk was supposed never to leave his cloister. The Friar in St. Francis' first intention had no cloister to leave. Even when he had where to lay his head, his life-work was not to save his own soul, but first and foremost to save the bodies and souls of others. The Monk had nothing to do with ministering to others. At best his business was to be the salt of the earth, and it behoved him to be much more upon his guard that the salt should not lose his savour, than that the earth should be sweetened. The Friar was an itinerant evangelist, always on the move. He was a preacher of righteousness. He lifted up his voice against sin and wrong. "Save yourselves from this untoward generation!" he cried; "save yourselves from the wrath to come." The Monk, as has been said, was an aristocrat. The Friar belonged to the great unwashed!

Without the loss of a day the new apostles of poverty, of pity, of an all-embracing love, went forth by two and two to build up the ruined Church of God. Theology they were, from anything that appears, sublimely ignorant of. Except that they were masters of every phrase

and word in the Gospels, their stock in trade was scarcely more than that of an average candidate for Anglican orders; but to each and all of them Christ was simply _everything_. If ever men have preached Christ, these men did; Christ, nothing but Christ, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. They had no system, they had no views, they combated no opinions, they took no side. Let the dialecticians dispute about this nice distinction or that. There _could_ be no doubt that Christ had died and risen, and was alive for evermore. There was no place for controversy or opinions when here was a mere simple, indisputable, but most awful fact. Did you want to wrangle about the aspect of the fact, the evidence, the what not? St. Francis had no mission to argue with you. "The pearl of great price--will you have it or not? Whether or not, there are millions sighing for it, crying for it, dying for it. To the poor at any rate the Gospel shall be preached now as of old."

To the poor by the poor. Those masses, those dreadful masses, crawling, sweltering in the foul hovels, in many a southern town with never a roof to cover them, huddling in groups under a dry arch, alive with vermin; gibbering _cretins_ with the ghastly wens; lepers by the hundred, too shocking for mothers to gaze at, and therefore driven forth to curse and howl in the lazar-house outside the walls, there stretching out their bony hands to clutch the frightened almsgiver's dole, or, failing that, to pick up shreds of offal from the heaps of garbage--to these St. Francis came.

More wonderful still!--to these outcasts came those other twelve, so utterly had their leader's sublime self-surrender communicated itself to his converts. "We are come," they said, "to live among you and be your servants, and wash your sores, and make your lot less hard than it is. We only want to do as Christ bids us do. We are beggars too, and we too have not where to lay our heads. Christ sent us to you. Yes. Christ the crucified, whose we are, and whose you are. Be not wroth with us, we will help you if we can."

As they spoke, so they lived. They _were_ less than the least, as St. Francis told them they must strive to be. Incredulous cynicism was put to silence. It was wonderful, it was inexplicable, it was disgusting, it was anything you please; but where there were outcasts, lepers, pariahs, there, there were these penniless Minorites tending the miserable sufferers with a cheerful look, and not seldom with a merry laugh. As one reads the stories of those earlier Franciscans, one is reminded every now and then of the extravagances of the Salvation Army.

The heroic example set by these men at first startled, and then fascinated the upper classes. While labouring to save the lowest, they took captive the highest. The Brotherhood grew in numbers day by day; as it grew, new problems presented themselves. How to dispose of all the wealth renounced, how to employ the energies of all the crowds of brethren. Hardest of all, what to do with the earnest, highly-trained, and sometimes erudite convert who could not divest himself of the treasures of learning which he had amassed. "Must I part with my books?" said the scholar, with a sinking heart. "Carry nothing with you for your journey!" was the inexorable answer. "Not a Breviary? not even the Psalms of David?" "Get them into your heart of hearts, and provide yourself with a treasure in the heavens. Who ever heard of Christ reading books save when He opened the book in the

synagogue, and then _closed_ it and went forth to teach the world for ever?"

In 1215 the new Order held its first Chapter at the Church of the Portiuncula. The numbers of the Brotherhood and the area over which their labours extended had increased so vastly that it was already found necessary to nominate Provincial Ministers in France, Germany, and Spain.

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While these things were going on in Italy, another notable reformer was vexing his righteous soul in Spain. St. Dominic was a very different man from the gentle and romantic young Italian. Of high birth, which among the haughty Castillians has always counted for a great deal, he had passed his boyhood among ecclesiastics and academics. He was twelve years older than St. Francis. He studied theology for ten years at the University of Palencia, and before the twelfth century closed he was an Augustinian Canon. In 1203, while St. Francis was still poring over his father's ledgers, Dominic was associated with the Bishop of Osma in negotiating a marriage for Alphonso the Eighth, king of Castille. For the next ten years he was more or less concerned with the hideous atrocities of the Albigensian war. During that dark period of his career he was brought every day face to face with heresy and schism. From infancy he must have heard those around him talk with a savage intolerance of the Moors of the South and the stubborn Jews of Toledo nearer home. Now his eyes were open to the perils that beset the Church from sectaries who from within were for casting off her divine authority. Wretches who questioned the very creeds and rejected the Sacraments, yet perversely insisted that they were Christian men and women, with a clearer insight into Gospel mysteries than Bishops and Cardinals or the Holy Father himself. Here was heresy rampant, and immortal souls, all astray, beguiled by evil men and deceivers, "whose word doth eat as doth a canker." Dominic "saw that there was no man, and marvelled that there was no intercessor."

It was not ungodliness that Dominic, in the first instance, determined to war with, but ignorance and error. _These_ were to him the monster evils, whose natural fruit was moral corruption. Get rid of them and the depraved heart might be dealt with by-and-by. Dominic stood forth as the determined champion of orthodoxy. "Preach the word in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort"--that was his panacea. His success at the first was but small. Preachers with the divine fervour, with the gift of utterance, with the power to drive truth home--are rare. They are not to be had for the asking; they are not to be trained in a day. Years passed, but little was achieved.

Dominic was patient He had, indeed, founded a small religious community of sixteen brethren at St. Ronain, near Toulouse--one of these, we are told, was an Englishman--whose aim and object were to produce an effect through the agency of the pulpit, to confute the heretics and instruct the unlearned. The Order, if it deserved the name, was established on the old lines. A monastery was founded, a local habitation secured. The maintenance of the brotherhood was provided for by a sufficient endowment; the petty cares and anxieties of life were in the main guarded against; but when Innocent the Third gave his formal sanction to the new community, it was given to

Dominic and his associates, on the 8th of October, 1215, as to a house of _Augustinian Canons_, who received permission to enjoy in their corporate capacity the endowments which had been bestowed upon them. [Footnote: So "La Cordaire, vie de S. Dominique" (1872), p. 120. It was, however, a very curious community, as appears from "Ripolli Bullarium Praedicat:" I.i.]

In the following July Innocent died, and was at once succeeded by Honorius the Third. Dominic set out for Rome, and on the 22nd of December he received from the new Pope a bare confirmation of what his predecessor had granted, with little more than a passing allusion to the fact that the new canons were to be emphatically _Preachers_ of the faith. In the autumn of 1217 Dominic turned his back upon Languedoc for ever. He took up his residence at Rome, and at once rose high in the favour of the Pope. His eloquence, his earnestness, his absorbing enthusiasm, his matchless dialectic skill, his perfect scholastic training--all combined to attract precisely those cultured churchmen whose fastidious sense of the fitness of things revolted from the austerities of St. Francis and the enormous demands which the Minorites made upon their converts. While Francis was acting upon the masses from Assisi, Dominic was stirring the dry bones to a new vitality among scholars and ecclesiastics at Rome.

Thus far we have heard little or nothing of poverty among the more highly educated _Friars Preachers_, as they got to be called. That seems to have been quite an afterthought. So far as Dominic may be said to have accepted the Voluntary Principle and, renouncing all endowments, to have thrown himself and his followers for support upon the alms of the faithful, so far he was a disciple of St. Francis. The Champion of Orthodoxy was a convert to the Apostle of Poverty.

How soon the Dominicans gave in their adhesion to the distinctive tenet of the Minorites will never now be known, nor how far St. Francis himself adopted it from others; but a conviction that holiness of life had deteriorated in the Church and the cloister by reason of the excessive wealth of monks and ecclesiastics was prevalent everywhere, and a belief was growing that sanctity was attainable only by those who were ready to part with all their worldly possessions and give to such as needed. Even before St. Francis had applied to Innocent the Third, the poor men of Lyons had come to Rome begging for papal sanction to their missionary plans; they met with little favour, and vanished from the scene. But they too declaimed against endowments--they too were to live on alms. The Gospel of Poverty was "_in the air_."

In 1219 the Franciscans held their second general Chapter. It was evident that they were taking the world by storm; evident, too, that their astonishing success was due less to their preaching than to their self-denying lives. It was abundantly plain that this vast army of fervent missionaries could live from day to day and work wonders in evangelizing the masses without owning a rood of land, or having anything to depend upon but the perennial stream of bounty which flowed from the gratitude of the converts. If the Preaching Friars were to succeed at such a time as this, they could only hope to do so by exhibiting as sublime a faith as the Minorites displayed to the world. Accordingly, in the very year after the second Chapter of the Franciscans was held at Assisi, a general Chapter of the Dominicans was held at Bologna, and there the profession of poverty was formally adopted, and the renunciation of all means of support, except such as

might be offered from day to day, was insisted on. Henceforth the two orders were to labour side by side in magnificent rivalry--mendicants who went forth like Gideon's host with empty pitchers to fight the battles of the Lord, and whose desires, as far as the good things of this world went, were summed up in the simple petition, "Give us this day our daily bread!"

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Thus far the friars had scarcely been heard of in England. The Dominicans--trained men of education, addressing themselves mainly to the educated classes, and sure of being understood wherever Latin, the universal medium of communication among scholars, was in daily and hourly use--the Dominicans could have little or no difficulty in getting an audience such as they were qualified to address. It was otherwise with the Franciscans. If the world was to be divided between these two great bands, obviously the Minorites' sphere of labour must be mainly among the lowest, that of the Preaching Friars among the cultured classes.

When the Minorites preached among Italians or Frenchmen they were received with tumultuous welcome. They spoke the language of the people; and in the vulgar speech of the people--rugged, plastic, and reckless of grammar--the message came as glad tidings of great joy. When they tried the same method in Germany, we are told, they signally failed. The gift of tongues, alas! had ceased. That, at any rate, was denied, even to such faith as theirs. They were met with ridicule. The rabble of Cologne or Bremen, hoarsely grumbling out their grating gutturals, were not to be moved by the most impassioned pleading of angels in human form, soft though their voices might be, and musical their tones. "Ach Himmel! was sagt er?" growled one. And peradventure some well-meaning interpreter replied: "Zu suchen und selig zu machen." When the Italian tried to repeat the words his utterance, not his faith, collapsed! The German-speaking people must wait till a door should be opened. Must England wait too? Yes! For the Franciscan missionaries England too must wait a little while.

But England was exactly the land for the Dominican to turn to. Unhappy England! Dominic was born in the same year that Thomas a Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral; Francis in the year before the judgment of the Most High began to fall upon the guilty king and his accursed progeny. Since then everything seemed to have gone wrong. The last six years of Henry the Second's reign were years of piteous misery, shame, and bitterness. His two elder sons died in arms against their father, the one childless, the other, Geoffrey, with a baby boy never destined to arrive at manhood. The two younger ones were Richard and John. History has no story more sad than that of the wretched king, hard at death's door, compelled to submit to the ferocious vindictiveness of the one son, and turning his face to the wall with a broken heart when he discovered the hateful treachery of the other. Ten years after this Richard died childless, and King John was crowned--the falsest, meanest, worst, and wickedest king that ever sat upon the throne of England. And now John himself was dead; and "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child!" for Henry the Third was crowned, a boy just nine years old.

For eight years England had lain under the terrible interdict; for most of the time only a single bishop had remained in England. John had small need to tax the people: he lived upon the plunder of

bishops and abbots. The churches were desolate; the worship of God in large districts almost came to an end. Only in the Cistercian monasteries, and in them only for a time, and to a very limited extent, were the rites of religion continued. It is hardly conceivable that the places of those clergy who died during the eight years of the interdict were supplied by fresh ordinations; and some excuse may have been found for the outrageous demands of the Pope to present to English benefices in the fact that many cures must have been vacant, and the supply of qualified Englishmen to succeed them had fallen short.

Strange to say, in the midst of all this religious famine, and while the Church was being ruthlessly pillaged and her ministers put to rebuke, there was more intellectual activity in the country than had existed for centuries. The schools at Oxford were attracting students from far and near; and when, in consequence of the disgraceful murder of three _clerics_ in 1209, apparently at the instance of King John, the whole body of masters and scholars dispersed--some to Cambridge, others to Reading--it is said their number amounted to 3,000. These were for the most part youths hardly as old as the undergraduates in a Scotch university in our own time; but there was evidently an ample supply of competent teachers, or the reputation of Oxford could not have been maintained.

It was during the year after the Chapter of the Dominicans held at Bologna in 1220, that the first brethren of the order arrived in England. They were under the direction of one Gilbert de Fraxineto, who was accompanied by twelve associates. They landed early in August, probably at Dover. They were at once received with cordiality by Archbishop Langton, who put their powers to the test by commanding one of their number to preach before him. The Primate took them into his favour, and sent them on their way. On the 10th of August they were preaching in London, and on the 15th they appeared in Oxford, and were welcomed as the bringers-in of new things. Their success was unequivocal. We hardly hear of their arrival before we learn that they were well established in their school and surrounded by eager disciples.

Be it remembered that any systematic training of young men to serve as evangelists--any attempt to educate them directly as preachers well furnished with arguments to confute the erring, and carefully taught to practise the graces of oratory--had never been made in England. These Dominicans were already the Sophists of their age, masters of dialectic methods then in vogue, whereby disputation had been raised to the dignity of a science. Then a scholar was looked upon as a mere pretender who could not maintain a _thesis_ against all comers before a crowded audience of sharp-witted critics and eager partisans, not too nice in their expressions of dissent or approval. The exercises still kept up for the Doctor's degree in Divinity at Oxford and Cambridge are but the shadow of what was a reality in the past. Whether we have not lost much in the discontinuance of the old _Acts_ and _Apponencies_, which at least assured that a young man should be required to stand up before a public audience to defend the reasonableness of his opinions, may fairly be doubted. The aim of the Dominican teachers was to turn out trained preachers furnished with all tricks of dialectic fence, and practised to extempore speaking on the most momentous subjects. Unfortunately the historian, when he has told us of the arrival of his brethren, leaves us in the dark as to all their

early struggles and difficulties, and passes on to other matters with which we are less concerned. What would we not give to know the history, say during only twenty years, of the labours of the Preaching Friars in England? Alas! it seems never to have been written. We are only told enough to awaken curiousity and disappoint it.

Happily, of the early labours of the Franciscan friars in England much fuller details have reached us, though the very existence of the records in which they were handed down was known to very few, and the wonderful story had been forgotten for centuries when the appearance of the "Monumenta Franciscana" in the series of chronicles published under direction of the Master of the Rolls in 1858 may be said to have marked an event in literature. If the late Mr. Brewer had done no more than bring to light the remarkable series of documents which that volume contains, he would have won for himself the lasting gratitude of all seekers after truth.

The Dominicans had been settled in Oxford just two years when the first band of Franciscan brethren landed in England on the 11th of September, 1224. They landed penniless; their passage over had been paid by the monks of Fécamp; they numbered in all nine persons, five were laymen, four were clerics. Of the latter three were Englishmen, the fourth was an Italian, Agnellus of Pisa by name. Agnellus had been some time previously destined by St. Francis as the first _Minister_ for the province of England, not improbably because he had some familiarity with our language. He was about thirty years of age, and as yet only in deacon's orders. Indeed, of the whole company _only one was a priest_, a man of middle age who had made his mark and was famous as a preacher of rare gifts and deep earnestness. He was a Norfolk man born, Richard of Ingworth by name and presumably a priest of the diocese of Norwich. Of the five laymen one was a Lombard, who may have had some kinsfolk and friends in London, where he was allowed to remain as warden for some years, and one, Lawrence of Beauvais, was a personal and intimate friend of St. Francis, who on his death-bed gave him the habit which he himself had worn.

The whole party were hospitably entertained for two days at the Priory of the Holy Trinity at Canterbury. Then brother Richard Ingworth, with another Richard--a Devonshire youth conspicuous for his ascetic fervour and devotion, but only old enough to be admitted to minor orders--set out for London, accompanied by the Lombard and another foreigner, leaving behind him Agnellus and the rest, among them William of Esseby, the third Englishman, enthusiastic and ardent as the others, but a mere youth and as yet a novice. He, too, I conjecture to have been a Norfolk or Suffolk man, whose birth-place, _Ashby_, in the East Anglian dialect, would be pronounced nearly as it is written in Eccleston's manuscript. It was arranged that Richard Ingworth should lose no time in trying to secure some place where they might all lay their heads, and from whence as a centre they might begin the great work they had in hand. The Canterbury party were received into the Priest's House and allowed to remain for a while. Soon they received permission to sleep in a building used as a school during the day-time, and while the boys were being taught the poor friars huddled together in a small room adjoining, where they were confined as if they had been prisoners. When the scholars went home the friars crept out, lit a fire and sat round it, boiled their porridge, and mixed their small beer, sour and thick as we are

told it was, with water to make it go further, and each contributed some word of edification to the general stock, brought forward some homely illustration which might serve to brighten the next sermon when it should be preached, or told a pleasant tale, thought out during the day--a story with a moral. Of the five left behind at Canterbury it is to be observed that no one of them was qualified as yet to preach in the vernacular. William of Esseby was too young for the pulpit, though he became a very effective preacher in a few years. He was, however, doing good service as interpreter, and doubtless as teacher of English to the rest.

Before long the cheerfulness, self-denial, and devout bearing of the little company at Canterbury gained for them the warm support and friendship of all classes. They had a very hard time of it. Sometimes a kind soul would bring them actually a dish of meat, sometimes even a bottle of wine, but as a rule their fare was bread--made up into _twists_, we hear, when it was specially excellent--wheat-bread, wholesome and palatable; but, alas, sometimes barley-bread, washed down with beer too sour to drink undiluted with water. Alexander, the master of the Priest's House at Canterbury, soon after gave them a piece of ground and built them a temporary chapel, but when he was for presenting them with the building, he was told that they might not possess houses and lands, and the property was thereupon made over to the corporation of Canterbury to hold in honourable trust for their use, the friars _borrowing_ it of the town. Simon Langton too, Archdeacon of Canterbury, the primate's brother, stood their friend, and one or two people of influence among the laity, as Sir Henry de Sandwich, a wealthy Kentish gentleman, and a lady whom Eccleston calls a "noble countess," one Inclusa de Baginton, warmly supported them and liberally supplied their necessities. It is worthy of notice that at Canterbury their first friends were among the wealthy, _i.e._, those among whom a command of English was not necessary.

While Agnellus and his brethren were waiting patiently at Canterbury, Ingworth and young Richard of Devon with the two Italians had made their way to London and had been received with enthusiasm. Their first entertainers were the Dominican friars who, though they had been only two years before them, yet had already got for themselves a house, in which they were able to entertain the new-comers for a fortnight. At the end of that time they hired a plot of ground in Cornhill of John Travers, the Sheriff of London, and there they built for themselves a house, such as it was. Their cells were constructed like sheep-cotes, mere wattels with mouldy hay or straw between them. Their fare was of the meanest, but they gained in estimation every day. In their humble quarters at Cornhill they remained preaching, visiting, nursing, begging their bread, but always gay and busy, till the summer of 1225, when a certain John Iwyn--again a name suspiciously like the phonetic representative of the common Norfolk name of _Ewing_--a mercer and citizen, offered them a more spacious and comfortable dwelling in the parish of St. Nicholas. As their brethren at Canterbury had done, so did they; they refused all houses and lands, and the house was made over to the corporation of London for their use. Not long after the worthy citizen assumed the Franciscan habit and renounced the world, to embrace poverty.

In the autumn of 1225 Ingworth and the younger Richard left London, Agnellus taking their place. He had not been idle at Canterbury, and his success in making converts had been remarkable. At Canterbury and

London the Minorites had secured for themselves a firm footing. The Universities were next invaded. The two Richards reached Oxford about October, 1225, and as before were received with great cordiality by the Dominicans, and hospitably entertained for eight days. Before a week was out they had got the loan of a house or hall in the parish of St. Ebbs, and had started lectures and secured a large following. Here young Esseby joined them, sent on it seems by Agnellus from London to assist in the work; a year or so older than when he first landed, and having shown in that time unmistakable signs of great capacity and entire devotion to the work. Esseby was quite able to stand alone.

Once more the two Richards moved on to Northampton, where an "opening from the Lord" seemed to have presented itself. By this time the whole country was on the tip-toe of expectation and crowds of all classes had given in their adhesion to the new missionaries. No! it was _not_ grandeur or riches or honour or learning that were wanted above all things--not these, but Goodness, Meekness, Simplicity, and Truth. The love of money was the root of all evil. The Minorites were right. When men with a divine fervour proclaim a truth, or even half a truth, which the world has forgotten, there is never any lack of enthusiasm in its acceptance. In five years from their first arrival the Friars had established themselves in almost every considerable town in England, and where one order settled the other came soon after, the two orders in their first beginning co-operating cordially. It was only when their faith and zeal began to wax cold that jealousy broke forth into bitter antagonism.

In no part of England were the Franciscans received with more enthusiasm than in Norfolk. They appear to have established themselves at Lynn, Yarmouth, and Norwich in 1226. Clergy and laity, rich and poor, united in offering to them a ready homage. To this day a certain grudging provincialism is observable in the East Anglian character. A Norfolk man distrusts the settler from "the Shires," who comes in with new-fangled reforms. To this day the home of wisdom is supposed to be in the East. When it was understood that the virtual leader of this astonishing religious revival was a Norfolk man, the joy and pride of Norfolk knew no bounds. Nothing was too much to do for their own hero. But when it became known that Ingworth had been welcomed with open arms by Robert Grosseteste, the foremost scholar in Oxford--he a Suffolk man--and that Grosseteste's friend, Roger de Weseham, was their warm supporter, son of a Norfolk yeoman, whose brethren were to be seen any day in Lynn market--the ovation that the Franciscans met with was unparalleled. There was a general rush by some of the best men of the county into the order.

Already St. Francis had found it necessary to include in the fraternity a class of recognized associates who may be described as the _unattached_. These were the _Tertiaries_--laymen who were not prepared to embrace the vows of poverty and to surrender their all--but well-wishers pledged to support the Minorites, and to co-operate with them when called upon, showing their good-will sometimes in visiting the sick and needy, sometimes in engaging in the work of teaching, or accompanying the preachers when advisable, and bound by their engagement to set an example of sobriety and seriousness in their dress and manners.

Up to this time the word _religious_ had been applied only to such as were inmates of a cloister. Now the truth dawned upon men

that it was possible to live the higher life even while pursuing one's ordinary vocation in the busy world. The tone of social morality must have gained enormously by the dissemination of this new doctrine, and its acceptance among high and low. It became the fashion in the upper classes to enrol oneself among the Tertiaries, and every new enrolment was an important accession to the stability, and, indeed, to the material resources of the Minorites; and when, apparently within a few days of one another--no less than five gentlemen of knightly rank, of whom at least one, Sir Giles de Merc, had only recently been employed as an envoy by the king to his brother Richard in Gascony, and another, Sir Henry de Walpole, was amongst the most considerable and wealthy men in the eastern counties, Henry the Third spoke out his mind and showed that he was not too well-pleased. Really these friars were going on too fast--turning men's heads! At Lynn the Franciscans were specially fortunate in their warden, whose austerity of life, gentle manners, and profoundly sympathetic temperament obtained for him unbounded influence. Among others Alexander de Bassingbourne [Footnote: The name is again changed into _Bissing_burne by Eccleston, who writes it as he heard it from Norfolk people.]--seneschal of Lynn for Pandulph, Bishop of Norwich, and, as such, a personage of importance, became his convert and joined the new order; but the number of Norfolk clergy and scholars who actually became friars must have been very large indeed; they were quite the picked men among the Franciscans in England. Of the first eighteen masters of Franciscan schools at Cambridge, at least ten were Norfolk men, while of the first five Divinity readers at Oxford whose names have been recorded, after those of Grosseteste and Roger de Weseham, four were unmistakably East Anglians. No one familiar with Norfolk topography could fail to be struck by this fact, and the queer spellings of some places, which puzzled even Mr. Brewer, are themselves suggestive. [Footnote: _E.g._, Turnham represents the Norfolk pronunciation of _Thornham_. Heddele is _Hadleigh_, in Suffolk spelt phonetically ; Ravingham is _Raveningham_, Assewelle is _Ashwell_ [cf. p. 93, Esseby for Ashby], Sloler is _Sloley_, Leveringfot is _Letheringset_.]

St. Francis died at Assisi on October 4, 1226. With his death troubles began. Brother Elias, who was chosen to succeed him as Minister General of the Order, had little of the great founder's spirit, and none of his genius. There was unseemly strife and rivalry, and on the Continent it would appear that the Minorites made but little way. Not so was it in England; there the supply of brethren animated by genuine enthusiasm and burning zeal for the cause they had espoused was unexampled. Perhaps there more than anywhere else such labourers were needed, perhaps too they had a fairer field. Certainly there they were truer to their first principles than elsewhere.

Outside the city walls at Lynn and York and Bristol; in a filthy swamp at Norwich, through which the drainage of the city sluggishly trickled into the river, never a foot lower than its banks; in a mere barn-like structure, with walls of mud, at Shrewsbury, in the "Stinking Alley" in London, the Minorites took up their abode, and there they lived on charity, doing for the lowest the most menial offices, speaking to the poorest the words of hope, preaching to learned and simple such sermons--short, homely, fervent, and emotional--as the world had not heard for many a day. How could such evangelists fail to win their way? Before Henry III.'s reign was half over the predominance of the Franciscans over Oxford was almost

supreme. At Cambridge their influence was less dominant only because at Cambridge there was no commanding genius like Robert Grosseteste to favour and support them.

St. Francis's hatred of book-learning was the one sentiment that he never was able to inspire among his followers. Almost from the first scholars, students, and men of learning were attracted by the irresistible charm of his wonderful moral persuasiveness; they gave in their adherence to him in a vague hope that by contact with his surpassing holiness virtue would go out of him, and that somehow the divine goodness which he magnified as the one thing needful would be communicated to them and supply that which was lacking in themselves; but they could not bring themselves to believe that culture and holiness were incompatible or that nearness to God was possible only to those who were ignorant and uninstructed. We should have expected learning among the Dominicans, but very soon the English Franciscans became the most learned body in Europe, and that character they never lost till the suppression of the monasteries swept them out of the land. Before Edward I. came to the throne, in less than fifty years after Richard Ingworth and his little band landed at Dover, Robert Kilwarby, a Franciscan friar, had been chosen Archbishop of Canterbury, and Bonaventura, the General of the Order, had refused the Archbishopric of York. In 1281 Jerome of Ascoli, Bonaventura's successor as General, was elected Pope, assuming the name of Nicholas IV.

Meanwhile such giants as Alexander Hales and Roger Bacon and Duns Scotus among the Minorites--all Englishmen be it remembered--and Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus among the Dominicans, had given to intellectual life that amazing lift into a higher region of thought, speculation, and inquiry which prepared the way for greater things by-and-by. It was at Assisi that Cimabue and Giotto received their most sublime inspiration and did their very best, breathing the air that St. Francis himself had breathed and listening day by day to traditions and memories of the saint, told peradventure by one or another who had seen him alive or even touched his garments in their childhood. It may even be that there Dante watched Giotto at his work while the painter got the poet's face by heart.

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To write the history of the Mendicant Orders in England would be a task beyond my capacity, but no man can hope to understand the successes or the failures of any great party in Church or State until he has arrived at some comprehension, not only of the objects which it set itself to achieve, but of its _modus operandi_ at the outset of its career.

The Friars were a great party in the Church, organized with a definite object, and pledged to carry out that object in simple reliance upon what we now call the _Voluntary Principle_. St. Francis saw, and saw much more clearly than even we of the nineteenth century see it, that the Parochial system is admirable, is a perfect system for the village, that it is unsuited for the town, that in the towns the attempt to work it had ended in a miserable and scandalous failure. The Friars came as helpers of the poor town clergy, just when those clergy had begun to give up their task as hopeless. They came as missionaries to those whom the town clergy had got to regard as mere _pariahs_. They came to strengthen the weak hands, and

to labour in a new field. _St. Francis was the John Wesley of the thirteenth century, whom the Church did not cast out_.

Rome has never been afraid of fanaticism. She has always known how to utilise her enthusiasts fired by a new idea. The Church of England has never known how to deal with a man of genius. From Wicklif to Frederick Robertson, from Bishop Peacock to Dr. Rowland Williams, the clergyman who has been in danger of impressing his personality upon Anglicanism, where he has not been the object of relentless persecution, has at least been regarded with timid suspicion, has been shunned by the prudent men of low degree, and by those of high degree has been--forgotten. In the Church of England there has never been a time when the enthusiast has not been treated as a very _unsafe_ man. Rome has found a place for the dreamiest mystic or the noisiest ranter--found a place and found a sphere of useful labour. We, with our insular prejudices, have been sticklers for the narrowest uniformity, and yet we have accepted, as a useful addition to the Creed of Christendom, one article which we have only not formulated because, perhaps, it came to us from a Roman Bishop, the great sage Talleyrand--_Surtout pas trop de zèle!_

The Minorites were the Low Churchmen of the thirteenth century, the Dominicans the severely orthodox, among whom spiritual things were believed to be attainable only through the medium of significant form. Rome knew how to yoke the two together, Xanthos and Balios champing at the bit yet always held well in hand. At the outset the two orders were so deeply impressed by the magnitude of the evils they were to combat that they hardly knew there was anything in which they were at variance. Gradually--yes, and somewhat rapidly--each borrowed something from the other. The Minorites found they could not do without culture; the Dominicans renounced endowments; by-and-by they drew apart into separate camps, and discord proved that the old singleness of purpose and loyalty to a great cause had passed away. Imitators arose. Reformers they all professed to be, improvers of the original idea, Augustinian Friars, Carmelites, Bethlehemites, Bonhommes, and the rest. Friars they all called themselves--all pledged to the Voluntary Principle, all renouncing endowments, all professing to live on alms.

I have called St. Francis the John Wesley of the thirteenth century. The parallels might be drawn out into curious detail, if we compared the later history of the great movements originated by one or the other reformer. The new orders of Friars were to the old ones what the Separatists among the Wesleyan body are to the Old Connexion. They had their grievances, real or imagined, they loudly protested against corruption and abuses, they professed themselves anxious only to go back to first principles. Rome absorbed them all; they became the Church's great army of volunteers, perfectly disciplined, admirably handled; their very jealousies and rivalries turned to good account. When John Wesley offered to the Church of England precisely their successors, we would have no commerce with them; we did our best to turn them into a hostile and invading force.

The Friars were the Evangelizers of the towns in England for 300 years. When the spoliation of the religious houses was decided upon, the Friars were the first upon whom the blow fell--the first and the last. [Footnote: The king began with the Franciscan convent of Christ Church, London, in 1532; he bestowed the Dominican convent at Norwich upon the corporation of that city on the 25th of June, 1540.] But

when their property came to be looked into, there was nothing to rob but the churches in which they worshipped, the libraries in which they studied, and the houses in which they passed their lives. Rob the county hospitals to-morrow through the length and breadth of the land, or make a general scramble for the possessions of the Wesleyan body, and how many broad acres would go to the hammer?

Voluntaryism leaves little for the spoiler.

As with the later history of the Friars in England, so with the corruptions of the Mendicant orders--though they were as great as malice or ignorance may have represented them--I am not concerned. That the Minorites of the fourteenth century were very unlike the Minorites of the thirteenth I know; that the other Mendicant orders declined, I cannot doubt--

> What keeps a spirit wholly true
> To that ideal which he bears?
> What record? Not the sinless years
> That breathed beneath the Syrian blue.

The Rule of St. Francis was a glorious ideal; when it came to be carried into practice by creatures of flesh and blood, it proved to be something to dream of, not to live. And yet, even as it was, its effects upon the Church, nay, upon the whole civilized world, were enormous. If, one after another, the Mendicant orders declined, if their zeal grew cold, their simplicity of life faded, and their discipline relaxed; if they became corrupted by that very world which they promised to purify and deliver from the dominion of Mammon--this is only what has happened again and again, what must happen as long as men are men. In every age the prophet has always asked for the unattainable, always pointed to a higher level than human nature could breathe in, always insisted on a measure of self-renunciation which saints in their prayers send forth the soul's lame hands to clutch-in their ecstasy of aspiration hope that they may some day arrive at. But, alas! they reach it--never. And yet the saint and the prophet do not live in vain. They send a thrill of noble emotion through the heart of their generation, and the divine tremor does not soon subside; they gather round them the pure and generous--the lofty souls which are not all of the earth earthy. In such, at any rate, a fire is kindled by the spark that has fallen from the altar. By-and-by it is the fuel that fails; then the old fire, after smouldering for a while, goes out, and by no stirring of the dead embers can you make them flame again. You may cry as loudly as you will, "Pull down the chimney that will not draw, and set up another in its place!" That you may do if you please; another fire you may have, but the new will not be as the old.

II.

VILLAGE LIFE SIX HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

> "The rude forefathers of the hamlet..."

[In the autumn of 1878, while on a visit at Rougham Hall, Norfolk, the seat of Mr. Charles North, my kind host drew my attention to some large boxes of manuscripts, which he told me nobody knew anything about, but which I was at liberty to ransack to my heart's content. I at once dived into one of the boxes, and then spent half the night in examining some of its treasures. The chest is one of many, constituting in their entirety a complete apparatus for the history of the parish of Rougham from the time of Henry the Third to the present day--so complete that it would be difficult to find in England a collection of documents to compare with it.

The whole parish contains no more than 2,627 acres, of which about thirty acres were not included in the estate slowly piled up by the Yelvertons, and purchased by Roger North in 1690.

Yet the charters and evidences of various kinds which were handed over with this small property, and which date _before_ the sixteenth century, count by thousands. The smaller strips of parchment or vellum--for the most part conveyances of land, and having seals attached--have been roughly bound together in volumes, each containing about one hundred documents, and arranged with some regard to chronology, the undated ones being collected into a volume by themselves. I think it almost certain that the arranging of the early charters in their rude covers was carried out before 1500 A.D., and I have a suspicion that they were grouped together by Sir William Yelverton, "the cursed Norfolk Justice" of the Paston Letters, who inherited the estate from his mother in the first half of the fifteenth century.

When Roger North purchased the property the ancient evidences were handed over to him as a matter of course; and there are many notes in his handwriting showing that he found the collection in its present condition, and that he had bestowed much attention upon it. Blomefield seems to have been aware of the existence of the Rougham muniments, but I think he never saw them; and for one hundred and fifty years, at least, they had lain forgotten until they came under my notice. Of this large mass of documents I had copied or abstracted scarcely more than five hundred, and I had not yet got beyond the year 1355. The court rolls, bailiffs' accounts, and early leases, I had hardly looked at when this lecture was delivered.

The following address gives some of the results of my examination of the first series of the Rougham charters. It was delivered in the Public Reading-room of the village of Tittleshall, a parish adjoining Rougham, and was listened to with apparent interest and great attention by an audience of farmers, village tradesmen, mechanics, and labourers. I was careful to avoid naming any place which my audience were not likely to know well; and there is hardly a parish mentioned which is five miles from the lecture-room.

When speaking of "six hundred years," I gave myself roughly a limit of thirty years before and after 1282, and I have rarely gone beyond that limit on one side or the other.

They who are acquainted with Mr. Rogers' "History of Prices" will observe that I have ventured to put forward views, on more points than one, very different from those which he advocates.

Of the value of Mr. Rogers' compilation, and of the statistics which

he has tabulated, there can be but one opinion. It is when we come to draw our inferences from such returns as these, and bring to bear upon them the sidelights which further evidence affords, that differences of opinion arise among inquirers. I really know nothing about the Midlands in the Middle Ages; I am disgracefully ignorant of the social condition of the South and West; but the early history of East Anglia, and especially of Norfolk, has for long possessed a fascination for me; and though I am slow to arrive at conclusions, and have a deep distrust of those historians who, for every pair of facts, construct a Trinity of Theories, I feel sure of my ground on some matters, because I have done my best to use all such evidence as has come my way.]

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Few things have struck me more forcibly since I have cast in my lot among country people, than the strange ignorance which they exhibit of the _history of themselves_. I do not allude to those unpleasant secrets which we should be very sorry indeed for our next-door neighbours to be acquainted with, nor to any such matters as our experience or memories of actual facts could bring to our minds; I mean something very much more than that. Men and women are not only the beings they appear to be at any one moment of their lives, they are not single separate atoms like grains of sand. Rather they are like branches or leaves of some great tree, from which they have sprung and on which they have grown, whose life in the past has come at last to them in the present, and without whose deep anchorage in the soil, and its ages of vigour and vitality, not a bud or a spray that is so fresh and healthful now would have had any existence.

Consider for a moment--Who are we, and what do we mean by _Ourselves_? When I meet a ragged, shuffling tramp on the road (and I meet a good many of them in my lonely walks) I often find myself asking the question, "How did that shambling vagabond come to his present condition? Did his father turn him out of doors? Did his mother drink? Did he learn nothing but lying and swearing and thieving when he was a child? Was his grandfather hanged for some crime, or was his great-grandfather a ruffian killed in a fight?" And I say to myself, "Though I do not know the truth, yet I am sure that man was helped towards his vagabondism, helped to become an outcast as he is, by the neglect or the wickedness, the crimes or the bad example of his fathers and forefathers on one side or the other; for if he had come of decent people on both sides, people who had been honestly and soberly brought up themselves, as they tried to bring up their children, yonder dirty tramp would not and could not have sunk to his present self, for we and ourselves are what we come to, partly by our own sins and vices, but partly (and much more than some like to believe) by the sins, negligences, and ignorances of those whose blood is in our veins.

My friends, it surely must be worth our while to know much more than most of us do know about _Ourselves_.

Being convinced of this, and believing, moreover, that to most of us nothing on earth is so interesting as that which most concerns ourselves at any period of our existence, I resolved, when I was asked to address you here this evening, that I would try to give you some notion of the kind of life which your fathers led in this parish a long, long time ago, and so help you to understand through what

strange changes we have all passed, and what strange stories the walls of our houses, if they could speak, would have to tell, and on what wonderful struggles, and hardships, and dangers, and sorrows yonder church tower of yours has looked down, since, centuries ago, it first rose up, the joy and pride of those whose hands laid stone on stone.

When I came to think over the matter, however, I found that I could not tell you very much that I was sure of about your own parish of Tittleshall, but that it so happened I could tell you something that is new to you about a parish that joins your own; and because what was going on among your close neighbours at any one time would be in the main pretty much what would be going on among your forefathers, in bringing before you the kind of life which people led in the adjoining parish of Rougham six hundred years ago, I should be describing precisely the life which people were leading here in this parish where we are now--people, remember, whose blood is throbbing in the veins of some of you present; for from that dust that lies in your churchyard yonder I make no doubt that some of you have sprung--you whom I am speaking to now.

Six hundred years ago! Yes, it is a long time. Not a man of you can throw his thoughts back to so great a lapse of time. I do not expect it of you; but nevertheless I am going to try to give you a picture of a Norfolk village, and that a village which you all know better than I do, such as it was six hundred years ago.

In those days an ancestor of our gracious Queen, who now wears the crown of England, was king; and the Prince of Wales, whom many of you must have seen in Norfolk, was named _Edward_ after this same king. In those days there were the churches standing generally where they stand now. In those days, too, the main roads ran pretty much where they now run; and there was the same sun overhead, and there were clouds, and winds, and floods, and storms, and sunshine; but if you, any of you, could be taken up and dropped down in Tittleshall or Rougham such as they were at the time I speak of, you would feel almost as strange as if you had been suddenly transported to the other end of the world.

The only object that you would at all recognize would be the parish church. That stands where it did, and where it has stood, perhaps, for a thousand years or more; but, at the time we are now concerned with, it looked somewhat different from what it looks now. It had a tower, but that tower was plainer and lower than the present one. The windows, too, were very different; they were smaller and narrower; I think it probable that in some of them there was stained glass, and it is almost certain that the walls were covered with paintings representing scenes from the Bible, and possibly some stories from the lives of the saints, which everybody in those days was familiar with. There was no pulpit and no reading desk. When the parson preached, he preached from the steps of the altar. The altar itself was much more ornamented than now it is. Upon the altar there were always some large wax tapers which were lit on great occasions, and over the altar there hung a small lamp which was kept alight night and day. It was the parson's first duty to look to it in the morning, and his last to trim it at night.

The parish church was too small for the population of Rougham, and the consequence was that it had been found necessary to erect what we

should now call a chapel of ease--served, I suppose, by an assistant priest, who would be called a chaplain. I cannot tell you where this chapel stood, but it had a burial-ground of its own. [Footnote: Compare the remarkable regulations of Bishop Woodloke of Winchester (A.D. 1308), illustrative of this. Wilkins' "Conc.," vol. ii. p. 296. By these constitutions every chapel, two miles from the mother church, was bound to have its own burying-ground]

There was, I think, only one road deserving the name, which passed through Rougham. It ran almost directly north and south from Coxford Abbey to Castle Acre Priory. But do not suppose that a road in those days meant what it does now. To begin with, people in the country never drove about in carriages. In such a place as Rougham, men and women might live all their lives without ever seeing a travelling carriage, whether on four wheels or two. [Footnote: It is, however, not improbable that when the Queen came into Norfolk, the eyes of the awe-struck rustics may have been dazzled by even such an astonishing equipage as is figured in Mr. Parker's "Hist. Domestic Architecture," vol. ii. p. 141.] The road was quite unfit for driving on. There were no highway rates. Now and then a roadway got so absolutely impassable, or a bridge over a stream became so dangerous, that people grumbled; and then an order came down from the king to the high sheriff of the county, bidding him see to his road, and the sheriff thereupon taxed the dwellers in the hundred and forced them to put things straight. The village of Rougham in those days was in its general plan not very unlike the present village--that is to say, the church standing where it does, next to the churchyard was the parsonage with a croft attached; and next to that a row of houses inhabited by the principal people of the place, whose names I could give you, and the order of their dwellings, if it were worth while. Each of these houses had some outbuildings--cowsheds, barns, &c., and a small croft fenced round. Opposite these houses was another row facing west, as the others faced east; but these latter houses were apparently occupied by the poorer inhabitants--the smith, the carpenter, and the general shopkeeper, who called himself, and was called by others, the _merchant_. There was one house which appears to have stood apart from the rest and near Wesenham Heath. It probably was encircled by a moat, and approached by a drawbridge, the bridge being drawn up at sunset. It was called the Lyng House, and had been probably built two or three generations back, and now was occupied by a person of some consideration--viz., Thomas Middleton, Archdeacon of Suffolk, and brother of William Middleton, then Bishop of Norwich. This house was on the east side of the road, and the road leading up to it had a name, and was called the Hutgong. In front of the house was something like a small park of 5½ acres inclosed; and next that again, to the south, 4 acres of ploughed land; and behind that again--that is, between it and the village--there was the open heath. Altogether, this property consisted of a house and 26 acres. Archdeacon Middleton bought it on October 6, 1283, and he bought it in conjunction with his brother Elias, who was soon after made seneschal or steward of Lynn for his other brother, the bishop. The two brothers probably used this as their country house, for both of them had their chief occupation elsewhere; but when the bishop died, in 1288, and they became not quite the important people they had been before, they sold the Lyng House to another important person, of whom we shall hear more by-and-by.

The Lyng House, however, was not the great house of Rougham. I am inclined to think _that_ stood not far from the spot where

Rougham Hall now stands. It was in those days called the Manor House, or the Manor.

And this brings me to a point where I must needs enter into some explanations. Six hundred years ago all the land in England was supposed to belong to the king in the first instance. The king had in former times parcelled it out into tracts of country, some large and some small, and made over these tracts to his great lords, or barons, as they were called. The barons were supposed to hold these tracts, called fiefs, as _tenants_ of the king, and in return they were expected to make an acknowledgment to the king in the shape of some _service_, which, though it was not originally a money payment, yet became so eventually, and was always a substantial charge upon the land. These fiefs were often made up of estates in many different shires; and, because it was impossible for the barons to cultivate all their estates themselves, they let them out to _subtenants_, who in their turn were bound to render services to the lord of the fief. These sub-tenants were the great men in the several parishes, and became the actual lords of the manors, residing upon the manors, and having each, on their several manors, very large powers for good or evil over the, tillers of the soil.

A manor six hundred years ago meant something very different from a manor now. The lord was a petty king, having his subjects very much under his thumb. But his subjects differed greatly in rank and status. In the first place, there were those who were called the free tenants. The free tenants were they who lived in houses of their own and cultivated land of their own, and who made only an annual money payment to the lord of the manor as an acknowledgment of his lordship. The payment was trifling, amounting to some few pence an acre at the most, and a shilling or so, as the case might be, for the house. This was called the _rent_, but it is a very great mistake indeed to represent this as the same thing which we mean by rent now-a-days. It really was almost identical with what we now call in the case of house property, "ground rent," and bore no proportion to the value of the produce that might be raised from the soil which the tenant held. The free tenant was neither a yearly tenant, nor a leaseholder. His holding was, to all intents and purposes, his own--subject, of course, to the payment of the ground rent. But if he wanted to sell out of his holding, the lord of the manor exacted a payment for the privilege. If he died, his heir had to pay for being admitted to his inheritance, and if he died without heirs, the property went back to the lord of the manor, who then, but only then, could raise the ground rent if he pleased, though he rarely did so. So much for the free tenants.

Besides these were the _villeins_ or _villani_, or _natives_, as they were called. The villeins were tillers of the soil, who held land under the lord, and who, besides paying a small money ground rent, were obliged to perform certain arduous services to the lord, such as to plough the lord's land for so many days in the year, to carry his corn in the harvest, to provide a cart on occasion, &c. Of course these burdens pressed very heavily at times,

and the services of the villeins were vexatious and irritating under a hard and unscrupulous lord. But there were other serious inconveniences about the condition of the villein or native. Once a villein, always a villein. A man or woman born in villeinage could never shake it off. Nay, they might not even go away from the manor

to which they were born, and they might not marry without the lord's license, and for that license they always had to pay. Let a villein be ever so shrewd or enterprising or thrifty, there was no hope for him to change his state, except by the special grace of the lord of the manor. [Footnote: I do not take account of those who ran away to the corporate towns. I suspect that there were many more cases of this than some writers allow. It was sometimes a serious inconvenience to the lords of manors near such towns as Norwich or Lynn. A notable example may be found in the "Abbrev, Placit.," p. 316 (6°. E. ii. Easter term). It seems that no less than eighteen villeins of the Manor of Cossey were named in a mandate to the Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, who were to be taken and reduced to villeinage, and their goods seized. Six of them pleaded that they were citizens of Norwich--the city being about four miles from Cossey.] Yes, there was one means whereby he could be set free, and that was if he could get a bishop to ordain him. The fact of a man being ordained at once made him a free man, and a knowledge of this fact must have served as a very strong inducement to young people to avail themselves of all the helps in their power to obtain something like an education, and so to qualify themselves for admission to the clerical order and to the rank of free-man.

At Rougham there was a certain Ralph Red, who was one of these villeins under the lord of the manor, a certain William le Butler. Ralph Red had a son Ralph, who I suppose was an intelligent youth, and made the most of his brains. He managed to get ordained about six hundred years ago, and he became a chaplain, perhaps to that very chapel of ease I mentioned before. His father, however, was still a villein, liable to all the villein services, and _belonging_ to the manor and the lord, he and all his offspring. Young Ralph did not like it, and at last, getting the money together somehow, he bought his father's freedom, and, observe, with his freedom the freedom of all his father's children too, and the price he paid was twenty marks. [Footnote: N.B.--A man could not buy his own freedom, Merewether's "Boroughs," i. 350. Compare too Littleton on "Tenures," p 65, 66.] That sounds a ridiculously small sum, but I feel pretty sure that six hundred years ago twenty marks would be almost as difficult for a penniless young chaplain to get together as L500 for a penniless young curate to amass now. Of the younger Ralph, who bought his father's freedom, I know little more; but, less than one hundred and fifty years after the elder man received his liberty, a lineal descendant of his became lord of the manor of Rougham, and, though he had no son to carry on his name, he had a daughter who married a learned judge, Sir William Yelverton, Knight of the Bath, whose monument you may still see at Rougham Church, and from whom were descended the Yelvertons, Earls of Sussex, and the present Lord Avonmore, who is a scion of the same stock.

When Ralph Red bought his father's freedom of William le Butler, William gave him an acknowledgment for the money, and a written certificate of the transaction, but he did not sign his name. In those days nobody signed their names, not because they could not write, for I suspect that just as large a proportion of people in England could write well six hundred years ago, as could have done so forty years ago, but because it was not the fashion to sign one's name. Instead of doing that, everybody who was a free man, and a man of substance, in executing any legal instrument, affixed to it his _seal_, and that stood for his signature. People always carried their seals about with them in a purse or small bag, and it was no

uncommon thing for a pickpocket to cut off this bag and run away with the seal, and thus put the owner to very serious inconvenience. This was what actually did happen once to William le Butler's father-in-law. He was a certain Sir Richard Bellhouse, and he lived at North Tuddenham, near Dereham. Sir Richard was High Sheriff for the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1291, and his duties brought him into court on January 25th of that year, before one of the Judges at Westminster. I suppose the court was crowded, and in the crowd some rogue cut off Sir Richard's purse, and made off with his seal. I never heard that he got it back again. [Footnote: Abbreviatio Placit. 284, b.]

And now I must return to the point from which I wandered when I began to speak of the free tenants and the "villeins." William le Butler, who sold old Ralph Red to his own son, the young Ralph, was himself sprung from a family who had held the Manor of Rougham for about a century. His father was Sir Richard le Butler, who died about 1280, leaving behind him one son, our friend William, and three daughters. Unfortunately, William le Butler survived his father only a very short time, and he left no child to succeed him. The result was that the inheritance of the old knight was divided among his daughters, and what had been hitherto a single lordship became three lordships, each of the parceners looking very jealously after his own interest, and striving to make the most of his powers _and rights_.

Though each of the husbands of Sir Richard le Butler's daughters was a man of substance and influence--yet, when the manor was divided, no one of them was anything like so great a person as the old Sir Richard. In those days, as in our own, there were much richer men in the country than the country gentlemen, and in Rougham at this time there were two very prosperous men who were competing with one another as to which should buy up most land in the parish, and be the great man of the place. The one of these was a gentleman called Peter the Roman, and the other was called Thomas the Lucky. They were both the sons of Rougham people, and it will be necessary to pursue the history of each of them to make you understand how things went in those "good old times."

First let me deal with Peter the Roman. He was the son of a Rougham lady named Isabella, by an Italian gentleman named Iacomo de Ferentino, or if you like to translate it into English, James of Ferentinum.

How James of Ferentinum got to Rougham and captured one of the Rougham heiresses we shall never know for certain. But we do know that in the days of King Henry, who was the father of King Edward, there was a very large incursion of Italian clergy into England, and that the Pope of Rome got preferment of all kinds for them. In fact, in King Henry's days the Pope had immense power in England, and it looked for a while as if every valuable piece of preferment in the kingdom would be bestowed upon Italians who did not know a word of English, and who often never came near their livings at all. One of these Italian gentlemen, whose name was _John_ de Ferentino, was very near being made Bishop of Norwich; [Footnote: At the death of Thomas de Blunville in 1236. John de Ferentino must have been almost supreme in the diocese. The see was practically vacant for three years.] he _was_ Archdeacon of Norwich, but though the Pope tried to make him bishop, he happily did not succeed in forcing him into the see that time, and John of Ferentinum had to content himself

with his archdeaconry and one or two other preferments.

Our friend at Rougham may have been, and probably was, some kinsman of the archdeacon, and it is just possible that Archdeacon Middleton, who, you remember, bought the Lyng House, may have had, as his predecessor in it, another archdeacon, this John de Ferentino, whose nephew or brother, James, married Miss Isabella de Rucham, and settled down among his wife's kindred. Be that as it may, John de Ferentino had two sons, Peter and Richard, and it appears that their father, not content with such education as Oxford or Cambridge could afford--though at this time Oxford was one of the most renowned universities in Europe--sent his sons to Rome, having an eye to their future advancement; for in King Henry's days a young man that had friends at Rome was much more likely to get on in the world than he who had only friends in the King's Court, and he who wished to push his interests in the Church must look to the Pope, and not to the King of England, as his main support.

When young Peter came back to Rougham, I dare say he brought back with him some new airs and graces from Italy, and I dare say the new fashions made his neighbours open their eyes. They gave the young fellow the name he is known by in the charters, and to the day of his death people called him Peter Romayn, or Peter the Roman. But Peter came back a changed man in more ways than one. He came back a cleric. We in England now recognize only three orders of clergy--bishops, priests, and deacons. But six hundred years ago it was very different. In those days a man might be two or three degrees below a deacon, and yet be counted a cleric and belonging to the clergy; and, though Peter Romayn was not priest or deacon, he was a privileged person in many ways, but a very unprivileged person in one way--he might never marry.

It was a hard case for a young man who had taken to the clerical profession without taking to the clerical life, and all the harder because there were old men living whose fathers or grandfathers had known the days when even a Bishop of Norwich was married, and who could tell of many an old country clergyman who had had his wife and children in the parsonage. But now--just six hundred years ago--if a young fellow had once been admitted a member of the clerical body, he was no longer under the protection of the laws of the realm, nor bound by them, but he was under the dominion of another law, commonly known as the Canon Law, which the Pope of Rome had succeeded in imposing upon the clergy; and in accordance with that law, if he took to himself a wife, he was, to all intents and purposes, a ruined man.

But when laws are pitted against human nature, they may be forced upon people by the strong hand of power, but they are sure to be evaded where they are not broken literally; and this law of forbidding clergymen to marry _was_ evaded in many ways. Clergymen took to themselves wives, and had families. Again and again their consciences justified them in their course, whatever the Canon Law might forbid or denounce. They married on the sly--if that may be called marriage which neither the Church nor the State recognized as a binding contract, and which was ratified by no formality or ceremony civil or religious: but public opinion was lenient; and where a clergyman was living otherwise a blameless life, his people did not think the worse of him for having a wife and children, however much the Canon Law and certain bigoted people might give the wife a bad name. And so it came to pass that Peter Romayn of Rougham,

cleric though he were, lost his heart one fine day to a young lady at Rougham, and marry he would. The young lady's name was Matilda. Her father, though born at Rougham, appears to have gone away from there when very young, and made money somehow at Leicester. He had married a Norfolk lady, one Agatha of Cringleford; and he seems to have died, leaving his widow and daughter fairly provided for; and they lived in a house at Rougham, which I dare say Richard of Leicester had bought. I have no doubt that young Peter Romayn was a young gentleman of means, and it is clear that Matilda was a very desirable bride. But then Peter _couldn't_ marry! How was it to be managed? I think it almost certain that no religious ceremony was performed, but I have no doubt that the two plighted their troth either to each, and that somehow they did become man and wife, if not in the eyes of Canon Law, yet by the sanction of a higher law to which the consciences of honourable men and women appeal against the immoral enactments of human legislation.

Among the charters at Rougham I find eighteen or twenty which were executed by Peter Romayn and Matilda. In no one of them is she called his wife; in all of them it is stipulated that the property shall descend to whomsoever they shall leave it, and in only one instance, and there I believe by a mistake of the scribe, is there any mention of their _lawful_ heirs. They buy land and sell it, sometimes separately, more often conjointly, but in all cases the interests of both are kept in view; the charters are witnessed by the principal people in the place, including Sir Richard Butler himself, more than once; and in one of the later charters Peter Romayn, as if to provide against the contingency of his own death, makes over all his property in Rougham without reserve to Matilda, and constitutes her the mistress of it all. [Footnote: By the constitutions of Bishop Woodloke, any _legacies_ left by a clergyman to his "concubine" were to be handed over to the bishop's official, and distributed to the poor.--Wilkins' "Cone." vol. ii. p. 296 b.]

Some year or two after this, Matilda executes her last conveyance, and executes it alone. She sells her whole interest in Rougham--the house in which she lives and all that it contains--lands and ground rents, and everything else, for money down, and we hear of her no more. Did she retire from the world, and find refuge in a nunnery? Did she go away to some other home? Who knows? And what of Peter the Roman? I know little of him, but I suspect the pressure put upon the poor man was too strong for him, and I suspect that somehow, and, let us hope, with much anguish and bitterness of heart--but yet somehow, he was compelled to repudiate the poor woman to whom there is evidence to show he was true and staunch as long as it was possible--and when it was no longer possible I _think_ he too turned his back upon the Rougham home, and was presented by the Prior of Westacre Monastery to the Rectory of Bodney at the other end of the county, where, let us hope, he died in peace.

It is a curious fact that Peter Romayn was not the only clergyman in Rougham whom we know to have been married. As for Peter Romayn, I believe he was an honourable man according to his light, and as far as any men were honourable in those rough days. But for the other. I do not feel so sure about him.

I said that the two prosperous men in Rougham six hundred years ago were Peter Romayn and Thomas the Lucky, or, as his name appears in the Latin Charters, Thomas Felix. When Archdeacon Middleton gave up

living at Rougham, Thomas Felix bought his estate, called the Lyng House; and shortly after he bought another estate, which, in fact, was a manor of its own, and comprehended thirteen free tenants and five villeins; and, as though this were not enough, on September 24, 1292, he took a lease of another manor in Rougham for six years, of one of the daughters of Sir Richard le Butler, whose husband, I suppose, wanted to go elsewhere. Before the lease expired he died, leaving behind him a widow named Sara and three little daughters, the eldest of whom cannot have been more than eight or nine years old. This was in the year 1294. Sara, the widow, was for the time a rich woman, and she made up her mind never to marry again, and she kept her resolve.

When her eldest daughter Alice came to the mature age of fifteen or sixteen, a young man named John of Thrysford wooed and won her. Mistress Alice was by no means a portionless damsel, and Mr. John seems himself to have been a man of substance. How long they were married I know not; but it could not have been more than a year or two, for less than five years after Mr. Felix's death a great event happened, which produced very momentous effects upon Rougham and its inhabitants in more ways than one.

Up to this time there had been a rector at Rougham, and apparently a good rectory-house and some acres of glebe land--how many I cannot say. But the canons of Westacre Priory cast their eyes upon the rectory of Rougham, and they made up their minds they would have it. I dare not stop to explain how the job was managed--that would lead me a great deal too far--but it _was_ managed, and accordingly, a year or two after the marriage of little Alice, they got possession of all the tithes and the glebe, and the good rectory-house at Rougham, and they left the parson of the parish with a smaller house on the other side of the road, and _not_ contiguous to the church, an allowance of two quarters of wheat and two quarters of barley a year, and certain small dues which might suffice to keep body and soul together but little more. [Footnote: This appears from the following charter, which it seems worth while to quote: "Pateat universis... quod nos Robertas de Feletone, Miles, et Hawigia uxor mea concessimus ... Alicie filie Thome de Rucham... Totum ius nostrum... in terris... dicte Alicie... in Rucham, que ... habuimus de dono et dimissione Johannis filii Roberti de Thyrsforde in Rucham _ante diuorstium_ (sic) _inter eundem Johannem et dictam_ Aliciam factum... Omnia munimenta et scripta que de dicto tenemento habuimus eidem Alicie quiete reddidimus... Datum apud Lucham die Dom: prox: post Annunc: B Mar: Virg: Anno R. R. Edw: fit. Reg. Henr: tricessimotertio" (28 March, 1305).--_Rougham Charter_, No. 157.]

John of Thyrsfordhad not been married more than a year or two when he had had enough of it. Whether at the time of his marriage he was already a _cleric_, I cannot tell, but I know that on October 10, 1301, he was a priest, and that on that day he was instituted to the vicarage of Rougham, having been already divorced from poor little Alice. As for Alice--if I understand the case, she never could marry, however much she may have wished it; she had no children to comfort her; she became by-and-by the great lady of Rougham, and there she lived on for nearly fifty years. Her husband, the vicar, lived on too--on what terms of intimacy I am unable to say. The vicar died some ten years before the lady. When old age was creeping on her she made over all her houses and lands in Rougham to feoffees, and I have a suspicion that she went into a nunnery and there died.

In dealing with the two cases of Peter Romayn and John of Thyrsford I have used the term _cleric_ more than once. These two men were, at the end of their career at any rate, what we now understand by clergyman; but there were hosts of men six hundred years ago in Norfolk who were _clerics,_ and yet who were by no means what we now understand by clergymen. The _clerics_ of six hundred years ago comprehended all those whom we now call the professional classes; all, _i.e._, who lived by their brains, as distinct from those who lived by trade or the labour of their hands.

Six hundred years ago it may be said that there were two kinds of law in England, the one was the law of the land, the other was the law of the Church. The law of the land was hideously cruel and merciless, and the gallows and the pillory, never far from any man's door, were seldom allowed to remain long out of use. The ghastly frequency of the punishment by death tended to make people savage and bloodthirsty. [Footnote: In 1293 a case is recorded of three men, one of them a goldsmith, who had their right hands chopped off in the middle of the street in London.-"Chron. of Edward I. and Edward II.," vol. i. p.--102. Ed. Stubbs. Rolls Series.] It tended, too, to make men absolutely reckless of consequences when once their passions were roused. "As well be hung for a sheep as a lamb" was a saying that had a grim truth in it. When a violent ruffian knew that if he robbed his host in the night he would be sure to be hung for it, and if he killed him he could be no more than hung, he had nothing to gain by letting him live, and nothing to lose if he cut his throat. Where another knew that by tampering with the coin of the realm he was sure to go to the gallows for it, he might as well make a good fight before he was taken, and murder any one who stood in the way of his escape. Hanging went on at a pace which we cannot conceive, for in those days the criminal law of the land was not, as it is now, a strangely devised machinery for protecting the wrongdoer, but it was an awful and tremendous power for slaying all who were dangerous to the persons or the property of the community.

The law of the Church, on the other hand, was much more lenient. To hurry a man to death with his sins and crimes fresh upon him, to slaughter men wholesale for acts that could not be regarded as enormously wicked, shocked those who had learnt that the Gospel taught such virtues as mercy and longsuffering, and gave men hopes of forgiveness on repentance. The Church set itself against the atrocious mangling, and branding, and hanging that was being dealt out blindly, hastily, and indiscriminately, to every kind of transgressor; and inasmuch as the Church law and the law of the land six hundred years ago were often in conflict, the Church law acted to a great extent as a check upon the shocking ferocity of the criminal code. And this is how the check was exercised.

A man who was a _cleric_ was only half amenable to the law of the land. He was a citizen of the realm, and a subject of the king, but he was _more_; he owed allegiance to the Church, and claimed the Church's protection also. Accordingly, whenever a _cleric_ got into trouble, and there was only too good cause to believe that if he were brought to his trial he would have a short shrift and no favour, scant justice and the inevitable gallows within twenty-four hours at the longest, he proclaimed himself a _cleric_, and demanded the protection of the Church, and was forthwith handed over to the custody of the ordinary or bishop. The process was a clumsy

one, and led, of course, to great abuses, but it had a good side. As a natural and inevitable consequence of such a privilege accorded to a class, there was a very strong inducement to become a member of that class; and as the Church made it easy for any fairly educated man to be admitted at any rate to the lower orders of the ministry, any one who preferred a professional career, or desired to give himself up to a life of study, enrolled himself among the _clerics_, and was henceforth reckoned as belonging to the clergy.

The country swarmed with these _clerics_. Only a small proportion of them ever became ministers of religion; they were lawyers, or even lawyers' clerks; they were secretaries; some few were quacks with nostrums; and these all were just as much _clerics_ as the chaplains, who occupied pretty much the same position as our curates do now--clergymen, strictly so called, who were on the look out for employment, and who earned a very precarious livelihood--or the rectors and vicars who were the beneficed clergy, and who were the parsons of parishes occupying almost exactly the same position that they do at this moment, and who were almost exactly in the same social position as they are now. Six hundred years ago there were at least seven of these _clerics_ in Rougham, all living in the place at the same time besides John of Thyrsford, the vicar. Five of them were chaplains, two were merely _clerics_. If there were seven of these clerical gentlemen whom I happen to have met with in my examination of the Rougham Charters, there must have been others who were not people of sufficient note to witness the execution of important legal instruments, nor with the means to buy land or houses in the parish. It can hardly be putting the number too high if we allow that there must have been at least ten or a dozen _clerics_ of one sort or another in Rougham six hundred years ago.

How did they all get a livelihood? is a question not easy to answer; but there were many ways of picking up a livelihood by these gentlemen. To begin with, they could take an engagement as tutor in a gentleman's family; or they could keep a small school; or earn a trifle by drawing up conveyances, or by keeping the accounts of the lord of the manor. In some cases they acted as private chaplains, getting their victuals for their remuneration, and sometimes they were merely loafing about, and living upon their friends, and taking the place of the country parson if he were sick or past work. Then, too, the smaller monasteries had one or more chaplains, and I suspect that the canons at Castle Acre always would keep two or three chaplains in their pay, and it is not unlikely that as long as Archdeacon Middleton kept on his big house at Rougham he would have a chaplain, who would be attached to the place, and bound to perform the service in the great man's chapel.

But besides the clerics and the chaplains and the rector or vicar, there was another class, the members of which just at this time were playing a very important part indeed in the religious life of the people, and not in the religious life alone; these were the Friars. If the monks looked down upon the parsons, and stole their endowments from them whenever they could, and if in return the parsons hated the monks and regarded them with profound suspicion and jealousy, both parsons and monks were united in their common dislike of the Friars.

Six hundred years ago the Friars had been established in England

about sixty years, and they were now by far the most influential Religionists in the country. The Friars, though always stationed in the towns, and by this time occupying large establishments which were built for them in Lynn, Yarmouth, Norwich, and elsewhere, were always acting the part of itinerant preachers, and travelled their circuits on foot, supported by alms. Sometimes the parson lent them the church, sometimes they held a camp meeting in spite of him, and just as often as not they left behind them a feeling of great soreness, irritation, and discontent; but six hundred years ago the preaching of the Friars was an immense and incalculable blessing to the country, and if it had not been for the wonderful reformation wrought by their activity and burning enthusiasm, it is difficult to see what we should have come to or what corruption might have prevailed in Church and State.

When the Friars came into a village, and it was known that they were going to preach, you may be sure that the whole population would turn out to listen. Sermons in those days in the country were very rarely delivered. As I have said, there were no pulpits in the churches then. A parson might hold a benefice for fifty years, and never once have written or composed a sermon. A preaching parson, one who regularly exhorted his people or expounded to them the Scriptures, would have been a wonder indeed, and thus the coming of the Friars and the revival of pulpit oratory was all the more welcome because the people had not become wearied by the too frequent iteration of truths which may be repeated so frequently as to lose their vital force. A sermon was an event in those days, and a preacher with any real gifts of oratory was looked upon as a prophet sent by God. Never was there a time when the people needed more to be taught the very rudiments of morality. Never had there been a time when people cared less whether their acts and words were right or wrong, true or false. It had almost come to this, that what a man thought would be to his profit, that was good; what would entail upon him a loss, that was evil.

And this brings me to another point, viz., the lawlessness and crime in country villages six hundred years ago. But before I can speak on that subject it is necessary that I should first try to give you some idea of the every-day life of your forefathers. What did they eat and drink? what did they wear? what did they do from day to day? Were they happy? content? prosperous? or was their lot a hard and bitter one? For according to the answer we get to questions such as these, so shall we be the better prepared to expect the people to have been peaceable citizens, or sullen, miserable, and dangerous ruffians, goaded to frequent outbursts of ferocious savagedom by hunger, oppression, hatred, and despair.

Six hundred years ago no parish in Norfolk had more than a part of its land under tillage. As a rule, the town or village, with its houses, great and small, consisted of a long street, the church and parsonage being situated about the middle of the parish. Not far off stood the manor house, with its hall where the manor courts were held, and its farm-buildings, dovecote, and usually its mill for grinding the corn of the tenants. No tenant of the manor might take his corn to be ground anywhere except at the lord's mill; and it is easy to see what a grievance this would be felt to be at times, and how the lord of the manor, if he were needy, unscrupulous, or extortionate, might grind the faces of the poor while he ground their corn. Behind most of the houses in the village might be seen a croft

or paddock, an orchard or a small garden. But the contents of the gardens were very different from the vegetables we see now; there were, perhaps, a few cabbages, onions, parsnips, or carrots, and apparently some kind of beet or turnip. The potato had never been heard of.

As for the houses themselves, they were squalid enough for the most part. The manor house was often built of stone, when stone was to be had, or where, as in Norfolk, no stone was to be had, then of flint, as in so many of our church towers. Usually, however, the manor house was built in great part of timber. The poorer houses were dirty hovels, run up "anyhow," sometimes covered with turf, sometimes with thatch. None of them had chimneys. Six hundred years ago houses with chimneys were at least as rare as houses heated by hot-water pipes are now. Moreover, there were no brick houses. It is a curious fact that the art of making bricks seems to have been lost in England for some hundreds of years. The labourer's dwelling had no windows; the hole in the roof which let out the smoke rendered windows unnecessary, and, even in the houses of the well-to-do, glass windows were rare. In many cases oiled linen cloth served to admit a feeble semblance of light, and to keep out the rain. The labourer's fire was in the middle of his house; he and his wife and children huddled round it, sometimes grovelling in the ashes; and going to bed meant flinging themselves down upon the straw which served them as mattress and feather bed, exactly as it does to the present day in the gipsy's tent in our byways. The labourer's only light by night was the smouldering fire. Why should he burn a rushlight when there was nothing to look at? and reading was an accomplishment which few labouring men were masters of.

As to the food of the majority, it was of the coarsest. The fathers of many a man and woman in every village in Norfolk can remember the time when the labourer looked upon wheat-bread as a rare delicacy; and those legacies which were left by kindly people a century or two ago, providing for the weekly distribution of so many _white_ loaves to the poor, tell us of a time when the poor man's loaf was as dark as mud, and as tough as his shoe-leather. In the winter-time things went very hard indeed with all classes. There was no lack of fuel, for the brakes and waste afforded turf which all might cut, and kindling which all had a right to carry away; but the poor horses and sheep and cattle were half starved for at least four months in the year, and one and all were much smaller than they are now. I doubt whether people ever fatted their hogs as we do. When the corn was reaped, the swine were turned into the stubble and roamed about the underwood; and when they had increased their weight by the feast of roots and mast and acorns, they were slaughtered and salted for the winter fare, only so many being kept alive as might not prove burdensome to the scanty resources of the people. Salting down the animals for the winter consumption was a very serious expense. All the salt used was produced by evaporation in _pans_ near the seaside, and a couple of bushels of salt often cost as much as a sheep. This must have compelled the people to spare the salt as much as possible, and it must have been only too common to find the bacon more than rancid, and the ham alive again with maggots. If the salt was dear and scarce, sugar was unknown except to the very rich. The poor man had little to sweeten his lot. The bees gave him honey; and long after the time I am dealing with people left not only their hives to their children by will, but actually bequeathed a summer flight of bees to their friends; while the hive was claimed by one,

the next swarm might become the property of another.

As for the drink, it was almost exclusively water, beer, and cider. [Footnote: On a court roll of the manor of Whissonsete, of the date July 22, 1355, I find William Wate fined "iiij botell cideri quia fecit dampnum in bladis domini."] Any one who pleased might brew beer without tax or license, and everybody who was at all before the world did brew his own beer according to his own taste. But in those days the beer was very different stuff from that which you are familiar with. To begin with, people did not use hops. Hops were not put into beer till long after the time we are concerned with. I dare say they flavoured their beer with horehound and other herbs, but they did not understand those tricks which brewers are said to practise now-a-days for making the beer "heady" and sticky and poisonous. I am not prepared to say the beer was better, or that you would have liked it; but I am pretty sure that in those days it was easier to get pure beer in a country village than it is now, and if a man chose to drink bad beer he had only himself to thank for it. There was no such monopoly as there is now. I am inclined to think that there were a very great many more people who sold beer in the country parishes than sell it now, and I am sorry to say that the beer-sellers in those days had the reputation of being rather a bad lot. [Footnote: The presentments of the beer-sellers seem to point to the existence of something like a licensing system among the lords of manors. I know not how otherwise to explain the frequency of the fines laid upon the whole class. Thus in a court-leet of the manor of Hockham, held the 20th of October, 1377, no less than fourteen women were fined in the aggregate 30s. 8d., who being _brassatores vendidere servisiam_ (sic) _contra assisam_, one of these brewsters was fined as much as four shillings.

The earliest attempt to introduce uniformity in the measures of ale, &c., is the assize of Richard I., bearing date the 20th of November, 1197. It is to be found in "Walter of Coventry," vol. ii. p. 114 (Rolls Series). On the importance of this document see Stubbs' "Const. Hist.," vol. i. pp. 509, 573. On the _tasters_ of bread and ale cf. "Dep. Keeper's 43rd Report," p. 207.] It is quite certain that they were very often in trouble, and of all the offences punished by fine at the manor courts none is more common than that of selling beer in false measures.

The method of cheating their customers by the beer-sellers was, we are told, exactly the contrary plan followed by our modern publicans. Now, when a man gets into a warm corner at the pot-house, they tell me that John Barleycorn is apt to serve out more drink than is good for him; but six hundred years ago the beer-seller made his profit, or tried to make it, by giving his customer less than he asked for. Tobacco was quite unknown; it was first brought into England about three hundred years after the days we are dealing with. When a man once sat himself down with his pot he had nothing to do but drink. He had no pipe to take off his attention from his liquor. If such a portentous sight could have been seen in those days as that of a man vomiting forth clouds of smoke from his mouth and nostrils, the beholders would have undoubtedly taken to their heels and run for their lives, protesting that the devil himself had appeared to them, breathing forth fire and flames. Tea and coffee, too, were absolutely unknown, unheard of; and wine was the rich man's beverage, as it is now. The fire-waters of our own time--the gin and the rum, which have wrought us all such incalculable mischief--were not discovered then.

Some little ardent spirits, known under the name of _cordials_, were to be found in the better appointed establishments, and were kept by the lady of the house among her simples, and on special occasions dealt out in thimblefuls; but the vile grog, that maddens people now, our forefathers of six hundred years ago had never even tasted.

The absence of vegetable food for the greater part of the year, the personal dirt of the people, the sleeping at night in the clothes worn in the day, and other causes, made skin diseases frightfully common. At the outskirts of every town in England of any size there were crawling about emaciated creatures covered with loathsome sores, living heaven knows how. They were called by the common name of lepers, and probably the leprosy strictly so called was awfully common. But the children must have swarmed with vermin; and the itch, and the scurvy, and the ringworm, with other hideous eruptions, must have played fearful havoc with the weak and sickly.

As for the dress of the working classes, it was hardly dress at all. I doubt whether the great mass of the labourers in Norfolk had more than a single garment--a kind of tunic leaving the arms and legs bare, with a girdle of rope or leather round the waist, in which a man's knife was stuck, to use sometimes for hacking his bread, sometimes for stabbing an enemy in a quarrel. As for any cotton goods, such as are familiar to you all, they had never been dreamt of, and I suspect that no more people in Norfolk wore linen habitually than now wear silk.

Money was almost inconceivably scarce. The labourer's wages were paid partly in rations of food, partly in other allowances, and only partly in money; he had to take what he could get. Even the quit-rent, or what I have called the ground rent, was frequently compounded for by the tenant being required to find a pair of gloves, or a pound of cummin, or some other acknowledgment in lieu of a money payment; and one instance occurs among the Rougham charters of a man buying as much as 11-1/2 acres, and paying for them partly in money and partly in barley. [Footnote: In the year 1276 halfpence and farthings were coined for the first time. This must have been a great boon to the poorer classes, and it evidently was felt to be a matter of great importance, insomuch that it was said to be the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy by the great seer Merlin, who had once foretold in mysterious language, that "there shall be half of the round." In the next century it appears that the want of small change had again made itself felt: for in the 2nd Richard II. we find the Commons setting forth in a petition to the King, that "_...les ditz coes n'on petit monoye pur paier pur les petites_ mesures a grant damage des dites coes," and they beg "Le plese a dit Sr. le Roi et a son sage conseil de faire ordeiner Mayles et farthinges pur paier pur les petites mesures... et en eovre de charitée...."--Rolls of Parl., vol. iii. p. 65.] Nothing shows more plainly the scarcity of money than the enormous interest that was paid for a loan. The only bankers were the Jews; [Footnote: I am speaking of Norfolk and Suffolk, where the Jews, as far as I have seen, had it all their own way.] and when a man was once in their hands he was never likely to get out of their clutches again. But six hundred years ago the Jews had almost come to the end of their tether; and in the year 1290 they were driven out of the country, men, women, and children, with unutterable barbarity, only to be replaced by other bloodsuckers who were not a whit less mercenary, perhaps, but only less pushing and successful in their

usury.

It is often said that the monasteries were the great supporters of the poor, and fed them in times of scarcity. It may be so, but I should like to see the evidence for the statement. At present I doubt the fact, at any rate as far as Norfolk goes. [Footnote: The returns of the number of poor people supported by the monasteries, which are to be found in the "Valor Ecclesiasticus," are somewhat startling. Certainly the monasteries did not return _less_ than they expended in alms. Note, too, the complaint of the St. Alban's men to Wat Tyler, who are said to have slandered the abbey "de retentione stipendiorum pauperum." Walsingham, i. 469.] On the contrary, I am strongly impressed with the belief that six hundred years ago the poor had no friends. The parsons were needy themselves. In too many cases one clergyman held two or three livings, took his tithes and spent them in the town, and left a chaplain with a bare subsistence to fill his place in the country. There was no parson's wife to drop in and speak a kind word--no clergyman's daughter to give a friendly nod, or teach the little ones at Sunday school--no softening influences, no sympathy, no kindliness. What could you expect of people with such dreary surroundings?--what but that which we know actually was the condition of affairs? The records of crime and outrage in Norfolk six hundred years ago are still preserved, and may be read by any one who knows how to decipher them. I had intended to examine carefully the entries of crime for this neighbourhood for the year 1286, and to give you the result this evening, but I have not had an opportunity of doing so. The work has been done for the hundred of North Erpingham by my friend Mr. Rye, and what is true for one part of Norfolk during any single year is not likely to be very different from what was going on in another.

The picture we get of the utter lawlessness of the whole county, however, at the beginning of King Edward's reign is quite dreadful enough. Nobody seems to have resorted to the law to maintain a right or redress a wrong, till every other method had been tried. Starting with the squires, if I may use the term, and those well-to-do people who ought to have been among the most law-abiding members of the community--we find them setting an example of violence and rapacity, bad to read of. One of the most common causes of offence was when the lord of the manor attempted to invade the rights of the tenants of the manor by setting up a fold on the heath, or _Bruary_ as it was called. What the lord was inclined to do, that the tenants would try to do also, as when in 1272 John de Swanton set up a fold in the common fields at Billingford; whereupon the other tenants pulled it down, and there was a serious disturbance, and the matter dragged on in the law courts for four years and more. Or as when the Prior of Wymondham impleads William de Calthorp for interfering with his foldage at Burnham; Calthorp replying that the Prior had no right to foldage, and that he (Calthorp) had the right to pull the fold down. In these cases, of course, there would be a general gathering and a riot, for every one's interest was at stake; but it was not only when some general grievance was felt that people in those days were ready for a row.

It really looks as if nothing was more easy than to collect a band of people who could be let loose anywhere to work any mischief. One man had a claim upon another for a debt, or a piece of land, or a right which was denied--had the claim, or fancied he had--and he seems to have had no difficulty in getting together a score or two of roughs

to back him in taking the law into his own hands. As when John de la Wade in 1270 persuaded a band of men to help him in invading the manor of Hamon de Clere, in this very parish of Tittleshall, seizing the corn and threshing it, and, more wonderful still, cutting down timber, and _carrying it off_. There are actually two other cases of a precisely similar kind recorded this same year, one where a gang of fellows in broad day seems to have looted the manors of Dunton and Mileham; the other case was where a mob, under the leadership of three men, who are named, entered by force into the manor of Dunham, laid hands on a quantity of timber fit for building purposes, and took it away bodily! A much more serious case, however, occurred some years after this when two gentlemen of position in Norfolk, with twenty-five followers, who appear to have been their regular retainers, and a great multitude on foot and horse, came to Little Barningham, where in the Hall there lived an old lady, Petronilla de Gros; they set fire to the house in five places, dragged out the old lady, treated her with the most brutal violence, and so worked upon her fears that they compelled her to tell them where her money and jewels were, and, having seized them, I conclude that they left her to warm herself at the smouldering ruins of her mansion.

On another occasion there was a fierce riot at Rainham. There the manor had become divided into three portions, as we have seen was the case at Rougham. One Thomas de Hauville had one portion, and Thomas de Ingoldesthorp and Robert de Scales held the other two portions. Thomas de Hauville, peradventure, felt aggrieved because some rogue had not been whipped or tortured cruelly enough to suit his notions of salutary justice, whereupon he went to the expense of erecting a brand new pillory, and apparently a gallows too, to strike terror into the minds of the disorderly. The other parceners of the manor were indignant at the act, and collecting nearly sixty of the people of Rainham, they pulled down the new pillory and utterly destroyed the same. When the case came before the judges, the defendants pleaded in effect that if Thomas de Hauville had put up his pillory on his own domain they would have had no objection, but that he had invaded their rights in setting up his gallows without their permission.

If the gentry, and they who ought to have known better, set such an example, and gave their sanction to outrage and savagery, it was only natural that the lower orders should be quick to take their pattern by their superiors, and should be only too ready to break and defy the law. And so it is clear enough that they were. In a single year, the year 1285, in the hundred of North Erpingham, containing thirty-two parishes, the catalogue of crime is so ghastly as positively to stagger one. Without taking any account of what in those days must have been looked upon as quite minor offences--such as simple theft, sheep-stealing, fraud, extortion, or harbouring felons--there were eleven men and five women put upon their trial for burglary, eight men and four women were murdered; there were five fatal fights, three men and two women being killed in the frays; and, saddest of all, there were five cases of suicide, among them two women, one of whom hanged herself, the other cut her throat with a razor. We have in the roll recording these horrors very minute particulars of the several cases, and we know too that, not many months before the roll was drawn up, at least eleven desperate wretches had been hanged for various offences, and one had been torn to pieces by horses for the crime of debasing the king's coin. It is impossible for us to realize

the hideous ferocity of such a state of society as this; the women were as bad as the men, furious beldames, dangerous as wild beasts, without pity, without shame, without remorse; and finding life so cheerless, so hopeless, so very very dark and miserable, that when there was nothing to be gained by killing any one else they killed themselves.

Anywhere, anywhere out of the world!

Sentimental people who plaintively sigh for the good old times will do well to ponder upon these facts. Think, twelve poor creatures butchered in cold blood in a single year within a circuit of ten miles from your own door! Two of these unhappy victims were a couple of lonely women, apparently living together in their poverty, gashed and battered in the dead of the night, and left in their blood, stripped of their little all. The motive, too, for all this horrible housebreaking and bloodshed, being a lump of cheese or a side of bacon, and the shuddering creatures cowering in the corner of a hovel, being too paralyzed with terror to utter a cry, and never dreaming of making resistance to the wild-eyed assassins, who came to slay rather than to steal.

Let us turn from these scenes, which are too painful to dwell on; and, before I close, let me try and point to some bright spots in the village life of six hundred years ago. If the hovels of the labourer were squalid, and dirty, and dark, yet there was not--no, there was not--as much difference between them and the dwelling of the former class, the employers of labour. Every man who had any house at all had some direct interest in the land; he always had some rood or two that he could call his own; his allotment was not large, but then there were no large farmers. I cannot make out that there was any one in Rougham who farmed as much as two hundred acres all told. What we now understand by tenant farmers were a class that had not yet come into existence. Where a landlord was non-resident he farmed his estate by a bailiff, and if any one wanted to give up an occupation for a time he let it with all that it contained. Thus, when Alice the divorced made up her mind in 1318 to go away from Rougham--perhaps on a pilgrimage--perhaps to Rome--who knows?--she let her house and land, and all that was upon it, live and dead stock, to her sister Juliana for three years. The inventory included not only the sheep and cattle, but the very hoes and pitchforks, and sacks; and everything, to the minutest particular, was to be returned without damage at the end of the term, or replaced by an equivalent. But this lady, a lady of birth and some position, certainly did not have two hundred acres under her hands, and would have been a very small personage indeed, side by side with a dozen of our West Norfolk farmers today. The difference between the labourer and the farmer was, I think, less six hundred years ago than it is now. Men climbed up the ladder by steps that were more gently graduated; there was no great gulf fixed between the employer and the employed.

I can tell you nothing of the amusements of the people in those days. I doubt whether they had any more amusement than the swine or the cows had. Looking after the fowls or the geese, hunting for the hen's nest in the furze brake, and digging out a fox or a badger, gave them an hour's excitement or interest now and again. Now and then a wandering minstrel came by, playing upon his rude instrument, and now and then somebody would come out from Lynn, or Yarmouth, or Norwich, with some new batch of songs for the most part scurrilous and coarse,

and listened to much less for the sake of the music than for the words. Nor were books so rare as has been asserted. There were even story-books in some houses, as where John Senekworth, bailiff for Merton College, at Gamlingay in Cambridgeshire, possessed, when he died in 1314, three books of romance; but then he was a thriving yeoman with carpets in his house, or hangings for the walls. [Footnote: Rogers' "Hist, of Prices" vol. i. p. 124.]

There was a great deal more coming and going in the country villages

than there is now, a great deal more to talk about, a great deal more doing. The courts of the manor were held periodically, and the free tenants were bound to attend and carry on a large amount of petty business. Then there were the periodical visitations by the Archdeacon and the Rural Dean, and now and then more august personages might be seen with a host of mounted followers riding along the roads. The Bishop of Norwich was always on the move when he was in his diocese; his most favourite places of residence were North Elmham and Gaywood; at both of these places he had a palace and a park; that meant that there were deer there and hunting, and all the good and evil that seems to be inseparable from haunches of vension. Nay, at intervals, even the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, the second man in the kingdom, came down to hold a visitation in Norfolk, and, exactly 602 years ago the great Archbishop Peckham spent some time in the county, and though I do not think he came near Rougham or Tittleshall, I think it not improbable that his coming may have had some influence in bringing about the separation between Peter Romayn and Matilda de Cringleford, and the divorce of poor Alice from John of Thyrsford.

That year, 1280, or just 602 years ago, when Archbishop Peckham paid his visit to Norfolk, was a very disastrous year for the farmers. It was the beginning of a succession of bad seasons and floods even worse than any that we have known. The rain began on the 1st of August, and we are told that it continued to fall for twenty-four hours, and then came a mighty wind such as men had never known the like of; the waters were out, and there was a great flood, and houses and windmills and bridges were swept away. Nay, we hear of a sad loss of life, and many poor people were drowned, and many lost their all; flocks, and herds, and corn and hay being whelmed in the deluge. In November there was a frightful tempest, the lightning doing extensive damage; and just at Christmas-time the frost set in with such severity as no man had known before. The river Thames was frozen over above London Bridge, so that men crossed it with horses and carts, and when the frost broke up on the 2nd of February there was such an enormous accumulation of ice and snow that five of the arches of London Bridge blew up, and all over the country the same destruction of bridges was heard of.

Next year and the year after that, things went very badly with your forefathers, and one of the saddest stories that we get from a Norfolk chronicler who was alive at the time is one in which he tells us that, owing to the continuous rain during these three years, there was an utter failure in garden produce, as well as of the people's hope of harvest. The bad seasons seem to have gone on for six or seven years; but by far the worst calamity which Norfolk ever knew was the awful flood of 1287, when by an incursion of the sea a large district was laid under water, and hundreds of unfortunate creatures were drowned in the dead of the night, without warning. Here, on the

higher level, people were comparatively out of harm's way, but it is impossible to imagine the distress and agony that there must have been in other parts of the county not twenty miles from where we are this evening.

After that dreadful year I think there was a change for the better, but it must have been a long time before the county recovered from the "agricultural distress;" and I strongly suspect that the cruel and wicked persecution of the Jews, and the cancelling of all debts due to them by the landlords and the farmers, was in some measure owing to the general bankruptcy which the succession of bad seasons had brought about. Men found themselves hopelessly insolvent, and there was no other way of cancelling their obligations than by getting rid of their creditors. So when the king announced that all the Jews should be transported out of the realm, you may be sure that there were very few Christians who were sorry for them. There had been a time when the children of Israel had spoiled the Egyptians--was it not fitting that another time should have come when the children of Israel should themselves be spoiled?

The year of the great flood was the frequent talk, of course, of all your forefathers who overlived it, and here in this neighbourhood it must have acquired an additional interest from the fact that Bishop Middleton died the year after it, and his brothers then parted with their Rougham property.

Nor was this all, for Bishop Middleton's successor in the see of Norwich came from this immediate neighbourhood also. This was Ralph Walpole, son of the lord of the manor of Houghton, in which parish the bishop himself had inherited a few acres of land. In less than forty years no less than three bishops had been born within five miles of where we are this evening: Roger de Wesenham, [Footnote: The names of several members of the bishop's family occur in the Rougham Charters as attesting witnesses, and a Roger de Wesenham is found among them more than once.] who became Bishop of Lichfield in 1245; William Middleton, who had just died; and Ralph Walpole, who succeeded him. There must have been much stir in these parts when the news was known. The old people would tell how they had seen "young master Ralph" many a time when he was a boy scampering over Massingham Heath, or coming to pay his respects to the Archdeacon at the Lyng House, or talking of foreign parts with old James de Ferentino or Peter Romayn. Now he had grown to be a very big man indeed, and there were many eyes watching him on both sides of the water. He had a very difficult game to play during the eleven years he was Bishop of Norwich, for the king was dreadfully in need of money, and, being desperate, he resorted to outrageous methods of squeezing it from those whom he could frighten and force, and the time came at last when the bishops and the clergy had to put a bold face on and to resist the tyranny and lawless rapacity of the sovereign.

And this reminds me that though archdeacons, and bishops, and even an archbishop, in those days might be and were very important and very powerful personages, they were all very small and insignificant in comparison with the great King Edward, the king who at this time was looked upon as one of the most mighty and magnificent kings in all the world. He, too, paid many a visit to Norfolk six hundred years ago. He kept his Christmas at Burgh in 1280, and in 1284 he came down with the good Queen Eleanor and spent the whole of Lent in the

county; and next year, again, they were in your immediate neighbourhood, making a pilgrimage to Walsingham. A few years after this he seems to have spent a week or two within five miles of where we are; he came to Castle Acre, and there he stayed at the great priory whose ruins you all know well. There a very stirring interview took place between the king and Bishop Walpole, and a number of other bishops, and great persons who had come down as a deputation to expostulate with the king, and respectfully to protest against the way in which he was robbing his subjects, and especially the clergy, whom he had been for years plundering in the most outrageous manner. The king gave the deputation no smooth words to carry away, but he sent them off with threatening frowns and insults and in hot anger. Some days after this he was at Massingham, and one of his letters has been preserved, dated from Massingham, 30th of January, 1296, so that it is almost certain the great king passed one night there at least. It is a little difficult to understand what the king was doing at Massingham, for there was no great man living there, and no great mansion. Sometimes I have thought that the king rode out from Castle Acre to see what state the Walpoles of those times were keeping up at Houghton. Had not that audacious Bishop Walpole dared to speak plainly to his Grace the week before? But the more probable explanation is that the king went to Massingham to visit a small religious house or monastery which had been recently founded there. I suspect it had already got into debt and was in difficulties, and it is possible that the king's visit was made in the interest of the foundation. At any rate, there the king stayed; but though he was in Norfolk more than once after this, he never was so near you again, and that visit was one which your forefathers were sure to talk about to the end of their lives.

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And these were the days of old. But now that we have looked back upon them as they appear through the mists of centuries, the distance distorting some things, obscuring others, but leaving upon us, on the whole, an impression that, after all, these men and women of the past, whose circumstances were so different from our own, were perhaps not so very unlike what we should be if our surroundings were as theirs. Now that we have come to that conclusion, if indeed we have come to it, let me ask you all a question or two. Should we like to change with those forefathers of ours, whose lives were passed in this parish in the way I have attempted to describe, six hundred years ago? Were the former times better than these? Has the world grown worse as it has grown older? Has there been no progress, but only decline?

My friends, the people who lived in this village six hundred years ago were living a life hugely below the level of yours. They were more wretched in their poverty, they were incomparably less prosperous in their prosperity, they were worse clad, worse fed, worse housed, worse taught, worse tended, worse governed; they were sufferers from loathsome diseases which you knew nothing of; the very beasts of the field were dwarfed and stunted in their growth, and I do not believe there were any giants in the earth in those days. The death-rate among the children must have been tremendous. The disregard of human life was so callous that we can hardly conceive it. There was everything to harden, nothing to soften; everywhere oppression, greed, and fierceness. Judged by our modern standards, the people of our county village were beyond all doubt coarser, more

brutal, and more wicked, than they are. Progress is slow, but there has been progress. The days that are, are not what they should be; we still want reforms, we need much reforming ourselves; but the former days were not better than these, whatever these may be; and if the next six hundred years exhibit as decided an advance as the last six centuries have brought about, and if your children's children of the coming time rise as much above your level in sentiment, material comfort, knowledge, intelligence, and refinement, as you have risen above the level which your ancestors attained to, though even then they will not cease to desire better things, they will nevertheless have cause for thankfulness such as you may well feel to-night as you look back upon what you have escaped from, and reflect upon what you are.

III.

DAILY LIFE IN A MEDIEVAL MONASTERY.

> "Now I think on't,
> They should be good men; their affairs as righteous:
> But all hoods make not monks."

[The commemoration of the birth of Martin Luther, which people would have called his quater-centenary if they had not been deterred by the terrific appearance of so huge a word, was the occasion of many preachments and much lecturing, besides a great deal of heroic talk in public and private. With so much to encourage cynicism and persiflage among us it was comforting to find that the instinct of hero-worship is not quite dead, and that the story of a great man's life still stirs the heart. It was inevitable that, among the many utterances with which we were treated in the year 1883, many should be very foolish, and not a few mischievous and erroneous. Itinerant Windbags are rarely scrupulous about their facts, and the allusive style flavoured with stinging invective is far more telling than any historical narrative, however picturesque and eloquent it may be. Luther the Monk will always be a more attractive subject in the lecture hall than Luther the Theologian, and an audience prepared to be harrowed and shocked will greedily listen to broad hints about _abominations_-the word is a very favourite one--which the author could disclose, but mercifully withholds in pity for the shuddering hearts of a too sensitive assembly. The consequence was that an altogether disproportionate amount of declamation was wasted up and down the country by gentlemen on the stump, in girding at monks and nuns, their vices and crimes, till some men's minds were not a little exercised, and some, horrified by what they were told, asked in their perplexity, "Can these things be?" The present writer knows nothing of the condition of the German Religious Houses in the fifteenth or the sixteenth century, and not as much as he would wish to learn of the condition of the English houses during the same period, but he has been painfully convinced that the peripatetic orators are about as qualified to lecture upon the subject as he is to lecture on astronomy.

It was while musing in my solitude upon the harm done by ignorant

pretenders in sowing error broadcast in the waste places of the world that I received a call from one of the class, who came to beg my countenance for a lecture upon Luther the Monk and Monkery. He was a vociferous personage and prodigal of his words. He added to all his sins this one, that he did not know when to go. He had no tact, only talk. Irritated at last beyond endurance, my normal suavity forsook me, and I spoke with brutal plainness. Of course he was wroth, and pressed for an explanation. In a weak moment I yielded. "To begin with," said I, "Luther, strictly speaking, was not a monk at all!" [Footnote: He belonged to the order of Friars Eremite under the Augustinian Rule.] It was a foolish speech: first, because it made my friend an offender for a word; and, secondly, because there was more truth in it than the man was capable of understanding or was prepared to receive; but it had the effect of ridding me of a bore. As he took his leave he shot at me this Parthian shaft--" If you are above learning, sir," he said," perhaps teaching might not be beneath you. Could you not, for instance, let the world know something about monks and monasteries some day? Even I, ignorant as you pronounce me, have heard of your lecturing on a thirteenth-century village. Why not try a thirteenth-century monastery next?" I politely thanked him for his valuable suggestion, and promised to give it my respectful attention. The following sketch is the outcome of our interview. "Facit indignatio versus."]

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It may be assumed as a fact which scarcely requires to be more than stated that there are few subjects which the great mass of Englishmen are so curiously ignorant of as the History of Monasticism, of the constitution of the various Orders, of the fortunes of any single religious house, or the discipline to which its members were, in theory at least, compelled to submit. The assumption being granted, it may naturally be asked, How is such ignorance to be accounted for? It is due to more causes than one, but chiefly and primarily to the vastness of the subject itself.

When the monasteries were suppressed by Henry VIII. there was an utter obliteration of an order of things which had existed in our island for certainly more than a thousand years, and how much longer it is impossible to say. The names of religious houses which are known to have existed before the Norman Conquest count by hundreds; the names of men and women who presided over such houses during the centuries preceding that event count by thousands. Some of these religious houses had passed through the strangest vicissitudes; they had been pillaged again and again; they had been burnt by Danish marauders; their inmates driven out into the wilderness or ruthlessly put to the sword; their lands given over to the spoiler or gone out of cultivation; their very existence in some cases almost forgotten; yet they had revived again and again from their ashes. When William the Conqueror came among us, and that stern rule of his began, there was scarcely a county in England and Wales in which one or more religious houses were not to be found, and during his reign of twenty-one years about thirty new monasteries of one sort or another were added to those already existing.

To begin with, the very word monastery is a misnomer: the word is a Greek word, and means the dwelling-place of a solitary person, living in seclusion. But, misnomer though it be, the employment of the word in a sense so widely different from that which it first bore, until

it got to designate the dwelling-place of a corporate body, among whom no solitude was allowed and privacy was almost impossible, is of itself very significant as indicating the stages through which the original idea of monasticism passed.

It was natural enough, when society was in a condition of profound disorganization, and sensuality and violence were in the ascendant, that men and women of gentle nature should become convinced that the higher life could only be lived in lonely retirement, far from the sound of human voices and the contact of human creatures, whose very nearness almost implies sin. But what a vast step from this to that other conviction which the developed form of monasticism expresses, when experience has convinced the devout searcher after God that no great work can be done in improving the world, or raising the tone of society, or in battling with our own weaknesses and vices, except by earnest, resolute, and disciplined co-operation. It is when we draw together that we are strong, and strongest when we are labouring shoulder to shoulder for some common object, and that no mean and sordid one; it is then that we best find deliverance from our self-deception and most inveterate delusions, whilst living in the light of other's eyes, and subjected to the influence and control of a healthy and well-instructed public opinion.

In the thirteenth century (and I shall as much as possible confine myself to the limits of that period), a monastery meant what we now understand it to mean--viz., the abode of a society of men or women who lived together in common--who were supposed to partake of common meals; to sleep together in one common dormitory; to attend certain services together in their common church; to transact certain business or pursue certain employments in the sight and hearing of each other in the common cloister; and, when the end came, to be laid side by side in the common graveyard, where in theory none but members of the order could find a resting-place for their bones. When I say "societies of men and women" I am again reminded that the other term, "convent," has somehow got to be used commonly in a mistaken sense. People use the word as if it signified a religious house tenanted exclusively by women. The truth is that a convent is nothing more than a Latin name for an association of _persons_ who have _come together_ with a view to live for a common object and to submit to certain rules in the ordering of their daily lives. The monastery was the common dwelling-place: the convent was the society of persons inhabiting it; and the ordinary formula used when a body of monks or nuns execute any corporate act--such as buying or selling land--by any legal instrument is, "The Prior and Convent of the Monastery of the Holy Trinity at Norwich;" "the Abbot and Convent of the Monastery of St. Peter's, Westminster;" "the Abbess and Convent of the Monastery of St. Mary and St. Bernard at Lacock," and so on.

Bearing in mind, then, that the term convent has to do with a corporation of men or women united into an organized society, and that the term monastery can strictly be applied only to the buildings--the _domus_, in which that society has its home--it will be well at starting that we should endeavour to gain some notion of the general plan of these buildings first, and when we have done that that we should proceed to deal next with the constitution of the society itself and the daily routine of conventual life.

A monastery in theory then was, as it was called, a Religious House. It was supposed to be the home of people whose lives were passed in

the worship of God, and in taking care of their own souls, and making themselves fit for a better world than this hereafter. As for this world, it was lying in wickedness; if men remained in this wicked world they would most certainly become contaminated by all its pollutions; the only chance of ever attaining to holiness lay in a man or woman's turning his back upon the world and running away from it. It was no part of a monk's duty to reform the world; all he had to do was to look after himself, and to save himself from the wrath to come. It is hardly overstating the case if I say that a monastery was not intended to be a benevolent institution; and if a great religious house became, as it almost inevitably did become, the centre of civilization and refinement, from which radiated light and warmth and incalculable blessings far and wide, these results flowed naturally from that growth and development which the original founders had never looked forward to or could have foreseen, but it was never contemplated as an end to be aimed at in the beginning. Being a home for religious men, whose main business was to spend their days and nights in worshipping God, the first requisite, the first and foremost, the _sine qua non_ was, that there should be a church.

On the church of a monastery, as a rule, no amount of money spent, no amount of lavish ornament or splendour of decoration, was grudged. Sculpture and painting, jewels and gold, gorgeous hangings, and stained-glass that the moderns vainly attempt to imitate, the purple and fine linen of the priestly vestments, embroidery that to this hour remains unapproachable in its delicacy of finish and in the perfect harmony of colours--all these were to be found in almost incredible profusion in our monastic churches. You hear some people work themselves into a frenzy against the idolatrous worship of our forefathers; but to a monk of a great monastery his church was his one idol--to possess a church that should surpass all others in magnificence, and which could boast of some special unique glory--that seemed to a monk something worth living for. The holy rood at Bromholm, the holy thorn at Glastonbury, were possessions that brought world-wide renown to the monasteries in which they were found, and gave a lustre to the churches in which they were deposited; and the intense _esprit de corps_, the passionate loyalty, of a monk to his monastery is a sentiment which we in our time find it so extremely difficult to understand that we can hardly bring ourselves to believe that it could exist without some subtle intermixture of crafty selfishness as its ruling force and motive.

The church of a monastery was the heart of the place. It was not that the church was built for the monastery, but the monastery existed for the church; there were hundreds and thousands of churches without monasteries, but there could be no monastery without a church. The monks were always at work on the church, always spending money upon it, always adding to it, always "restoring" it; it was always needing repair. We are in the habit of saying, "Those old monks knew how to build; look at their work--see how it stands!" But we are very much mistaken if we suppose that in the twelfth or the thirteenth or the fourteenth century there was no bad building. On the contrary, nothing is more common in the monastic annals than the notices of how this and that tower fell down, and how this and that choir was falling into ruins, and how this or that abbot got into debt by his mania for building. There was an everlasting tinkering going on at the church; and the surest token that a monastery was in a bad way was that its church was in a shabby condition.

The church was, almost invariably, built in the form of a cross, facing east and west, the long limb of the cross being called the nave, the cross limbs being called the transepts, and the shorter limb, or head of the cross, being called the choir. The choir, as a rule, was occupied exclusively by the monks or nuns of the monastery. The servants, workpeople, and casual visitors who came to worship were not admitted into the choir; _they_ were supposed to be present only on sufferance. The church was built for the use of the monks; it was _their_ private place of worship.

Almost as essential to the idea of a monastery as the church was the cloister or great quadrangle, inclosed on all sides by the high walls of the monastic buildings. Its usual position was on the south of the church, to gain as much of the sun's rays as possible, and to insure protection from the northerly and easterly winds in the bitter season. All round this quadrangle ran a covered arcade, whose roof, leaning against the high walls, was supported on the inner side by an open trellis work in stone--often exhibiting great beauty of design and workmanship--through which light and air was admitted into the arcade. [Footnote: In other words the thirteenth-century monk passed far the greater portion of his time in the open air, except that there was a roof over his head. As time went on, and monks became more self-indulgent, they did not by any means like the draughts and exposure in the cloister, and the old-fashioned open arcades were glazed, and the old open walks were turned into splendid lounges, comfortable and luxurious, such as the cloisters of Gloucester could be made into at a small outlay at the present day.] The open space not roofed in was called the _garth_, and was sometimes a plain grass plat and sometimes was planted with shrubs, a fountain of running water being often found in the centre, which afforded a pleasant object for the eye to rest on. The cloister was really the living-place of the monks. Here they pursued their daily avocations, here they taught their school, they transacted their business, they spent their time and pursued their studies, always in society, co-operating and consulting, and, as a rule, knowing no privacy.

"But surely a monk always lived in a cell, didn't he?"

The sooner we get rid of that delusion the better.

Be it understood that until Henry II. founded the Carthusian Abbey of Witham, in 1178, there was no such thing known in England as a monk's _cell_, as we understand the term. It was a peculiarity of the Carthusian order, and when it was first introduced it was regarded as a startling novelty for any privacy or anything approaching solitude to be tolerated in a monastery. The Carthusian system never found much favour in England. The Carthusians never had more than nine houses, all told; the discipline was too rigid, the rule too severe, the loneliness too dreadful for our tastes and for our climate. In the thirteenth century, if I mistake not, there were only two monasteries in England in which monks or nuns could boast of having any privacy, any little corner of their own to turn into, any place where they could enjoy the luxury of retirement, any private study such as every boy nowadays, in a school of any pretension, expects to have provided for himself, and without which we assume that nobody can read and write for an hour.

The cloister arcade was said to have four _walks_. The south

walk ran along the south wall of the nave, the north walk was bounded by the refectory or great dining hall, the east walk extended along the south transept, and where the transept ended there usually came a narrow passage called _slype_, passing between the end of the transept and the chapter-house, which may be described as the council-chamber of the convent. Beyond the chapter-house, and abutting partly upon the east wall of the cloister, but extending far beyond it till, in some cases, it made with the refectory a block of buildings in the form of a T, ran the dormitory or common sleeping-place for the fraternity. The dormitory was always approached by steps, for it was invariably constructed over a range of vaulted chambers, which served for various purposes; one of these chambers was set apart for the reception of those monks who had been subjected to the monthly bleedings which all were supposed to require, and which all were compelled to submit to, that so by a mechanical process, if in no other way, the flesh might be subdued. The beds of the monks were arranged along the walls of the dormitory, at regular intervals; and in some monasteries a wainscot partition separated the sleepers from each other, thus making for each a little cubicle, with a low door leading into it. The broad passage, running from end to end, between the sleeping-places in the dormitory was strewn with rushes; and at the end opposite to the flight of stairs were the latrines or washing-places, which were open to the air, and under which was always a sewer that could be flushed by a water-course hard by.

In the dormitory and the latrines lights were kept burning through the night; a provision necessary, if for no other reason, because the services in the church at night-time had to be kept up and attended by the whole house. They who went from the dormitory to the church always passed under cover--sometimes by going through the cloister, sometimes by passing straight into the transept.

We have been round three sides of the cloister: on the north the church; on the east the chapterhouse and dormitory; on the south the refectory. There remain the buildings abutting on the west wall. In the arrangement of these no strict rule was observed. But generally the western buildings were dedicated to the cellarer's hall with cellars under it, the pitanciar's and kitchener's offices or _chequers_ as they were called, and a guest-chamber for the reception of distinguished strangers and for the duties of hospitality, to which great importance was attached.

These were the main buildings, the essential buildings of a monastery great or small. Where a monastery was rich enough to indulge in luxuries of "modern improvements and all the best appliances," there was hardly any limit to the architectural freaks that might be indulged in. There were the infirmary and the hospital; the calefactory or warming apparatus, the recreation hall and the winter hall, the locutorium and the common hall, and I know not what besides. You observe I have as yet said nothing about the library. I must remind you that in the thirteenth century the number of books in the world was, to say the least, small. A library of five hundred volumes would, in those days, have been considered an important collection, and, after making all due allowances for ridiculous exaggeration which have been made by ill-informed writers on the subject, it may safely be said that nobody in the thirteenth century--at any rate in England--would have erected a large and lofty building as a receptacle for books, simply because nobody could have

contemplated the possibility of filling it. Here and there amongst the larger and more important monasteries there were undoubtedly collections of books, the custody of which was intrusted to an accredited officer; but the time had not yet come for making libraries well stored with such priceless treasures as Leland, the antiquary, saw at Glastonbury, just before that magnificent foundation was given as a prey to the spoilers. A library, in any such sense as we now understand the term, was not only no essential part of a monastery in those days, but it may be said to have been a rarity.

But if the thirteenth century monastery possessed necessarily no great Reading-Room, the Scriptorium, or Writing-Room, was almost an essential adjunct. In the absence of the printing-press, the demand for skilled writers and copyists throughout the country was enormous. In the Scriptorium all the business, now transacted by half a dozen agents and their clerks, was carried on. The land of the country in those days was subdivided to an extent that it is now almost impossible for us to realize, and the tenure under which the small patches of arable or meadow-land were held was sometimes very complex and intricate. The small patches were perpetually changing hands, being bought or sold, settled upon trustees, or let out for a term of years, and every transaction would be registered in the books of the monastery interested, while the number of conveyances, leases, and enfeofments made out in the course of the year was incalculable. In such an abbey as that of Bury St. Edmunds a small army of writers must have been constantly employed in the business department of the Scriptorium alone. Obviously it became a great writing-school, where the copyists consciously or unconsciously wrote according to the prevailing fashion of the place; and there have been, and there are, experts who could tell you whether this or that document was or was not written in this or that monastic Scriptorium. Paper was very little used, and the vellum and parchment required constituted a heavy item of expense. Add to this the production of school-books and all materials used for carrying on the education work, the constant replacement of _church_ service books which the perpetual thumbing and fingering would subject to immense wear and tear, the great demand for music which, however simple, required to be written out large and conspicuous in order to be read with ease, and you get a rather serious list of the charges upon the stationery department of a great abbey.

But though by far the greater portion of work done in the Scriptorium was mere office work, the educational department, if I may so term it, being subsidiary, it must not be forgotten that the literary and the historical department also was represented in the Scriptorium of every great monastery. In the thirteenth century men never kept diaries or journals of their own daily lives, but monasteries did. In theory, every religious house recorded its own annals, or kept a chronicle of great events that were happening in Church and State. Where a monastery had kept its chronicle going for a long time, it got to be regarded almost as a sacred book, and was treated with great veneration: it lay in a conspicuous place in the Scriptorium, and was under the care of an officer who alone was permitted to make entries in it. When any great piece of news was brought to the monastery that seemed worth putting on record, the person giving the information wrote out his version of the story on a loose piece of parchment, and slipped his communication into the book of annals for the authorized compiler to make use of in any way that seemed best to

him, after due examination of evidence. This was the rule in all monastic houses. Unfortunately, however, as it is with the journals or diaries of men and women of the nineteenth century, so it was with the journals and diaries of monks of the thirteenth, they evidently were kept by fits and starts; and before the fourteenth century was half out, the practice of keeping up these diaries in all but the larger monasteries had come to an end.

Before passing on from the Library and Scriptorium, on which a great deal more might easily be said, it is necessary that one caution should be given; I know not how that notion originated or how it has taken such hold of the minds of ninety-nine men out of a hundred, that the monks as a class were students or scholars or men of learning; as far as the English monasteries of the thirteenth century are concerned, I am sure that the notion is altogether erroneous. If we except some few of the larger and nobler monasteries, which from first to last seem always to have been centres of culture, enlightenment, and progress, the monks were no more learned than the nuns. As a class, students, scholars, and teachers they were not. When King John died, in 1216, a little learning went a long way, and whatever the Norman Conquest did for England (and it did a great deal), it certainly was not an event calculated to increase the love of study, or likely to make men bookish pundits.

I should only confuse my readers if I dwelt more at length upon the buildings of a monastery. It is enough for the present that we should understand clearly that the essential buildings were (1) the church, (2) the cloister, (3) the dormitory, (4) the refectory, (5) the chapter-house. In these five buildings the life of the convent was carried on. Having said thus much we will pass on to the corporation itself--that which strictly was called the convent; and for convenience and distinctness it will be as well if we use that word _convent_ in the more accurate sense and employ it only as signifying the corporate body of persons occupying those buildings of which I have been speaking, and which in their aggregate were called a _monastery_.

Once more I think it necessary to start with a caution. Not only do I propose to take no account here of that large class of conventuals which comprehended the mendicant order or friars as they are called, but I must needs pass by with little or no notice the various orders of regular canons-_i.e._, canons living under a rule. The friars came into England first in 1220. During the thirteenth century they were, so to speak, upon their trial; and from the first the monks and the friars were essentially opposed in the ideal of their daily lives. So with the very numerous houses of canons regular up and down the land. They and the monks did not love one another, and when I speak of monks and their houses it will be advisable to exclude from our consideration the friars on the one hand and the canons on the other, and, in fact, to limit ourselves to that view of conventual life which the great English monasteries under the rule of St. Benedict afford.

At the time of the Norman Conquest it may be said that all English monks were professedly under one and the same Rule--the famous Benedictine Rule. The Rule of a monastery was the constitution or code of laws, which regulated the discipline of the house, and the Rule of St. Benedict dates back as far as the sixth century, though it was not introduced into England for more than a hundred years

after it had been adopted elsewhere. Four hundred years is a very long time for any constitution or code of law to last unchanged, and though the English monasteries professedly were living according to the Benedictine Rule during all the Saxon and the Danish times, yet there is too much reason to believe that if St. Benedict could have risen from the dead in the days of Edward the Confessor and made a visitation of many an English house, he would have been rather astonished to be told that the monks were living according to his Rule.

About one hundred and fifty years before the Conquest, a great reformation had been attempted of the French monasteries, which it was said had fallen into a state of great decay as far as discipline and fervour were concerned, and a revision of the old rule had been found necessary, the reformers breaking away from the old Benedictines and subjecting themselves to a new and improved Rule. These first reformers were called _Cluniac_ monks, from the great Abbey of Clugni, in Burgundy, in which the new order of things had begun. The first English house of reformed or Cluniac monks was founded at Lewes, in Sussex, eleven years after the Conquest, by Gundrada, a step-daughter of William the Conqueror, and her husband, William, Earl of Warrene and Surrey. The Cluniacs were at first famous for the simplicity of their lives and the strictness of their discipline, but as time went on they became too rich and so too luxurious, and at last they too needed reforming, and a new reformer arose. In this case the real moving spirit of reformation was an Englishman, one Stephen Harding, probably a Dorsetshire man, who was brought up at the Benedictine monastery of Sherborne, and in the course of events chosen Abbot of the monastery of Citeaux, where St. Bernard became his ardent disciple, and where the two enthusiasts, working cordially together, brought about that second reform of the Benedictines which resulted in the founding of the great Cistercian order.

Thus, without looking too minutely into the matter, we find that when the thirteenth century opens, or if you will, when Henry III. came to the throne in 1216, there were three great orders of monks in England--the old Benedictines, who had held houses and lands for centuries; the Cluniacs, who were the reformed Benedictines; and the Cistercians, who may be styled the reformed Cluniacs. But inasmuch as the architectural and other reforms among the Cistercians were many and peculiar, it will again be advisable to pass by these peculiarities without remark.

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The constitution of every convent, great or small, was monarchical. The head of the house was almost an absolute sovereign, and was called the Abbot. His dominions often extended, even in England, over a very wide tract of country, and sometimes over several minor monasteries which were called Cells. Thus the Abbot of St. Alban's had under himself the cell of Tynemouth in Northumberland and two others in Norfolk-_viz._, Binham and Wymondham, the latter of which eventually became an independent abbey--and the heads of these cells or subject houses were called Priors. An _abbey_ was a monastery which was independent. A priory was a monastery which in theory or in fact was subject to an abbey. All the Cluniac monasteries in England were thus said to be alien priories, because they were mere cells of the great Abbey of Clugni in France, to which

each priory paid heavy tribute; while the priors were almost always foreigners, and always appointed by the Abbot of Clugni, and responsible to him much in the same way as a Pacha is to his suzerain the Sultan. On the other hand, the Cistercian houses were all abbeys, and their abbots sovereigns in alliance or confederation with one another, and exercising over their several convents supreme jurisdiction, though recognizing the Abbot of Citeaux as their overlord. The abbot not only had a separate residence within the monastery and lived apart from his monks, but he had his separate estate for the maintenance of his dignity, and to bear the very heavy expenses which that dignity necessitated, and he had the patronage of every office in the convent. These officers were numerous. The first of them was the prior, who was the abbot's prime minister and head of the executive and the abbot's representative in his absence. Under him was the sub-prior, sometimes a third prior, and then a number of functionaries, to whom, as in the case of the abbot, separate estates were assigned out of which they were bound to provide for certain charges which they were called upon to meet as best they could, while a complicated system of finance provided for the surplus of one office being applied when necessary for the deficiency of another.

In the great Abbey of Evesham a very elaborate constitution was drawn up and agreed to in the year 1214, after a long dispute between the abbot and convent which had lasted for several years, and this scheme has come down to us.

From it we find that certain officers (obedientiaries was their technical name) were charged with providing certain articles out of the revenue of the office. The prior, to whom no mean share of the revenues was assigned, had to provide the parchment that might be required for business purposes or for legal instruments and all other materials for the scriptorium, except ink. The manciple was to provide all wine and mead, the keeping up the stock of earthenware cups, jugs, basins, and other vessels, together with the lamps and oil. The precentor had to find all the ink used, and all colour required for illumination, the materials for book-binding, and the keeping the organ in repair. To the chamberlain were assigned certain revenues for providing all the clothing of the monks, it being stipulated that the abbot's dress was not to be paid for out of the fund. In the same way certain small tithes are apportioned for buying basins, jugs, and towels for the guests' chamber; while all rents levied from the various tenants paid not in money, but in kind--as, _e.g_., capons, eggs, salmon, eels, herrings, &c.--were to be passed to the account of the kitchener. Every monk bearing office was bound to present his accounts for audit at regular intervals, and the rolls on which these accounts were inscribed exist in very large numbers, and may still be consulted by those who are able to read them.

It looks as if it were the policy of the Benedictines to give as many monks as possible some special duty and responsibility--to give each, in fact, a personal interest in the prosperity of the house to which he belonged--and the vacancies occurring from time to time in the various offices gave everybody something to look forward to. There was room for ambition, and, I am bound to add, room for a good deal of petty scheming, on the one hand, and truckling to the abbot, on the other; but it all went towards relieving the monotony of the life in the cloister--a monotony which has been very much over-stated by those who have never studied the subject. To begin with, it does not follow that what would be very dull to us would be dull and insipid

to the men of the thirteenth century. Before a man offered himself for admission to a monastery, he must have had a taste for a quiet life, and in many instances he

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