NORTHUMBRIAN SAINTS;

OR,

CHAPTERS

FROM THE

EARLY HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

THIS volume has grown out of a series of papers originally published in the (now defunct) "Leeds Parish Church Magazine." Its main object is to popularize some of the charming stories which abound in the pages of our earliest English historian. This accounts for the copious extracts made on almost every page from the "Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation." I have striven throughout to let Bæda, as far as possible, tell his own story in his own way, in the hope that some few at any rate of those, into whose hands this little book may fall, may be tempted to pursue the subject for themselves, and study, if not in the original Latin, at least in an English translation, that most delightful of histories.

WELLS,
May 15, 1884.

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CHAPTER I.

PAULINUS.

PURPOSE to tell the story of the Saints of Yorkshire in the days before the Norman Conquest, of those, that is, who came from other kingdoms and spent their life amongst us, and of those who went forth from us with the Gospel in their hands to preach to others. To do this we must go back more than twelve hundred years, to the time when the seventh century was yet young and the country between the Humber and the Forth formed a distinct kingdom, known as Northumbria, under the great Anglian king Edwin, whose supremacy was acknowledged over almost all the other kingdoms in England. "Northward, his frontier reached the Forth, and was guarded by a city which bore his name, Edinburgh, Edwin's burgh, the city of Edwin. Westward, he was master of Chester, and the fleet he equipped there sub-

dued the Isles of Anglesey and Man. South of the Humber he was owned as over-lord by the whole English race, save Kent; and Kent bound itself to him by giving him its king's daughter as a wife, a step which probably marked political subordination[1]." The marriage was one that led to important results for the northern kingdom, for the Kentish princess Ethelberga was a Christian, and her brother Eadbald only suffered the marriage on condition that she should be unhindered in the practice of her religion, and that all who should go with her, men or women, priests or ministers, should be allowed to follow their faith and worship after the custom of Christians.

Accordingly, Paulinus, "a man beloved of God, was ordained bishop that he might go with her, and by daily exhortations and celebrating the heavenly sacraments, confirm her and her company, lest they should be corrupted by the pagans[2]." There were brave men before Agamemnon, and there were Saints in Yorkshire before Paulinus, but their names and memories have perished from off the earth.

[1] Green's "Short History of the English People."

[2] The quotations throughout, if not otherwise specified, are from Bæda's "Ecclesiastical History."

There had been a Christian Church in the days of the Roman dominion, and a Bishop of York, Eborius by name, is mentioned as having crossed the Channel to attend a Church Council in France, A.D. 314. But nothing further is known of him, and even the names of all others are lost to us. The withdrawal of the Roman legions, and the invasion of the Angles in the fifth century had swept away all traces of this early Christian Church; and in the year of grace 625 Paulinus and his little flock were the only Christians in England north of the Humber, and therefore it is that he claims the first place in the list of those holy men to whom the Church in Yorkshire owes so great a debt.

Paulinus himself had come from Rome, as one of the reinforcement of the Italian mission sent to St. Augustine at Canterbury by Pope Gregory I in 601, and now, at the close of the summer of 625, he is sent northwards to carry the Standard of Christ into a new country. He was described to the English historian Bæda, by one who had received Holy Baptism at his hands, as "tall of stature, with a slight stoop, his hair black, his face thin, and nose very slender and aquiline: his aspect at once venerable and awe-striking," and Bæda further tells

us that "his whole mind was bent upon reducing the nation to which he was sent to the knowledge of the truth." But for a time it seemed as if no results were destined to crown his labours. "He toiled much, not only to retain those that went with him, by the help of God, that they should not revolt from the faith, but, if he could, to convert some of the pagans to the grace of faith by his preaching. But, as the Apostle says, though he laboured long in the Word 'The god of this world blinded the eyes of them that believed not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine on them.'" And so the year ran out and the spring-time of another came, and brought with it the first sign of the coming harvest. It was Easter-tide—a time of joy to the little Christian Church, and perhaps to the pagans among whom they dwelt, the festival of whose goddess, Eostre, took place about the same time—and Edwin sat in state in his palace, near the river Derwent, to receive an ambassador from the King of the West Saxons. But beneath the ambassador's robe was concealed the dagger of the assassin, and the king's life was only saved by the ready interposition of his attendant Lilla, who laid down his life for his master.

The sequel must be told in the words of Bæda. "On that same holy night of Easter Sunday, the queen had borne to the king a daughter, called Eanfled. The king, in the presence of Bishop Paulinus, gave thanks to his gods for the birth of his daughter; and the Bishop, on the other hand, began to return thanks to Christ, and endeavoured to persuade the king that by his prayers to the Lord he had obtained that the queen should be delivered in safety. The king, delighted with his words, promised, that, in case God would grant him life and victory over the king by whom that assassin had been sent, he would renounce his idols, and serve Christ; and as a pledge that he would perform his promise, he delivered up that same daughter of his to Bishop Paulinus, to be consecrated to Christ. She was the first baptized of the nation of the Northumbrians, on the holy day of Pentecost, with eleven others of his family. At that time, the king being recovered of his wound, marched with his army which he had collected, against the nation of the West Saxons; and either slew or subdued all those that he had been informed had conspired to murder him. Returning thus victorious into his own country, he would not immediately and unadvisedly embrace the sacra-

ments of the Christian faith, though neither would he any longer worship idols, ever since he made the promise that he would serve Christ; but he thought fit first, at leisure, to be more diligently instructed, by the venerable Paulinus, in the knowledge of the faith, and to confer with such as he knew to be the wisest of his chief men, to advise what should be done in that case. And, being a man of extraordinary natural sagacity, he often sat alone a long time, silent as to his tongue, but deliberating in his heart how he should proceed, and to which religion he should adhere."

At length his mind was made up. Paulinus—so runs the tale—approached him one day as he sat alone, musing and pondering what he ought to do, and laying his right hand upon his head, asked him whether he knew the sign. Edwin had wandered far and wide as an exile before he came to the throne. And on one occasion a stranger had appeared before him and prophesied his future greatness, and gained from him a promise that he would follow his advice in matters of life and salvation should the prophecy come true; and ere the stranger disappeared he laid his hand on Edwin's head and said, "When this sign shall come unto thee,

remember this night and thine own words, and delay not that which thou hast promised." And now the sign was come unto him: but who this mysterious stranger was it is hard to say—was it Paulinus himself? or was it one known to him? or was the whole occurrence a dream, that had somehow become known to Paulinus? we cannot tell. We only know that Edwin recognised the sign when now Paulinus laid his hand upon his head, and forthwith summoned a meeting of his wise men to take counsel whether the new law which Paulinus preached was worthy to be adopted. The debate was soon concluded. Priest and warrior were agreed in the feeling that the idols they worshipped were nothing, and the revelation of life and immortality which Paulinus brought them filled a vacant place in souls that were yearning for knowledge of the future. "Methinks, O king," said one, "the life of man in this world compared with that life which is unknown to us, is like the swift flight of a sparrow through the room where you sit at supper in winter, with your captains and attendants, a good fire having been lit in the midst, and the room warmed, while the wintry storms of rain and snow rage abroad. And the sparrow flying in at one door and out again

immediately by another, so long as it is within is safe from the wintry storm. But when a little moment of rest is passed it presently vanishes from your sight into the dark winter whence it came. So is it with the life of man: it is but for a moment: what went before and what is to follow we cannot tell. Wherefore if this new doctrine contains something more certain, it should rightly be adopted." And adopted it was—Coifi, the heathen priest, was the first to call for horse and spear, with which he rode full tilt at the temple of the gods he had so lately served. The idols were destroyed and the temple and its enclosure burnt with fire; and a Christian church now marks the spot (a rising ground in the village of Goodmanham, not far from Market Weighton) where Paulinus won the victory that added Northumbria to the list of Christian kingdoms.

On the Eve of Easter in the following year, 627, Edwin was baptized at York, in a wooden church dedicated to St. Peter, that he had built there, while he was undergoing his preparatory training as a Catechumen. With him were baptized several of his nobles, and some other members of the royal family; and among them his grand-niece Hilda, then a mere child of thir-

teen, but destined hereafter to become famous as the first Abbess of Whitby.

And now there followed a glorious period of six years' incessant labour. The peaceful state of the country enabled the missionary to pass fearlessly throughout the length and breadth of the kingdom, for there was such perfect peace in Britain wherever the dominion of King Edwin extended, that the proverb ran, that "a woman with her new-born babe might walk throughout the Island from sea to sea, if she would, and receive no harm." Six years' incessant labour: now at York, where Edwin's children were baptized, and two of them taken away from this life within a week after they had received the Holy Sacrament, while still clad, according to the sweet custom of the times, in the white robes given to them for a token of the innocency then received—and where a larger and nobler church of stone was rising over the little wooden one which the king had first built; now crossing the Humber to preach the gospel in Lindsey to the men of Lincolnshire, and baptizing them in large numbers in the Trent; now journeying far to the north, and baptizing his converts "in the river Swale, which runs by the village of Cataract"—the modern Catterick,

a little below Richmond in Swaledale; and now spending thirty-six days near a royal country-seat among the Cheviot hills, "fully occupied in catechizing and baptizing; during all which days from morning till night he did nothing else but instruct in Christ's saving word the people that resorted thither from all villages and places; and when instructed, he washed them with the water of remission in the river Glen hard by." So passed six years of missionary labour among the hills and dales of the north, the pure waters of whose streams served for the baptism of those won over to the faith of Christ, for as yet there were few churches built; one we have already seen was rising at York, and another is mentioned at a place called Campodonum, that has been variously identified with Doncaster, Almondbury near Halifax, and Slack near Huddersfield. But, alas! the church at York was not finished when the six years' quiet labour came to an end. The Welsh king Cadwalla—a Christian in nothing but the name—allied himself with Penda, the heathen king of the Middle Angles, in throwing off the over-lordship of Edwin. A great battle was fought in the plain of Heathfield (i.e. Hatfield Chase, a few miles N.E. of Doncaster) on Oct. 12th, 633,

in which Edwin was slain and his army utterly destroyed. Then there fell a grievous persecution upon the Northumbrian Church; the royal palace at Campodonum was burnt, and with it the newly built church of which we have spoken, "but the altar, being of stone, escaped the fire, and is still preserved in the monastery of the most reverend abbot and priest Thrydwulf, which is in Elmete Wood." So wrote Bæda in the year 731, and the words have a special interest as the "monastery in Elmete Wood" most probably stood on the spot now occupied by the Parish Church of Leeds.

Thus died Edwin, the first Christian king of Northumbria, a man whose real greatness is very marked. Trained in the rough school of adversity, he was not unmindful of the lessons he there learnt when brighter days seemed to dawn upon him. As he was one of the most powerful, so he was one of the best of the early English kings. His slowness to adopt Christianity, and his very perplexity and hesitation in this matter, serve to show that his conversion was something real and genuine, and no mere matter of state policy. As an old writer somewhat quaintly puts it: "As those children which are backward of their tongues, when attaining

to speech, pronounce their words more plainly and distinctly, so Edwin, long, yea tedious, before turning to Christianity, more effectually at last embraced the same[1]." Once fairly convinced of the truth of the Gospel, he threw his whole influence into the scale on the side of Christianity, working hand-in-hand with Paulinus in spreading a knowledge of its promises. "He was so zealous," says Bæda, "for the worship of the truth, that he persuaded the king of the East Angles to abandon his idolatrous superstitions, and with his whole province to receive the faith and sacraments of Christ." And now that he was dead, what was his widow, Ethelberga, to do? What was the Bishop Paulinus to do? What they *ought* to have done is perhaps hard to say. What they *did* was to fly with all speed to Kent; and who shall blame them for it? "When they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another," had been the Divine command; and we are expressly told that "the affairs of the Northumbrians were in such confusion by reason of the disaster, that there was no prospect of safety anywhere, except in flight." To flight therefore they betook themselves, Paulinus conducting the

[1] Fuller's "Church History."

widowed queen back to her brother's Court at Canterbury, and carrying with him "many rich vessels of King Edwin, among which were a large gold cross, and a golden chalice dedicated to the use of the altar," which were in use many years later in the cathedral at Canterbury.

And so they pass away from all connexion with the north, but their work for the Church was not over yet. The bishopric of Rochester was vacant at the time, and at the request of Honorius, Archbishop of Canterbury, Paulinus took upon him the charge of the see, and administered it for ten years, till his death in the year 644. While for Ethelberga, her brother, the Kentish king, built a monastery at a place called Lyminge:

> Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,
> And for the power of ministration in her,
> And likewise for the high rank she had borne,
> Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess, past
> To where beyond these voices there is peace.

Meanwhile, what had happened to the Church in Northumbria? It would seem that the flight of Paulinus was shared by the whole missionary party with one exception—an exception worthy of all honour and reverence. Paulinus had

brought with him from the south a young deacon named James, celebrated for his sweet voice and skill in chanting. He had accompanied the bishop everywhere on his missionary journeys, and now he refused to quit his post, and remained through all the troubles of the Northumbrian Church, and the miseries of the "hateful year," as that in which Edwin was slain was long called. It is but little that we hear of him, but he must have been a man of no ordinary courage and devotion to his work, and living for the most part in Swaledale, at a village near Catterick, he kept alive a spirit of love and righteousness, "and by teaching and baptizing rescued much prey from the ancient enemy of mankind."

Better days were in store for the Church, and in time Northumbria once more became a Christian kingdom. James the Deacon is not often mentioned in the history of the times, but he appears before us now and again, always the same patient humble worker, going on in his own quiet path of duty, and using his sweet voice to the glory of God. He lived to a good old age (being present at a Council held at Whitby in 664, and probably living on for some ten years more after that), and his heart must

have been glad within him at the sights and scenes he was permitted to witness before his death, "priests and clerics passing through the villages of Northumbria on no other account than to preach, baptize, visit the sick, and, in a word, to take care of souls; and on Sundays the people flocking eagerly to the church or the monasteries to hear the Word of God." His work was over then; he could sing his "Nunc Dimittis" before he died, and in him passed away the last of that band of missionaries who first preached the Word of Life in English Yorkshire.

CHAPTER II.

ST. AIDAN.

THE year 633 was one of the utmost misery and distress for Northumbria; not only was the Christian mission under Paulinus abandoned, and Edwin slain by the Mercian king Penda and the Welsh king Cadwalla, but his successors Osric and Eanfrid (for the kingdom of Northumbria was now divided into two), "as soon as they had obtained the government of their earthly kingdoms, renounced and betrayed the sacraments of the heavenly kingdom in which they had been initiated, and again delivered themselves up to be defiled and destroyed by the abominations of idols." Nor was the prospect much brighter when, in the following summer, the Welsh king followed up his victories and destroyed the apostate kings. It was a year of utter wretchedness; Christianity almost dead, and Cadwalla tyrannizing over the land, and its remembrance long afterwards as the "hateful year," was "as well on account of the

apostacy of the English kings, who had renounced the sacraments of their faith, as of the outrageous tyranny of the Welsh king." But though the trial was sharp, yet it was short, and in 635 Oswald, the brother of the late King Eanfrid, advanced from his exile in Scotland, with an army, "small indeed, in numbers, but strengthened with the faith of Christ," and at Heavenfield—rightly so named—a spot not far from Hexham, afterwards marked by a Christian church, met the vast, and, as men deemed, invincible, host of Cadwalla. There Oswald, when first he came in sight of the foe, set up as his banner a wooden cross, hastily made, and no less hastily planted in the ground, and then cried aloud to his soldiers, "Let us all kneel and together pray the true and living God Almighty to save us in His mercy from the proud and fierce foe: for He knoweth that we have undertaken a just war for the safety of our nation." No details of the battle are preserved, but we are told that all did as he had commanded, and accordingly advancing towards the enemy, with the first dawn of day, they obtained the victory as their faith deserved.

The death of Cadwalla left Oswald undisputed master of the whole of Northumbria. His

first care was to provide for the religious instruction of the people over whom he was called to rule. But where was he to find teachers for them? Paulinus, he might think, had deserted them in their hour of need, but in the far north there was an Isle of Saints, to which he himself owed much, Iona, the Isle of St. Columba, the centre of Scottish[1] Christianity. Thither Oswald sends messengers, and begs that the monks will send him a bishop, by whose instruction and ministry the English nation may be taught the advantages of faith in the Lord, and receive the sacraments. His request is at once granted; but Corman, the missionary despatched, was soon disheartened by his ill-success, and by the refusal of the rough Northumbrians to listen to his teaching. The mission was hastily abandoned, and he returned to Iona, there to report to those who had commissioned him that he could do no good to the stubborn men of Northumbria, for they were harsh and barbarous in disposition. "Methinks, brother," said a gentle voice, "that *you* were harsher than you should have been to your unlearned hearers: nor did

[1] Or rather "Irish" (and so in the following pages): the west coast of Scotland being colonized from Ireland by the Scotti, who brought their name with them and gave it to their new home.

you at first, after the Apostolic precept, give them the milk of more gentle doctrine, till by degrees, through the nourishment of God's Word, they might have strength to receive and practise God's more perfect and exalted counsel."

All eyes were turned on the speaker, the monk Aidan, and all agreed that he was the right man for the mission, "since he was found to be endued with the grace of a singular discretion, which is the mother of virtues, and accordingly they ordained him, and sent him to preach: and he, as time proved, was afterwards seen to possess all other virtues, as well as the discretion for which he was first remarkable."

And now began the golden age of the Northumbrian Church. It must have been late in the year 635 when Aidan arrived from Iona. Oswald at once assigned him as his episcopal see, Lindisfarne (now known as Holy Island), off the Northumberland coast, a few miles north of the rock fortress of Bamborough; an island, and yet not an island—

> For with the ebb and flow, its style
> Varies from Continent to Isle;
> Dry-shod, o'er sands, twice every day
> The pilgrims to the shrine find way;
> Twice every day the waves efface
> Of staves and sandalled feet the trace.

Here the bishop made his home, to which he loved to retire from time to time, for the sake of private prayer and solitude; but his active work was done on the mainland, where he ever found a ready and willing helper in the king, so that the two worked hand-in-hand in the spread of Christianity, much as Edwin and Paulinus had done before them. Bæda has given us a graphic sketch of their labours, and a pretty picture it is. "The king, humbly and willingly giving ear to the bishop's admonitions, most industriously applied himself to build and extend the Church of Christ in his kingdom; and when the bishop, who did not perfectly understand the English tongue, preached the Gospel, it was most delightful to see the king himself interpreting the Word of God to his commanders and ministers, for he had perfectly learned the language of the Scots during his long banishment. From that time, many from the region of the Scots came daily into Britain, and with great devotion preached the Word of Faith to those provinces of the English over which King Oswald reigned, and those among them who had received priest's orders administered to the believers the grace of baptism. Churches were built in several places; the people joyfully flocked together to

hear the Word; possessions and lands were given of the king's bounty to build monasteries; the younger English were by their Scottish masters instructed; and there were greater care and attention bestowed upon the rules and observance of regular discipline."

Well did Aidan understand the value of education, and we find that on his first coming into the country he established a school, in which he trained up twelve Northumbrian boys, some of whom, in after days, carried on the good work which he had begun, and amongst them the famous St. Chad; so, too, he ever promoted the building of monasteries, the best schools throughout the Middle Ages; and delighted occasionally to spend a few days in quiet with their inmates. Nor was he less earnest in the active work of preaching and pastoral visitation: journeying over hill and dale, generally on foot, he exhorted all he met, "whether rich or poor, if unbelievers, to embrace the mystery of the faith, or, if already Christians, he would strengthen them in the faith and stir them up, by words and actions, to alms and good works." "He was accustomed not only to teach the people committed to his charge in church, but also feeling for the weakness of a new-born faith, to

wander round the provinces, to go into the houses of the faithful, and to sow the seeds of God's Word in their hearts, according to the capacity of each." Caring nothing for the world or for the things of the world, his own life was a better lesson than any that he could teach by his sermons. In him men saw one whose only thought was how to serve God himself, and how to win others to Him. When not engaged in teaching, he was always to be found employed in prayer and reading the Scriptures; and when forced occasionally to dine at Court with the king, "he went with one or two clergy, and having taken a small repast, made haste to be gone with them, either to read or to pray." Generous and liberal almost to a fault, "he delighted in distributing to the poor whatever was given him by the kings or rich men of the world." To such an extent did he carry this lavish generosity, that it is said that on one occasion when King Oswin (Oswald's successor) had given him a particularly fine horse for his own use, a poor man met him and asked for alms, upon which he immediately dismounted, and ordered the horse, with all his royal trappings, to be given to the beggar. Perhaps it was only natural that the king should be some-

what annoyed at the prompt way in which his gift was disposed of, but Aidan pointed out to him, "that man, made in the image of God, was of more value than his fine horse," and Oswin threw himself at his feet exclaiming, "that he would never again grudge anything to the children of God."

To return to Aidan's work in conjunction with Oswald; the lavish generosity of the bishop was imitated by the king; and a story is told how, that one Easter Day, as they sat at dinner together, with a silver dish full of royal dainties set before them, over which Aidan's hands were stretched out to ask a blessing, the king's almoner suddenly entered and reported that a crowd of beggars from all parts were without, asking alms: whereupon Oswald immediately bade them carry out to the poor the meat set before him, and cut in pieces the dish of silver, and divide it among them. Aidan, overwhelmed with joy, seized the king's hand, exclaiming, "May this hand never grow old!" And men loved to think in after days that it fell out according to his prayer; and the story ran, that after Oswald's death, his arm and hand, cut off from his body, remained uncorrupted, "preserved in a silver shrine, and venerated with

due honour, in St. Peter's church in the royal city," i.e. Bamborough. But we will pass back from legend to fact. One of the brightest features of early English Christianity is the eager way in which kings used their influence to further its spread through the neighbouring kingdoms. We have already seen Edwin introducing it into Lincolnshire, and now we see Oswald using his influence as supreme lord, not to introduce it, for that was already done, but to foster and further its growth in the South country kingdom of Wessex, standing as godfather to its king, Cynegils, and presently joining with him in assigning the bishop an episcopal see at Dorchester, hard by the Thames, some ten miles below Oxford. Dorchester has come down in the world now, but there is still a grand old church there, and the spot must always be interesting, as the see first fixed there was the original bishopric whence have sprung the two great sees of Lincoln and Winchester, just as Aidan's own see of Lindisfarne was afterwards moved to Chester-le-Street, and finally to the hill higher up on the banks of the Wear, now crowned by the glorious cathedral of Durham.

One would fain linger over the days of Os-

wald, and tell more of the king who would often pass half the night in prayer, and whose days were spent in ceaselessly providing for the poor and infirm, but we must hasten on. These happy days came to an end all too soon, and Oswald, like his great predecessor Edwin, fell in battle with the heathen Penda, after a reign of but eight years. He died as he had lived, interceding for his people, his last words being a prayer for the soldiers who fought at his side, "Lord, have mercy on their souls." It is no wonder that the fame of the saintly king was spread far and wide, and that strange stories are told of miracles wrought at his tomb, or by his relics, stories that in some cases perhaps are mere invention, but which more often may have some foundation in fact; for it should always be remembered that in those days men were ever ready to see miracles where we should find nothing extraordinary. What we might call a happy coincidence was then at once set down as a special providence, and what some of us might deem a special providence, was to them an undoubted miracle. Thus the facts of the following story, told by Bæda, may be perfectly true, and yet we are not forced to see a miracle in it as he did. Penda, it would seem, after the

death of Oswald, ravaged Northumbria far and wide, and at last approached the royal city, Bamborough. Not being able to take it by storm, he endeavoured to burn it, and having piled up an immense quantity of beams, planks, wattles from the walls, and thatch from the roofs of the neighbouring cottages, set fire to the mass when he saw that the wind blew towards the town. Aidan was at the time in his retreat at Lindisfarne, some two or three miles distant, and, says Bæda, "when he saw the flames of the smoke carried by the boisterous wind above the city walls, he is reported, with weeping eyes, and hands uplifted to heaven, to have cried, 'See, Lord, what mischief Penda is doing!' and the words were hardly uttered, when the wind immediately changed, and drove back the flames upon those who had kindled them, so that some being hurt, and all frightened, they forebore any further attempts against the city which they saw to be protected by the hand of God."

After the death of Oswald, the kingdom of Northumbria was once more divided into two; the northern part, Bernicia, was ruled over by Oswy, the brother of the late king, and Deira, which pretty nearly answers to the county of

Yorkshire, became the kingdom of Oswin, of the old line of kings to which Edwin had belonged. Bæda has left us an admirable portrait of the new king, and one which makes us long to know more of his history. He was "of graceful aspect and tall of stature, affable in discourse, and courteous in behaviour, and most bountiful to all men, as well to the ignoble as the noble; so that he was beloved by everyone for his royal qualities of body and mind, and merits, and persons even of the first rank came from almost all provinces to serve him. Among other virtues and rare endowments and glorious blessings, humility is said to have been the greatest." Then follows, as an instance, the story given above of his present of a horse to Aidan, and the manner in which it was made over to the beggar by the saint. And this is really all that we know of the seven prosperous years of his reign; they were abruptly terminated by his murder. A quarrel—we know not its cause—broke out between him and his northern neighbour, Oswy. Oswin, not feeling himself sufficiently strong to engage in battle, disbanded the army that he had gathered together, and hid himself in the house of one whom he supposed to be his most assured friend. But, alas!

it was far otherwise, for the same man betrayed him into the hands of Oswy, by whom he was cruelly murdered—a murder that has left a dark stain upon the otherwise fair fame of the Bernician monarch.

Aidan did not long survive the king whom he had loved so dearly. Twelve days afterwards he was at the royal residence, near Bamborough, when he was seized with a sudden illness. A tent was pitched to shelter him, against the west wall of the church, and there he died on August 31, 651, with his head leaning against a post that served as a buttress. The church was twice burnt in after days, but each time this post escaped the fire—a fact that was naturally set down as miraculous, and consequently, chips of the post were reputed efficacious for the cure of diseases.

Bæda, who did not agree with Aidan in all things, and who differed from him particularly concerning the time at which the Easter festival should be celebrated, has borne willing and ungrudging testimony to his saintly life, and concludes his account with a passage that may well serve to close this chapter. "I have written," he says, "thus much of the person and works of the aforesaid man, in no way commending or

approving what he imperfectly understood in relation to the observance of Easter; nay, very much disliking the same, as I have clearly shown in another book; but, like an impartial historian, simply relating what was done by or through him, and commending such things as are praiseworthy in his actions and preserving the memory thereof, for the benefit of my readers: namely, his love of peace and charity; his chastity and humility; his mind superior to anger and avarice, and despising pride and vainglory; his industry in keeping and teaching the heavenly commandments; his diligence in reading and watching; his authority becoming a priest in reproving the haughty and powerful, and, at the same time, his tenderness in comforting the afflicted and relieving and defending the poor. To say all, in a few words, as near as I could be informed by those who knew him, he took care to omit none of all those things which he found enjoined in the apostolic or prophetic writings, but to the utmost of his power endeavoured to perform them all in his actions."

CHAPTER III.

CEDD AND ST. CHAD.

ABOUT the middle of the seventh century "a brace of brethren, both bishops both eminent for learning and religion, appeared in the Church; so like in name, they are oft mistaken in authors one for another. Now, though it be 'pleasant for brethren to live together in unity,' yet it is not fit, by error, they should be jumbled together in confusion." It is thus that an old writer [1] begins his account of Cedd and his brother St. Chad: and the caution that he gives is not unnecessary, but with a little care the lives of the two great men may be kept quite distinct, for their histories are not so much alike as their names. Cedd was probably the eldest of four brothers, all of whom became priests, while two of them, as we see, were raised to the Episcopate: the date and place of his birth are both uncertain, but the north country may certainly

[1] Fuller.

claim him and his brother, though most of his work was done in the midland and eastern counties. We first hear of him in the year 653, when Peada, the son of the famous Penda, King of Mercia, was converted to Christianity and carried away from Northumbria a Christian princess as his bride. Four priests accompanied them to Mercia, to labour for the conversion of that still heathen kingdom, which comprised the midland counties of England, and among them was Cedd. Their ministry was rapidly crowned with success: "they were willingly listened to, and many, renouncing the abominations of idolatry, were daily washed in the foundation of faith." Nor did King Penda, (who will be remembered as the destroyer of Edwin and Oswald) "obstruct the preaching of the Word among his own people, if any were willing to hear it; but on the contrary he hated and despised those whom he saw not performing the works of faith, who neglected to obey their God, in whom they believed."

But Cedd was not destined to spend any long time in this mission; six months can hardly have passed before he was summoned to take charge of a new mission-field. The king of the East Saxons (i.e. the men of Essex) had been

won over to the faith of Christ by the pleading of Oswy of Northumbria, and had begged for missionaries to teach his new faith to his own people. Cedd was at once fixed on as the man for the work: he was summoned from Mercia and despatched with one other priest to preach the Word to the nation of the East Saxons. The history of the mission, and of Cedd's elevation to the Episcopate, shall be told in Bæda's words: "When these two, travelling to all parts of that country, had gathered a numerous Church to our Lord, it happened that upon one occasion Cedd returned home and came to the church of Lindisfarne, to confer with Bishop Finan; who, finding how successful he had been in the work of the gospel, made him bishop of the nation of the East Saxons, calling to him two bishops to assist at the ministry of the ordination. Cedd, having received the episcopal dignity, returned to his province, and pursuing the work he had begun, with more ample authority, built churches in several places, ordaining priests and deacons to assist him in the Word of Faith, and the ministry of baptizing, especially in the city which, in the language of the Saxons, is called 'Ythancæstir,' as also in that which is named Tilaburg; the first of

which places is on the banks of the Pente, the other on the banks of the Thames. Here, collecting an assemblage of the servants of Christ, he taught them to observe the discipline of regular life, as far as those rude people were then capable." The city that rejoiced in the uncouth name of "Ythancæstir" has probably been long ago covered by the sea; but in Tilaburg we cannot fail to recognise Tilbury, so famous for its associations with the history of the Spanish Armada.

To return to Cedd. His Episcopate over the East Saxons did not cause him to sever his connection with the north; he always looked upon Yorkshire as his home; there his brothers were living, and there was the Church which had sent him forth, and from time to time he loved to return to it. On one of these visits the king, "finding him a holy and wise man, and of a good disposition, desired him to accept some land to build a monastery, to which the king himself might frequently resort, to offer his prayers to the Lord, and hear the Word, and where he might be buried when he died. . . . . The bishop, therefore, complying with the king's desires, chose himself a place to build a monastery among lofty and distant mountains,

which looked more like lurking places for robbers or retreats for wild beasts, than habitations for men." And there he founded the monastery of Lastingham, among the purple moors above Pickering and Kirbymoorside. "The remains of that little sanctuary," says Canon Raine, "may still be seen. They are standing on the slopes of a long hill that looks towards the north, and the heather creeps up towards its foot, as if it were envious of the bright green turf that lies in the hollow below the church. Solitary is the village now, and solitary it must have been at all times. In that little shrine are resting the bones of the evangelizer of the East Saxons, and to the cell which once stood near it came the venerable Bæda to learn from the brethren of the house how their two first abbots, Cedd and his brother Chad, had lived and died [1]."

Here then it was that Cedd died. It was late in the year 644; and he was on one of his many visits to his monastery. A plague was raging throughout the country, and the bishop was attacked by it, fell sick, and died, having shortly before his death appointed his brother Chad to succeed him in the government of the monas-

[1] "History of the Archbishops of York."

tery. A touching story is told by Bæda of the affection borne to him by his East Saxon converts. "When the brethren who were in his monastery in the province of the East Saxons heard that the bishop was dead and buried in the province of the Northumbrians, about thirty men came thither from that monastery, being desirous either to live near the body of their father, if it should so please God, or to die there and be buried. Being lovingly received by their brethren and fellow-soldiers in Christ, all of them died there by the aforesaid pestilence, except one little boy, who was afterwards promoted to the order of priesthood, and proved very useful to many in the Church."

With the death of Cedd begins the history of the work of Chad. All that we know of his earlier life is that he was one of Aidan's twelve boys, mentioned in the last chapter, and that he had been educated partly in Ireland. Now we find him succeeding his brother as Abbot of Lastingham: but his quiet life there was soon interrupted. A bishop was wanted for York: Wilfred (whose life will be told in a future chapter) had been elected to the vacant see, and had gone across the water to France for consecration, but delayed his return for so long a time that

those at home became impatient, and prevailed on King Oswy to appoint Chad in his place, urging that he was in every way suited to the post, being "a holy man, grave in character, well read in the Scriptures, and diligently practising that which he learnt therein." And so Chad was consecrated, and Wilfrid, when at last he returned from his foreign tour, found his place already filled and no bishopric awaiting him! Like a wise and good man, as he was, he accepted facts, and quietly retired to the monastery of Ripon, while Chad administered the see of York. For three years he laboured, taking his old master Aidan and his brother Cedd for his examples; humbly and quietly he toiled, in true apostolic fashion; travelling about, generally on foot, as Aidan before him, and preaching the gospel in the towns and open country and the villages, wherever an opening was found, whether it was in the peasant's cottage, or the great man's castle.

The time was one of great importance in English history, the Church was passing through a crisis. Aidan and his followers in the north had naturally looked to Iona as their ecclesiastical centre; but a new generation of Northumbrian churchmen had arisen, who looked to Can-

terbury and Rome. Controversy had sprung up, and the Scottish party to which Chad belonged had been defeated. And from Rome, or rather beyond Rome, from Tarsus, St. Paul's own city, there had come to the English shore a Greek, Theodore, as Archbishop of Canterbury; a man of grand character, to whom our Church owes much. One of his first acts on his arrival was to make a general visitation of all England, ordaining bishops in proper places, and correcting such things as he found faulty. The see of York soon attracted his attention, and he upbraided Chad, saying that he had not been duly consecrated; Chad's gentleness, however, won his heart at once. "If you are persuaded," said he, "that I have not duly received episcopal ordination, I gladly resign the office, for I never thought myself worthy of it; but, though unworthy, in obedience to authority, I yielded so as to undertake it." Theodore was touched with such humility, and exclaimed that he should not resign the bishopric, but that he would himself complete his ordination after the Catholic manner—which accordingly he did—but Chad would not yield: he was only too ready to lay down the heavy burden of episcopal duties, and retired to his monastery at Lastingham, for quiet

and rest, thus making way for Wilfrid, who was at last put in possession of the see of York. But Theodore had learned Chad's value too well to lose his services entirely, and shortly afterwards, the bishopric of Mercia being vacant, he begged that Chad would accept it. "And," says Bæda, "seeing that it was the custom of that most reverend prelate to go about the work of the gospel on foot rather than on horseback, Theodore commanded him to ride whenever he had a long journey to make; and finding him very unwilling to omit, out of love to it, his former pious labour, he himself, with his own hands, lifted him on the horse; for he thought him a holy man, and therefore obliged him to ride wherever he had to go;" an exercise of archiepiscopal authority and interference with the liberty of the subject more in the style of those days than our own!

And so Chad followed in his brother's steps and came to Mercia, where he fixed the episcopal see "in the place called Lyccidfilth," in which name it is not hard to recognise the modern Lichfield, where he died and was buried, and where the see of the bishop continues to this day. For two years and a half he gloriously governed the Church, we are told by Bæda,

and the words make us long to know more of his episcopate. However, we do not hear much of him; we are told of his love of seizing every opportunity of retiring to a monastic establishment near the church, where he was wont privately to pray and read with seven or eight of the brethren, as often as he had any spare time from the labour and ministry of the Word. And we hear of his earnest prayers to God for all mankind, when the storms arose. "If the wind grew stronger, he closed his book, and prostrating himself on the ground, prayed still more earnestly. But if it proved a violent storm of wind or rain, or else that the earth and the air were terrified with thunder and lightning, he would repair to the church, and devote himself to earnest prayers and the repeating of psalms till the weather became calm." One can hardly help tracing back this custom to his boyhood, when he had been Aidan's pupil in the Isle of Lindisfarne, where the winds howled and the waves dashed off the rocky coast of Northumbria. But the legend of his death is one of the most beautiful in the whole of our early English history. One of his pupils was at work outside the little church where Chad was praying, when —so runs the tale—he suddenly heard the sound

of persons singing most sweetly, and rejoicing, and appearing to descend from heaven to earth. The voices gradually drew near to him, till they came to the church where the bishop was, and entering, filled the same and all round about it. The good man listened awhile, and after some thirty minutes, heard the same song of joy ascending, and returning to heaven by the way it came, with inexpressible sweetness. Suddenly the bishop signed to him, and bade him come with the seven brethren of the house to the church: "When they were come, he first admonished them to preserve the virtue of love and peace among themselves, and towards all others; indefatigably to practise the rules of regular discipline, which they had either been taught by him, or seen him observe, or had noticed in the words or actions of former fathers. Then he added, that the day of his death was at hand; for said he, 'that loving guest who was wont to visit our brethren has vouchsafed to come to me also this day, and to call me out of this world. Return, therefore, to the church and speak to the brethren, that they in their prayers recommend my departure to our Lord; and that they be careful to provide beforehand for their own, the hour whereof is uncertain, by

watching, prayer, and good work.' When he had spoken thus much, and they had gone away in much sorrow, he who had heard the heavenly song returned alone and besought leave to ask a question. 'Ask what you will,' answered the bishop. Then he said, 'I entreat you to tell me what song of joy was that which I heard of beings descending upon this oratory, and after some time returning to heaven.' The bishop answered, 'If you heard the singing, and know of the coming of the heavenly company, I command you, in the name of our Lord, that you do not tell the same to any one before my death. They truly were angelic spirits who came to call me to my heavenly reward, which I have always loved and longed for; and they promised that they would return seven days hence, and take me away with them.'" And in seven days he was dead, and it was told in after days that the soul of his brother Cedd, whom he had loved so dearly, had descended with a choir of angels from heaven, and that returning upward they had borne along with them the soul of the gentle Chad.

CHAPTER IV.

CÆDMON AND ST. HILDA.

HOSE whose biographies have been related in the earlier chapters were all in high positions in Church or State, and all *men*; but now I have to tell the story of a plain working man, and a saintly lady; of the cowherd Cædmon, and the abbess Hilda. Both were inmates of the same monastery, and that one whose ruins may be known to many of my readers, and may recall the memory of pleasant summer trips; the far-famed abbey of St. Hilda at Whitby, crowning the eastern cliff, the gleaming light from whose church windows shone out in past ages as a beacon, in welcome or in warning, to sailors on the Northern Sea. Gone are the lights now; gone are the domestic buildings of the Abbey, only of the church some fragments remain, marking the spot where lived and died the saintly "Mother Hilda," and where were heard the earliest notes of English song.

Hilda belonged to the royal family of Northumbria, and when but a child of thirteen was baptized at York with her great-uncle Edwin, by Paulinus, the bishop who came from Kent. The lessons of that day were never forgotten: she then "embraced the faith and sacraments of Christ, and preserved the same undefiled till she attained to the vision of Him in heaven." Twenty years passed on, and Hilda determined to retire from the life of the court, and to enter a monastery; after a year's probation in East Anglia, the good Bishop Aidan, who knew and valued her, called her back to her own country and gave her a site for a small monastery, near the river Wear. From this she was soon moved to a larger house at Hartlepool, which had been founded not many years previously by Bega, the first lady who took the monastic veil in the north of England. Here then Hilda was appointed abbess, and here she set herself heart and soul to carry out the discipline and enforce the regular life of a monastery; gaining all the help she could from the experience of others, and cheered by frequent visits from Aidan, who loved from time to time to spend a few days in the monastery, assisting the abbess by wise counsels and advice.

But after some seven or eight years, a new sphere of labour opened out before her, and she left Hartlepool to become the first Abbess of Whitby; to build and organize a new monastery there. "This monastery she placed under the same regular discipline as she had done the former; and taught there the strict observance of justice, piety, chastity, and other virtues, and particularly of peace and love; so that, after the example of the primitive church, none was there rich, and none was poor, all things being common to all, and none having any property."

The monastery was, like many others at that time, a double one, monks and nuns living in separate wings, but under the same roof; the lady Abbess Hilda, "whom all that knew called 'Mother,' for her singular piety and grace," being set over both, and winning the love and obedience of monks and nuns alike. Rapidly the fame of Hilda, and of her monastery, spread; not only persons of middle rank, but even kings and princes, sometimes asked and received her advice. No less than five of her monks were raised to the episcopate, and all of them (so Bæda tells us) men of singular merit and sanctity. Her Abbey was chosen as the scene of the great Ecclesiastical

Council in 664, when the Northumbrian Church finally agreed to adopt the customs of Rome and Canterbury.

But the chief glory of Whitby is not the memory of its Ecclesiastical Council, not of its five bishops, not even of its first abbess, but of the father of English song—the first of a glorious line of English poets who could utter nothing mean or base, but who dedicated their genius to God, and sang for Him, and Him alone. It was while St. Hilda ruled the monastery as mother, that there was employed on the estate a simple cowherd named Cædmon, who, though advanced in years, had learned nothing of verse: "Wherefore," says Bæda, "being sometimes at feasts, when all agreed for glee's sake to sing in turn, he no sooner saw the harp come towards him than he rose up from the board and went homewards. Once, when he had done this and gone from the feast to the stable where he had that night charge of the cattle, he laid himself down to rest at the proper time, and there appeared to him in his sleep One who said, greeting him by name, 'Cædmon, sing some song to Me.' 'I cannot sing,' he answered, 'and for that reason I left the feast and came hither, because I could not sing.'

He who talked with him answered, 'However that may be, you *shall* sing to Me.' 'What shall I sing?' rejoined he. 'Sing the beginning of created things,' said the other. Having received this answer he presently began to sing, to the praise of God the Creator, verses which he had never heard before, and afterwards awaking from his sleep, he remembered all that he had sung in his dream, and added more to the same effect in verse worthy of the Deity. In the morning he came to the steward, his superior, and having acquainted him with the gift which he had received, was conducted to the abbess, by whom he was ordered, in the presence of many learned men, to tell his dream and repeat the verses, that they might all give their judgment what it was and whence his verse proceeded. They all concluded that heavenly grace had been conferred upon him by our Lord. They explained to him a passage in Holy Writ, ordering him, if he could, to put the same into verse. Having undertaken it, he went away, and returning the next morning, gave it to them, composed in the most excellent verse; whereupon the abbess, understanding the Divine grace in the man, instructed him to quit the secular habit, and take upon him the monastic life; which being

accordingly done, she associated him with the rest of the brethren in her monastery, and ordered that he should be taught the whole series of sacred history. Thus he, keeping in mind all he heard, converted the narrative into most harmonious verse; and sweetly repeating the same, made his masters in turn his hearers. He sang the Creation of the World, the Origin of Man, and all the history of Genesis; the departure of the Children of Israel out of Egypt, and their entering into the Land of Promise, with many other histories from Holy Writ; the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection of our Lord, and His Ascension into Heaven; the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the preaching of the Apostles; also the terror of a future judgment, the horror of the pains of hell, and the delights of heaven; besides many more about the Divine benefits and judgments: by all which he endeavoured to turn away men from the love of vice, and to excite in them the love of good actions."

And so he passed his days, dedicating his gift to the glory of God. "He never," says Bæda, "could compose any trivial or idle song, but, as he recognised that it was God who had opened his lips, therefore, till his dying day, did

his mouth shew forth His praise." How long he lived after he had received this gift we are not told; but as he was already advanced in years, it was probably not long. His last illness lasted only for a fortnight, and was not deemed serious by those about him; so slight it seemed that he was able to walk and talk all the time. But one evening he begged to be carried into the infirmary of the monastery, to rest there that night. His request was granted, and far into the night he sat talking with those around him. Suddenly he asked for the Eucharist. "What need of the Eucharist?" said they, "you are not like to die, since you talk so joyfully with us, as if you were in perfect health." "However," said he, "bring me the Eucharist." Having received the same into his hand, he asked whether they were all in charity with him, and without any ill-will or rancour? They answered that they were all in perfect charity and free from all anger; and in their turn asked him whether he was in the same mind towards them. He immediately answered, "I am in charity, my children, with *all* God's servants." Then strengthening himself with the heavenly food, he prepared for the entrance into another life, and asked how near the hour was when the brethren were to be

awakened to sing the nocturnal praises of our Lord? They answered, "It is not far off." Then he said, "It is well, let us wait that hour;" and signing himself with the sign of the Cross, he laid his head on the pillow, and falling into a gentle slumber, ended his life in silence. And so it was, that as he had served God with a simple and pure mind, and tranquil devotion, so he departed to His presence, leaving the world by a tranquil death; and that tongue, which had composed so many holy words in praise of the Creator, in like manner uttered its last words whilst he was in the act of signing himself with the Cross, and recommending his spirit into the hands of God.

Let us pass from the death-bed of Cædmon to that of the Abbess Hilda. It was early in the winter of 680; for some six years she had borne the trial of a long illness with a sweetness and cheerfulness that never flagged; and during all this time she had never failed to return thanks to her Maker, or publicly and privately to instruct the flock committed to her charge; for by her own example she admonished all persons to serve God obediently while in perfect health, and under adversity or bodily infirmity to be faithful in rendering thanks to Him.

At last she felt that her end was near. She received the Holy Eucharist, and calling together the hand-maidens of Christ that were in the same monastery, she charged them to live in evangelical peace with each other and with all; and then, in the dim twilight of the November morn—

> Her quiet eyelids closed, she had
> Another morn than ours.

There are lessons to be learned from every noble life; and while St. Hilda shows us how much a good woman may do for God, and how widely her influence for good may be felt, the tale of Cædmon the cowherd, who became the first of our English poets, carries its own moral with it, and tells to the working man that God has need of him, and can find work for him to do; while to those who are blessed with special gifts above their fellows, gifts whether of voice or song, it brings the reminder that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, to be used to the glory of the Giver, and never desecrated and degraded by being put to the service of aught that is base or mean.

CHAPTER V.

ST. CUTHBERT.

THERE is perhaps none of the great Northumbrian Saints whose fame is more widely spread than that of St. Cuthbert. For centuries the armies of the North marched to battle under his banner, and pilgrims flocked to his shrine, rich gifts and offerings were made there: and it would be hard to count the churches dedicated to God's glory in his name. The wonderful story of his relics and their strange wanderings might well form the subject of a chapter, but perhaps it will be better to tell the story of his life. Only that indeed is hard enough to tell.

So great was his fame, and so widely spread the reverence for him, that even in his lifetime stories were told of the greatness of the grace of God in him, and of miracles wrought through his prayers; and no sooner was he dead than

legend upon legend sprung up, graceful and beautiful no doubt oftentimes, but perhaps as often grotesque and to us absurd: tales of the wonderful works of healing done by him, of miraculous knowledge of events happening elsewhere, and of his power over the animal world, stories that told how the very birds of the air obeyed his voice and ceased to rob his garden at his chiding; and how the wild sea-fowl hushed their screams at his bidding; while even the seals and otters knew him and played round his feet, fawning upon him, and refusing to be dismissed without a blessing. Amid all this wild luxuriance of legend it is often hard to disentangle the truth, but enough is certain to make us know that Cuthbert must have been of a singularly loveable nature, one of those rare characters who shed around them such a halo of winning gentleness that even the beasts of the field and the birds of the air seem to know it, and to lose their natural timidity in their presence: one of those of whom the poet was surely thinking when he wrote the lines—

> He prayeth best, who loveth best
> All things both great and small;
> For the dear God who loveth us,
> He made and loveth all.

In his childhood he was the leader in all the sports and pastimes of his companions, excelling in them all; from these he passed to the rough life of a shepherd lad among the Scottish hills by the banks of the Leader; and there, in the solitary nights and days passed on those wild uplands, he drank in the lessons which nature and solitude can teach so well, spending long hours in prayer alone with God, till it seemed as if the spirit world were opened to him, and the stranger clad in white garments riding over the hill-side became as a white-robed angel; while the Northern lights that streamed across the heaven shone as the choirs of the heavenly host coming down to earth, and bearing upward with them on their return a soul of exceeding brightness.

And so as time went on he longed more and more to withdraw from the world and worldly things, till at length his mind was made up, and with one attendant he rode across the hills and presented himself one morning at the church of Melrose, with the request that he might be taken in as a monk of the abbey. There he lived and laboured for many a long year, and many a glimpse of his life do we get in the pages of Bæda. Now he is reading aloud the Gospel of

St. John by the bedside of the dying provost (whom he succeeded in his office); now stealing out of the monastery at nightfall, to spend long hours alone with God in prayer on the sea-shore, and not returning home till the hour of mattins was at hand. At other times we see him on his missionary excursions seeking out and preaching in those remote villages which were situated far from the world in wild mountain regions, spending a week or two, or it might be a month, in calling back to heavenly concerns these rustic people, by the word of his preaching as well as by his example in virtue. "So great was his skill in teaching, so vast his power of loving persuasion, so striking was the light of his angelic countenance, that no one in his presence dared to conceal from him the hidden secrets of his heart, but all declared openly in confession what each had done amiss, thinking in truth that none of his misdeeds were concealed from him; and each strove to wipe away the sins he had confessed, as he commanded, with fruits worthy of repentance."

In missionary journeys such as these Cuthbert was often hard put to it to find his daily bread. So careful of the wants of others, he regarded not the needs of his own body. He was ready

to share his last loaf with a poor man, or (as he actually did on one occasion) with the horse that carried him, or even, as we are also told, with the eagle that soared above his head. The story is worth relating. The lad with him was complaining that they must go on their way fasting as no hospitable roof was near, when Cuthbert bade him ever have faith and hope in the Lord, for none who faithfully serve Him can ever perish with hunger, and pointing to an eagle overhead, told him that even by its ministry God could feed them that day. And it fell out even as he said: for presently seeing the eagle again on the river's bank, he said once more to the lad, "Do you see where our handmaid of whom I spoke is sitting? Run and search, and bring hither quickly whatever fare the Lord may have sent us." And the lad running as he was desired brought back a good sized fish, which the bird had lately taken from the river; but was met with a gentle rebuke from Cuthbert. "What have you done, my son? Why have you not given our handmaid her share? Cut it at once in half and give her the portion which she deserves for her service to us."

And so some thirteen years of labour at Melrose passed away, broken only by a short

stay in a monastery at Ripon, to which he was transferred for a time; but the little community there was broken up, and the monks, with Cuthbert among them, wandered back to their Northern home.

But now, about the year 664, he was called away from Melrose to take charge of Aidan's monastery in the Isle of Lindisfarne, where he quickly endeared himself to the monks, winning over by his gentleness and patience those who were at first inclined to resist him and dispute his authority.

But he seems to have longed for the solitary life that he had learned to love in his boyhood by the banks of the Leader; and at last he forsook the monastery for the life of a hermit in the Island of Farne, one of that group which the name of Grace Darling has made for ever famous. Men said that the evil spirits fled at his coming and left the Island to the saint of God; and there "with the deep sea rolling at his feet, and the gulls wailing about his head, he built himself one of those 'Picts' Houses,' the walls of which remain still in many parts of Scotland, a circular hut of turf and rough stone, and dug out the interior to a depth of some feet, and thatched it with sticks and grass; and made, it seems,

two rooms within; one for an oratory, and one for a dwelling-place; and so lived alone and worshipped God[1]." His retirement was occasionally broken by visits from the Lindisfarne monks, for whom he built a larger house near the landing-place of the Island; and at first he would go out and welcome them, ministering to their necessities with his own hands; but in time even their visits seemed to him an interruption, and he shut himself up in his hut and only spoke to them through the window: till at length he shut this up too and never unclosed it except for the sake of giving his blessing or some other great necessity. But God had active work for him still to do, and after about eight years he was drawn forth from his retreat, and persuaded by the prayers of the king of the country to accept the bishopric of Lindisfarne. Earnestly he begged to be allowed to decline, but being at last dragged before the Synod, in spite of his great reluctance his own will was overcome by the unanimous will of all assembled, and he was constrained to bow his neck to the yoke of the bishopric. Having once yielded, he threw himself heart and soul into the work that lay before him; and, so Bæda

[1] Kingsley's "Hermits."

tells us, "protected the flock committed to his charge by assiduous prayer, and called them to things of heaven by wholesome admonitions; and what above all is charming in those who teach, he showed the way by being the first to practise what he taught. He rescued the friendless from the hand of the more powerful, the needy and poor from the hand of the oppressor. He diligently comforted the sad and feeble-minded; nor did he neglect to call back those that rejoiced amiss to that becoming and godly sorrow which is according to God. He was diligent in practising his wonted self-denial, and rejoiced, amid all the assemblage of crowds, to observe with regularity the rigour of monastic life. He gave food to the hungry, and clothing to those that were shivering with cold; and all his life was marked with signs that betokened a bishop indeed."

For two years this continued; years that must have often recalled to him the old days of missionary excursions over the heather moors of the lowlands, as he now journeyed over the mountainous and wild districts of his diocese, on his confirmation tours, through regions where churches were few and far between: so that (at least in one instance) tents had to be erected

by the wayside, and those that flocked to the place cut down branches from the forest trees, and wove them into booths for shelter, staying there for two days while the saint laboured among them, in preaching, baptizing, and confirming. But at the end of two years the old passionate craving for solitude came over him again with irresistible force, and he laid down his office and bade farewell to the monks at Lindisfarne before retiring to his dearly loved hermitage. "And when," they cried as he bade them farewell, "may we hope for your return?" "When you shall bring my body hither," was the answer; and a true one it proved, for he never left his rocky isle again.

It must have been only a short time after his retirement when some of the monks, on paying him a visit, found him seized with a sudden illness and scarcely able to move. He had dragged himself down to the larger house he had built for them by the landing-place, and had lain there for five days during a raging storm, worn out with want and sickness. They would not leave him again; all they could do was to tend him lovingly, and he, thoughtful and considerate to the last, chose as his special companion one who could hardly have looked for

this honour, a poor monk, troubled with a distressing and painful disease that had long baffled the skill of the physicians. And so some days passed on as he gradually sank to rest, giving his last injunctions to those around him, and ministered to by loving hands, till one morning, after a wakeful night of prayer, about daybreak, with eyes lifted up to heaven, and hands extended on high, his soul, intent on heavenly praises, departed to the joy of the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. WILFRID.

IT was in the year 634, that is, "the hateful year," after the death of King Edwin and the flight of Paulinus, that St. Wilfrid first saw the light. He was but a child when he lost his mother, and when a boy of fourteen parted from his father to enter the monastery at Lindisfarne. There he made rapid progress in his studies, but there was evidently something that failed to satisfy him in the discipline of the Celtic monks, and he was fired with the desire of visiting Rome, thinking that there, and there alone, could he learn a more regular mode of life.

The queen of Northumbria—Eanfled, the daughter of the great Edwin—encouraged him in his purpose, and by her advice he made his way to the court of Canterbury, where he was well received, and forwarded on his way by her kinsman, Erconbert, and thence, in company with another high-born Northumbrian youth, he

passed on, crossed the Channel, and journeyed on through France till he came to Lyons, where the Archbishop of that see took an immense fancy to him, being charmed with his beautiful countenance, his prudence in speech, his quickness in action, his steadiness and maturity of thought, and offered to adopt him as his son, to give him his niece in marriage, and, it is said, to make him governor of an entire province. It was a great temptation to a youth of nineteen, but Wilfrid had the courage to resist it. "I have made a vow," he said; "I have left, like Abraham, my kindred and my father's house in order to visit the Apostolic See, and there to study the rules of ecclesiastical discipline, that my nation may profit thereby. If, however, God gives me life, I will return this way and see you again." And so he passed on and reached the eternal city, almost the first of a long line of pilgrims from the shores of England to the Mother city of the West.

It is not difficult to picture the delight and enthusiasm with which he would visit the various sanctuaries that must have had so deep an interest for him, as they have to this day for all Christians; but he had come there to learn rather than to see, and accordingly made good

use of his time, and gained all the instruction he could in the rules of ecclesiastical discipline, and the true calculation of Easter from the Archdeacon Boniface; and having knelt to receive the blessing of the Pope he took his journey homeward, stopping, according to promise, at Lyons, where he narrowly escaped martyrdom. The Archbishop was seized by his persecutors and dragged to execution, entreating Wilfrid to save himself by flight. Wilfrid, however, refused to leave one to whom he owed so much. "What is better," he cried, "than for father and son to die together and be with Christ?" He too was seized, and, after the murder of the Archbishop, was stripped for execution, when it occurred to one of the judges to raise the question, "Who is yon fair youth preparing for death?" "An Englishman from beyond the sea," was the answer. No charge had been raised against him and therefore the judge could not but order his release. "Touch him not, but let him go." And thus unexpectedly set free, he lost no time in escaping from the country and returning to his own land.

Here his advance was rapid. There must have been something singularly bright and taking about him, as in his early years we find him

winning the hearts of all with whom he came in contact. When still a boy he had completely captivated Queen Eanfled; in the same way the Archbishop of Lyons was won by him: and now the young King Alcfrid, who was associated with his father Oswy in the government, struck up a firm friendship with the young churchman; a friendship which so increased in fervour that Wilfrid's biographer could only compare it to that between David and Jonathan. Lands and honours were showered upon him, and he was presently granted the monastery of Ripon, which the monks of Melrose had lately vacated. Thus began his connexion with a place with which his name is inseparably associated, a place which he loved better than any other, and within which at last he found a grave.

For three years he ruled the monastery as abbot, happily and wisely. His charities endeared him to the poor, whose needs at all times moved his generous heart. He won the respect and affection of all classes, and men spoke of the Abbot of Ripon as humble and tranquil, occupied in devotion and in almsgiving, benignant, sober, modest, and merciful. But there was one thing that disturbed the quiet of his time there. It seemed to him that in the cus-

toms he had learned at Rome, and the calculation of Easter he had received there, he had found a more excellent way than that known to those about him, the members of the Celtic Church, to whom he owed his first lessons in the rudiments of Christianity. There were others who agreed with him on these subjects, notably the Queen Eanfled, and James the Deacon, the sole survivor of the mission of Paulinus, and a bishop named Agilbert, who had come from the south to visit King Alcfrid, and from whose hands Wilfrid himself received the priesthood: but the majority of the churchmen of the North had received their traditions from Lindisfarne and Iona, and knew nothing of and cared nothing for Rome and Canterbury. The question between the two parties nearly rent the Church asunder, so keen was the struggle and the interest excited. Of course it was highly unseemly that Easter should be kept twice in every year at the royal court, the king and his party keeping high festival, while the queen and her chaplains were still undergoing the discipline of the Lenten fast. And as we look back on the controversy we can see that Wilfrid and his friends had the right on their side, and that the Celtic monks were behind the age; but there can be no doubt that Wilfrid

was hasty and overbearing in his actions. "He had a real work to do for his countrymen," says Canon Bright, "but in his way of rushing into it, and going through with it, he exhibited the two faults of imperiousness and egotism. It seemed as if his stay in Rome had infected him with the Roman love of domination; and with all his high qualities and many virtues was blended a self-complacent consciousness, not only of abilities and force of character, but of exertions and sacrifices for religion and the Church."

At this time, however, his cause was entirely triumphant, and mainly owing to his exertions. To settle the questions at issue, King Oswy summoned a great council to meet in the hall of St. Hilda's Abbey at Whitby. Thither came Colman, St. Aidan's successor in the see of Lindisfarne; Cedd, the holy bishop of the East Saxons; James the Deacon, grown old in the service of God; and many others. The discussion which followed was lengthy. Bishop Colman showed the indomitable pride and tenacity of the Celtic race, and Wilfrid the eloquence alike vehement and persuasive which distinguished him. The arguments on either side would now be considered poor enough, and the controversy ended with St. Columba being put

forward on the one hand, and St. Peter on the other, as the authority for the two lines of action. When Wilfrid quoted the text, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church . . . and I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," Oswy turned to Colman and asked whether it was true that our Lord had said that to St. Peter; Colman could not but assent. So the monarch went on: "Can you shew that any authority was given to Columba?" This of course he could not do. "Then you both agree," resumed Oswy, "that it was St. Peter who received the keys from our Lord." Both disputants assented. "If it be so," said the king, "I cannot gainsay the power of him who keeps the keys, lest haply, coming to heaven's gate, St. Peter should deny me the help of his office and refuse to let me in to bliss." And so the king, with the assent of all present, agreed that the changes advocated by Wilfrid should be adopted. Upon this the Bishop Colman "perceiving," as Bæda says, "that his doctrine was rejected and his sect despised, took with him such as were willing to follow him, and would not comply with the Catholic Easter and the tonsure of the crown (for there was much controversy about that also),

and went back into Scotland." The see thus vacated was filled by the appointment of a good man named Tuda, who, however, governed the Church but a very short time, as apparently in the autumn of this same year, 664, he was carried off by a pestilence that raged throughout the country, and thus the bishopric of the Northumbrians was once more left vacant.

This time the "Roman" party succeeded in gaining the appointment for their champion, and Wilfrid was nominated by the king to the see, not of Lindisfarne but of York, where the first bishop, Paulinus, had fixed his chair, before the Scottish mission under Aidan had transferred it to Lindisfarne. And now it is that Wilfrid's conduct appears in a peculiarly ungracious light. It was not enough for him to have gained his point at the Council, and since then to have restored the bishopric to York, and thus broken the old Scottish tradition; but he must further offer what seems to us a deliberate insult to all the English bishops, refusing consecration at their hands, and seeking it from French bishops beyond the sea. No objection seems to have been raised at the time, but when it was found that he lingered in France, and left his see for some time uncared for, the Scotch party per-

suaded the king to fill his place by the appointment of Chad, and Wilfrid, when he at length returned to England, found a bishop already installed in his see at York. Whatever his feelings were, he seems to have submitted quietly, and to have retired to his monastery at Ripon, which he governed as wisely and carefully as before, only leaving it occasionally when called upon to exercise episcopal functions in other parts of England, wherever a diocese happened to be left vacant by the death of its bishop.

And so time rolled on until the arrival of Archbishop Theodore reversed the positions of Wilfrid and Chad; the latter now retired to his monastery, while the former at length gained possession of his see and set to work in good earnest in the administration of it. At York he shuddered to see the neglected state of his cathedral. "The foundations had settled, and so the walls had cracked. The rain oozed through the yawning roof, the windows were unglazed, and birds' nests hung in an unsightly way about the bare mullions, while the pillars ran down with green slime, or were covered with dripping moss[1]." To repair all this ruin was the first care; and then he returned to his dearly

[1] Faber's "Life of Wilfrid."

loved monastery at Ripon, where he reared from the foundations an entirely new church of wrought stone that was the wonder of all Yorkshire, built as it was by workmen from Italy "after the Roman manner." The church was finished in 671, and a bright day it must have been for Wilfrid when it was consecrated. "Oswy was no more; he had died in the preceding year after a complete reconciliation with Wilfrid: but his son and successor, Ecgfrid, was present, together with his royal brother Elfwin, all the princes and nobles of Northumbria, and the principal officers of Church and State. In the presence of that great concourse, Wilfrid dedicated the church and the altar, vesting it with precious coverings of purple and gold. Then, after the celebration of the Eucharist, the consecrator turned to the worshippers, and, like the mighty eastern potentate, rehearsed to them the great things which had been done for God. All the gifts which princes and holy men had made on that day to the Church did he recite, and then he enumerated as far as possible the possessions of the early British Church, which had passed into secular hands when the Saxons came in, as if to remind the nation how greatly it was in debt to the

Church. The magnificent ceremonial over, Wilfrid feasted the two monarchs, their attendants, and the whole concourse of people with noble hospitality, the banquet lasting three whole days[1]."

From Ripon, his band of Italian workmen moved on to Hexham, where a still more stately church was built by Wilfrid's orders for the monastery of St. Andrew. "And at this day, the visitor who looks round the exquisite Minster of Hexham will find nothing worthier of his attention than the small crypt of Roman masonry, with the two Roman inscriptions built up in its walls, on the western side of the transept; descending into it, he enters the only remaining part of Wilfrid's church, the building deep underground formed of admirably carved stone; of which an early writer tells us, adding that, so far as he knew, the church had no equal on this side of the Alps[2]."

But if Wilfrid was great as a church-builder, he was no less great as chief pastor of his diocese. His care for building up the spiritual temple was even more earnest than that for the material fabric. We read of him as indefatigable in his journeys over the country to baptize

[1] Faber's "Life of Wilfrid."
[2] Bright's "Early English Church History."

and to confirm, as holding ordinations, forming new parishes, and preaching incessantly even in the smallest hamlets. Honoured and trusted by all the great men of the realm from the king downwards, loved and followed enthusiastically by the common people, it was the most active period of his life, and forms a strange contrast to the years of incessant struggles and wanderings which were soon to fall to his lot.

The last thirty years of his life were strangely chequered and darkened with shadows. We shall see him, nevertheless, rising above his fortune, greater in adversity than in prosperity, chastened and softened by the repeated troubles and banishments: and in the quaint words of an old church writer, "as it is observed of nightingales, that they sing the sweetest when farthest from their nests; so this Wilfrid was most diligent in God's service, when at the greatest distance from his own home[1]."

The beginning of his troubles arose from an act on his part, which we cannot but feel to have been a wrong one. Etheldreda, the wife of King Ecgfrid, had formed "a resolution the reverse of wife-like," and determined to retire into a monastery, and Wilfrid, instead of dissuading

[1] Fuller.

her from thus forsaking the plain duties to which God had called her, encouraged her in her resolution, and himself placed the monastic veil upon her head. This naturally caused an estrangement between him and the king, who was so grievously wronged, and the breach thus made was gradually widened; Wilfrid's wealth and magnificence appeared greater than became a subject, and the king was glad of an opportunity of humbling his pride. In the year 678, Archbishop Theodore, of Canterbury, was persuaded that Wilfrid's northern diocese was too large for the supervision of one man, and called an assembly, in which, during Wilfrid's absence, a division was effected, and a large part of the diocese taken out of his control. Indignant at this high-handed treatment, Wilfrid first complained to the king, but in vain. Upon which he took a step, unprecedented at the time, but one that was to become fatally common in after ages, and appealed to the Bishop of Rome. His resolution was no sooner taken than he set out on his travels, but his journey led him through Friesland, as Holland was then called, a country that had not yet received the faith of Christ. The opportunity for missionary work was not to be lost, and Wilfrid at once began to preach to

the country folk with no little success; winning converts among the chieftains, and gaining influence over the king himself, who rejected with horror a bribe offered by the king of a neighbouring country, who was one of Wilfrid's enemies, for the saint's head. The letter in which the proposal was made was read out to the king as he sat at a feast, in the presence of Wilfrid and his companions. He listened quietly to the end, and then taking the scroll he tore it to pieces, and flung it into the fire that blazed before him, exclaiming to the messengers who had brought it: "Tell your lord what I now say; so may the Maker of all things tear in pieces and utterly consume the life and kingdom of one who is forsworn to his God, and keeps not the covenant into which he has entered!" Being thus freed from this peril, and having spent the winter happily with his new converts, he set out again on his way to Rome, where his cause was tried before Pope Agatho, and many bishops, and he was by their unanimous sentence fully acquitted of that which had been laid to his charge, and declared worthy of his bishopric. But it was one thing to be acquitted by the Pope and Council, and quite another to regain his see, as Wilfrid was soon to discover.

He hastened back to Northumbria, armed with the papal bull of acquittal, but to his great astonishment he found that Englishmen had too much regard for their national independence to receive it quietly. It was rudely put aside, and Wilfrid, instead of being restored to his episcopal throne, was flung into prison. Here he remained for some months, and even when, at the intercession of some of his friends, he regained his liberty, he was not allowed to remain in the Northumbrian kingdom. Southward he wandered, and at last settled in Sussex, the only kingdom in England into which Christianity had not yet penetrated. The men of Sussex, Bæda tells us, were ignorant of the name and faith of God. Here there was a fair field of labour once more opened to him, and nobly he occupied it. Just before his arrival there a terrible famine had wasted the country: so sore was the distress that often "forty or fifty, being spent with want, would go together to some cliff, or to the sea-shore, and there, hand-in-hand, miserably perish by the fall or be swallowed by the waves." The sea and the rivers abounded with fish, but the poor country folk were too simple to take them, and could only fish for eels! Wilfrid set himself at once to supply their temporal needs, and

borrowed a quantity of eel-nets, which his followers cast into the sea, and "by the blessing of God immediately took three hundred fishes of different kinds, which they divided into three parts, giving a hundred to the poor, a hundred to those who had lent them the nets, and keeping a hundred for their own use. By this act of kindness the bishop gained the affections of them all, and they began more readily at his preaching to hope for heavenly goods, seeing that by his help they had received those which are temporal." And so he led them from lower to higher things, from the wants of the body to the needs of the soul, and for five years lovingly and patiently laboured amongst them, only ending his work in Sussex to turn to a fresh sphere of labour in the Isle of Wight, which he was the first to evangelize. His devotion was not to go unrewarded even in this world. Archbishop Theodore, now growing old and feeble, was touched by it, and longed to be reconciled to the man whom he had formerly treated in so cavalier a manner; and it is pleasant to tell how the two good men met in London, and how Theodore expressed his regret for Wilfrid's sufferings, and his desire to promote his restoration to his see, a desire which he was happily able to

carry out: and Wilfrid was once more enabled to return to his dearly-loved Yorkshire, though the diocese over which he consented to preside was of smaller extent than that which he had formerly ruled. The monks of his own monasteries at Ripon and elsewhere had been true to his cause throughout his long exile, and never wavered in their allegiance: great, therefore, was the rejoicing over his restoration. They went out in crowds to meet him, and led him back in triumph to the churches in which they had prayed day by day for his return. Ecgfrid, the king who had been so bitter against him before, was now dead, and with his successor Aldfrid, Wilfrid lived on good terms for some years. "Peace and quietness abounded between the two, with the enjoyment of nearly every form of good."

But by degrees fresh troubles arose, and after five years those who had caused the former enmity succeeded in re-kindling the torch of dissension. It is hard to make out who was in the right and who was in the wrong in this dispute that now began; probably there were faults on both sides. Wilfrid may have been wanting in tolerance and gentleness, but the king seems certainly to have been unjust: and among other

things there was a design of taking away Ripon, the minster of Wilfrid's own creation, the minster that he loved more passionately than any other spot on earth, from his jurisdiction. This he steadily resisted, and the result was that he was once more banished, or at least compelled to leave the country. This time he found a resting place nearer home than formerly, and was warmly received by the king of Mercia (the midland counties), in whose kingdom episcopal work was soon found for him. In those days Leicester had a bishop of its own; the see at that time happened to be vacant, and Wilfrid was at once asked to occupy it, and accordingly lived for eleven years in obscurity, labouring earnestly among the Mercians we cannot doubt, though scarcely any details of this part of his life have come down to us. It was a sad time for England, and the perpetual disputes between the kings and bishops must have done much harm to the Church; but at length King Aldfrid determined to put an end to them, and with the design of restoring peace and promoting some satisfactory settlements, he summoned a council to meet at a place that is probably to be identified as Austerfield.

Here Wilfrid appeared among the other

bishops, having been assured that his case should meet with due consideration. However, there was a long and stormy debate, and after overpowering Wilfrid with accusations and recriminations, the synod determined to confirm all the regulations of Archbishop Theodore, including those against which Wilfrid had made appeal to Rome. To this Wilfrid demurred, for he considered these last statutes annulled by the decrees of Rome, and Theodore's subsequent action. His enemies tried to extort from him a written declaration of absolute submission to the Archbishop; but warned beforehand by a friend that his signature would be misused and made the handle for depriving him of everything he possessed, Wilfrid persistently refused. His enemies could extort nothing from him beyond a promise to obey his Archbishop in everything which was not contrary to the statutes of the Fathers, the Canons, or the Council of Pope Agatho. General confusion ensued, amid which the king proposed that all Wilfrid's preferments and property should be confiscated; but the members of the council thought this too severe, and proposed to leave him the monastery at Ripon on condition that he never left it without the royal permission, and that he gave up the

exercise of his episcopal functions. This sounds a hard measure indeed, and no wonder that Wilfrid met the proposal with a burst of indignation. "By what right," he exclaimed, "do you dare to abuse my weakness, and force me to turn the murderer's sword against myself, and sign my own condemnation? How shall I, accused of no fault, make myself a scandal in the sight of all who know that during nearly forty years I have borne, however unworthily, the name of Bishop?" Then followed a rapid recital of all the great things he had been privileged to do for the Northumbrian Church. Had he not been the first to root out the evil customs, and win over the whole land to the true celebration of Easter? Was it not he who taught them the sweet harmonies of the primitive Church in the responses and chants of the two alternate choirs? And now, after all this, was he called to condemn himself with his own hand, and this with no crime resting on his conscience? "I appeal," he cried, "I appeal to the Holy See. Let those who desire my deposition go there with me to receive the decision. The sages of Rome shall learn the reasons for which you would have me degraded, ere I bend to your will alone." His appeal was met with indignant outcries, and

there were even voices raised in favour of a proposal that he should be flung into prison; but he was suffered to depart quietly. "Let him go," was the cry of the majority, "without hindrance; and let us too go quietly to our own homes." In Northumbria, however, he and his partizans were treated as excommunicate, and grievous was the persecution which his faithful monks, who clung to him through all reverses, had to undergo. He himself was safe in Mercia, whose king was resolute in the determination to add no new trouble to the great wrongs that he had already received; and at his court the indomitable old man, who now numbered more than three-score years, rested awhile, before bravely setting out for Rome.

Twice before he had visited it: once in the freshness and ardour of youth; a second time in the vigour of his manhood, when he had made his appeal from the decision of Theodore; and now for the third time, with the snows of old age thick upon his head, he bent his steps towards the eternal city, and made his second appeal to the Pope. Upon his arrival he presented in due form a memorial, stating his grievances, and begging that the decision of the former Council in his favour might be confirmed: "or," said he,

"if that should seem too much, let the see of York be disposed of as you will, only at least let me have Ripon and Hexham." For four months the investigation lasted. At length the discovery was made (it would seem accidentally) that a certain Bishop Wilfrid had been present at an important Council held there twenty-four years before. The Bishops gazed at each other in astonishment, and asked who could that Bishop Wilfrid have been? The answer came from some of the older men, whose memories reached back to that earlier Council, "that he was the same Bishop who had lately come to Rome to be tried by the Apostolic See, being accused by his own people, and who," said they, "having long since been there upon a similar accusation, was proved by Pope Agatho to have been wrongfully expelled from his bishopric, and was so much honoured by him, that he commanded him to sit in the Council of the Bishops which he had assembled, as a man of an untainted faith and an upright mind." Upon this the whole assembly, with one voice, exclaimed that a man who had been forty years a bishop, a man who had shown such zeal in the cause of God, ought not to be condemned, but should rather be sent back with honour to his own land.

Once more, therefore, Wilfrid returned to England with Papal letters in his favour, and once more he was destined to find them useless, for Aldfrid, the Northumbrian king, flatly refused to allow him to take possession of his bishopric again. His exile, however, on this occasion was of no long duration, as Aldfrid died shortly after his return to England; and before long a Council was held somewhere by the banks of the river Nidd, at which a compromise was effected, and peace restored to the distracted Church. Both parties gave up something of their demands, and the once fiery and imperious spirit of Wilfrid, bent and chastened by age and troubles, was content with the prospect of quiet and peace in exchange for the hope of triumphant ascendancy; and so, writes his biographer, they returned to their own homes in the peace of Christ. But his life on earth was now drawing to an end, and he was soon to enter into a more lasting and unruffled peace. For four quiet years he laboured among his own people, and then the end came. For some time his health had been failing, and in the autumn of 709 he was on a visit to the monasteries of his own foundation in the neighbouring kingdom of Mercia, when his last illness

seized him; he reached the minster of St. Andrew, at Oundle, and there quietly lay down to die; a few parting admonitions were given to those around, and then he leaned his head back upon the pillow and went to his rest without a groan or murmur, just as the monks in the choir hard by were chanting the verse "Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created, and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth." And so passed away the foremost man of the day, and one of the grandest pillars of the Anglo-Saxon Church, after an episcopate of forty-five years, and a life in which cloud and sunshine had been strangely blended. "His life," says Fuller, "had been like an April day, often interchangeably fair and foul, and after many alterations, he set fair in full lustre at last."

CHAPTER VII.

BENEDICT BISCOP.

THE life that I have to tell in this chapter is in some points remarkably like that of Wilfrid, and in others strangely unlike. It is like in that it is the story of a high-born youth who gave up all for Christ; like too, in the fact that it is a record of frequent journeys to Rome, and of great reverence paid to the apostolic see, but, unlike in that, whereas the life of Wilfrid was a continuous record of troubles and disturbances, Benedict Biscop, so far as we know, never had an enemy in the world, never quarrelled with king or bishop, never appealed from Council at home to Pope abroad, but worked on quietly in his own way, and followed what seemed marked out as the path of duty, turning aside neither to the right hand nor to the left, interfering with nobody else, and expecting nobody else to interfere with him. To both men the Church of

England owes a great debt of gratitude, for both did much to promote the cause of Christianity; Wilfrid by his zeal for discipline and order, and still more by his untiring and loving missionary labours; and Benedict by his steady lifelong endeavours to win men to live the lives of Christians, and to help onwards in their heavenward course those who were brought by others within the pale of the Christian Church.

Born, in the year 628, of a noble English family, Benedict, when quite a young man, stood high in the royal favour, and was rewarded for his services to the Crown by the gift of a possession in land suitable to his rank. But, it would seem, to the astonishment of king and courtiers alike, when he was only twenty-five, and had all bright prospects opening out before him, "he lightly esteemed this transitory inheritance, in order that he might obtain that which is eternal; he despised the warfare of this world, with its corruptible rewards, that he might be the soldier of the true King, and be thought worthy to possess an everlasting kingdom in the heavenly city. He forsook home, kindred, and country for the sake of Christ and His gospel, that he might receive an hundredfold, and possess the life which is eternal." It

was just at the time that Wilfrid had determined to leave his country for his first visit to Rome, and Benedict hailed with joy the opportunity thus opened out to him, and the two friends started off together; but when Wilfrid was detained at Lyons, Benedict hastened onwards without him, "being anxious personally to visit and worship at the places in which were deposited even the bodies of the blessed Apostles, towards whom it had always been his wont to feel an ardent devotion." After no long time he returned to his own country, full of fervour and enthusiasm, inspired by all he had heard and seen in his travels, and from this time onward his life is a perpetual record of journeys backwards and forwards between England and Rome; journeys not lightly or idly undertaken, but each with its definite purpose, and each, we may say, taken for the good of the English Church. It was in 653 that he had first visited the eternal city; twelve years later we find him there again, and "on this," says Bæda, "as on the former occasion, he imbibed the sweets of no small amount of salutary learning." After a stay of some few months he started on his homeward journey, but stopped short at Lerins, an island off the south coast of France, where there was

a far-famed monastery. Here Benedict went through a course of instruction, and took upon him the vows of a monastic life. Two years were spent in seclusion, and then once more he set out for Rome, and paid his third visit to the Papal see. It was just at this time that Pope Vitalian, in compliance with a request of the two chief English kings, was sending to our shores the great Archbishop Theodore; and Theodore being a Greek, there was need of some one who might act as his interpreter, and explain to him the customs of the English nation. And who so well suited for this as Benedict, most fortunately just at that time in Rome? Accordingly, the pope, "observing that the venerable Benedict was a man of a mind fraught with wisdom, perseverance, religion, and nobleness, entrusted to his care the bishop whom he had ordained, together with all his party; and enjoined him to abandon the pilgrimage which he had undertaken for Christ's sake, and out of regard to a higher advantage, to return homewards to introduce into England that teacher of the truth whom it had so earnestly sought after; to whom he might become both a guide on the journey, and an interpreter in his teaching after his arrival." Benedict, we are told, did as he

was commanded; they arrived in Kent, where they were most cordially received.

Theodore ascended the throne of the episcopal see, while Benedict at his request undertook the government of the monastery of St. Peter and St. Paul in the same city; a monastery the traces of which linger to this day, and which has been in our own time restored to something like its original purpose, by becoming the great Missionary College of St. Augustine's. Here Benedict laboured for two years, at the end of which the indefatigable traveller paid a fourth visit to Rome, "with his usual good success," says Bæda. England was at that time behind the countries of the continent, both in arts and in literature, and Benedict had probably felt the lack of books from which to teach the scholars whom he gathered round him at Canterbury; and undertook this journey for the purpose of supplying the want he had experienced. Nor was his journey in vain, "he brought back with him no inconsiderable number of books on every branch of sacred literature, which he had either bought at a price, or received as presents from his friends." On his return to England he bent his steps northward, being anxious to revisit his own people and the region in which he had been

born, and so came to the kingdom of Northumbria. Here he was well received by the king, to whom he gave a glowing account of the foreign monasteries and schools of learning, and displayed the treasures that he had secured on his journey.

The king caught his enthusiasm, and gave him a tract of land where he might found a monastery; and here in a short time rose the walls of the monastery of St. Peter at Wearmouth, on the left bank of the river from which the spot takes it name. Benedict, let us hope, was a good sailor, for he had to go far and cross the sea before he could find men capable of building a church of stone; but nothing daunted, he crossed over to France, and brought back with him masons ready and able to do the work he wanted. If a stone church was a rarity in those days, glazed windows were positively unknown in this country; but Benedict was determined that nothing should be wanting to his new church, and so sent messengers again to France. Bæda's account of this is curious and interesting. "He sent messengers," he tells us, "to bring over glass-makers (a kind of workman hitherto unknown in Britain) to glaze the windows of the church, and its aisles and chancels.

And so it happened that when they came they not only accomplished that particular work which was required of them, but from this time they caused the English nation to understand and learn this kind of handicraft, which was of no inconsiderable utility for the enclosing of the lamps of the church, or for various uses to which vessels are put." Great was the astonishment of the good folk of Northumbria at this innovation introduced first in the church of Monkwearmouth, and shortly afterwards in Jarrow, so that a tradition sprang up, which was handed down for many generations, that because of its glazed windows it never was dark in old Jarrow church.

And now the building was finished, and Benedict had ransacked the treasures of France to provide "whatever related to the ministry of the altar and the church and holy vessels, and vestments." But there were still some things that he wanted, which he could not discover even in France, and so he set out for the *fifth* time for Rome. Here he obtained all that he could desire, and returned literally laden with spoil. In the first place, says Bæda, he imported a numberless collection of all kinds of books; secondly, he introduced some relics of

the saints, which were highly esteemed in those days; thirdly, a less questionable boon, he brought in to his own monastery the order of chanting, singing, and ministering in the church, according to the Roman manner, bringing back with him a precentor, John by name, who was to become the future master of his own monastery, and of the English nation; fourthly, he obtained from the pope, with the express permission of the king, a grant of certain privileges to his monastery; and lastly, he carried home with him paintings of holy subjects for the ornamentation of the church. There were paintings of the Blessed Virgin and of the Apostles at the east end; along the south side ran a series of figures of the Gospel history, while the north wall was filled with the sublime images of the Visions of St. John the Divine in the Revelation. We are told his reason for thus decorating his church, and it is a reason that still holds good. It was "to the intent that all who entered the church, even if ignorant of letters, might be able to contemplate, in what direction soever they looked, the ever-gracious countenance of Christ and His saints, even though it were in a representation; or, with a more wakeful mind, might be reminded of the grace of our Lord's incarna-

tion; or, having, as it were, the strictness of the last judgment before their eyes, should thereby be cautioned to examine themselves with more narrow scrutiny."

And so his great work was finished, and the monastery which he founded rapidly grew and flourished, so that in the short space of a year he sent out from it a colony of eighteen monks, and founded a sister monastery of St. Paul at Jarrow, with the hope (a hope which was nobly realized) "that mutual peace and concord, mutual and perpetual affection and kindness should be continued between the two places." Scarcely ten miles apart, the two monasteries were to all intents and purposes but one, and the names of Wearmouth and Jarrow will always be dear to those who love the Church of England, for to them belongs the credit of having trained and educated the chief glory of the Anglo-Saxon Church, Bæda, the monk of Jarrow.

Benedict was now growing old; but his new church at Jarrow must be no less glorious than that at Wearmouth, and so, in spite of age and infirmities, he crossed the sea once more, and for the *sixth* and last time repaired to Rome, "returning, as was his custom, enriched with countless gifts for ecclesiastical purposes, with

a large supply of sacred volumes, and no less abundance of paintings than on previous occasions. Some of these were scenes from the life of our Lord, which he placed in the old church, while for the church of Jarrow he brought back an excellent series of paintings showing the harmony between the Old and the New Testaments; for instance, side by side the painting represented such subjects as Isaac bearing the wood on which he was to be slain, and our Lord carrying the cross on which He was to suffer, or the serpent raised up by Moses in the wilderness, and the Son of Man exalted upon the cross."

Thus he lived long enough to see both monasteries fairly at work, and their buildings completed, and then his work was over. Shortly after his return from Rome he was seized with creeping paralysis. For three years the disease gradually gained upon him, yet he never lost his cheerfulness, nor ceased to praise God and exhort the brethren. He was often troubled by sleepless nights, when, to alleviate his weariness, he would call one of his monks and desire to have read to him the story of the patience of Job, or some other passage of Scripture by which a sick man might be comforted, or one

bent down by infirmities might be more spiritually raised to heavenly things. Nor did he neglect the regular hours of prayer, but as he was unable to rise from his bed to prayer, and could scarcely raise his voice in praise, he would call some of the brethren to him that they might sing the Psalms in two choirs, he himself joining with them to the best of his ability. In three years the end came. He died as he had lived, surrounded by the brethren of the monasteries of his own creation, and was buried in the stone church that he had reared at Wearmouth, in the midst of the treasures that he had collected.

CHAPTER VIII.

BÆDA.

IT is the story of a quiet life that I have to tell in this chapter, the life of Benedict Biscop's greatest scholar, Bæda, the father of English learning, from whose great work, the "Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation," I have drawn the greatest part of the materials for this volume of Church Biographies. One is inclined to wish that in his history, in which he has handed down such exquisite character portraits of the greatest men who preceded him, he had told us a little about himself and his own life, for indeed the materials are but scanty. He was born about the year 673, just to the north of the present town of Sunderland, and, when in his seventh year, he was handed over by his parents to the care of Benedict Biscop, in whose lately founded monastery of Wearmouth he was educated. In this and the sister monastery of

Jarrow his whole life was passed. The two were only a few miles apart, and intercourse between them was constant; but it would seem that after the first, Jarrow was his true home. Here he lived and laboured, and here it was that he died.

"Spending all my life," he says of himself, "in that monastery, I wholly applied myself to the study of the Scriptures; and amidst the observance of regular discipline and the daily care of singing in the Church, I always delighted in learning and teaching and writing. In my nineteenth year I was ordained Deacon; in my thirtieth I received the Priesthood: both at the hands of the Most Reverend Bishop John [St. John of Beverley, Bishop of Hexham, which was at that time an Episcopal See]. From the time that I was ordained Priest up to the fifty-ninth year of my age [the date at which the "Ecclesiastical History" was finished] I made it my business, for the use of me, and mine, to compile Commentaries upon the Sacred Scriptures." "I am mine own secretary," he says elsewhere, "I make my own notes, I am mine own librarian." And this is almost the whole of what we know of his life: a daily round of worship, and study, and teaching. One story which is worth record-

ing has been handed down to us, illustrative of his regular attendance at the Church's daily service of Praise and Prayer. It was told in after years that he used often to say, "I well know that angels visit the congregation of brethren at the canonical hours. What if they should not find me there among my brethren? Will they not have to say, Where is Bæda? Why comes he not with his brethren to the prescribed prayers?" But this anecdote stands almost alone; tradition has preserved scarcely any other details of the life of him to whose loving care and labour we owe all that we really know of our early English history. And yet, I hardly know whether one cares to know more. The little that is told us enables one to judge of the manner of his outward life, and one learns to know and love the man himself in the pages of his own history. A noble monument he has built for himself by it. It was a labour of love with him, and none can say it was "love's labour lost." Undertaken in a simple childlike spirit, not on his own impulse, but at the earnest and repeated wish of his friends, he seems to have worked at it with the simple desire of stating the truth, sparing no pains in his researches; and though perhaps not always quite critical,

but inclined, as he says himself, "to yield a simple faith to narratives" that he read, yet at the same time taking care to acquire what knowledge he could by the most certain testimony of faithful men. And if there are some things which later research has shown to be false, some legends in which no one can be expected to put faith now-a-days, who shall blame the simple-hearted monk for their insertion? Hear his own apology for such. "I humbly entreat the reader," he says, "that if in this writing of mine he shall find anything not delivered according to the truth, he will not impute the same to me, for I (as the true rule of history required) have laboured sincerely to commit to writing such things as I could gather from common report for the instruction of posterity." The error, if error there be, we may well believe was not his own, but that of his informants. He did his best, and where that best is excellent, it would be ungracious to quarrel with him because it is not perfect.

The great charm of his writing undoubtedly lies in his "exquisite faculty of story-telling," and yet, it has been well said that no story of his own telling is so touching as the story of his death. Of this, at least, we have a full account, though details of his life are wanting. One of his

scholars who was present at it has left us a touching account of it, and seems to have caught his master's skill in setting the scene before us.

It was in the spring of 735[1], and Bæda was about sixty-three years of age, when he was seized with an attack of asthma about a fortnight before Easter. The Easter Festival came and went and he grew no better. He was free from pain, but troubled by the difficulty of breathing, and by a succession of restless nights. Still he never lost his cheerfulness, nor his desire of helping others in their learning. "He daily instructed us," writes one of his scholars, "and spent the rest of the day in singing Psalms, and continued awake during the whole night, in joy and thanksgiving, except when interrupted by a moderate sleep. On awaking, he returned to his accustomed occupations, and with outstretched hands ceased not to give thanks to God. He chanted the passage from St. Paul, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Heb. x. 31), and many other passages of Holy Writ, in which he admonished us to rise from the sleep of the soul, by anticipating the last hour. And being skilled in our poetry, he

[1] Or possibly 742.

spoke in the Saxon language of the awful departure of the soul from the body. He also sang anthems, as well for our consolation as his own, one of which was the following: 'O King of glory, God of might, who didst ascend to-day in triumph above all heavens, leave us not orphans, but send upon us the promise of the Father, the Spirit of truth. Alleluia[1].' And when he came to the words, 'leave us not orphans,' he burst into tears and wept much; and after about an hour he resumed the repetition of what he had begun. As we heard we wept with him. One while we read, another while we wept; and our reading was always mingled with tears."

And so they passed the days up to the Eve of Ascension Day, Bæda working all the harder, because he longed to finish his translation of St. John's Gospel into English. "I don't want my boys to read a lie, and to work to no purpose after I am gone," he said to those who bade him rest; and to his scholars, "Learn as quickly as you can, for I know not how long I may be with you, nor how soon my Maker will take me away."

On the Eve of Ascension Day he was worse. One of the boys stayed with him while the rest

[1] Compare the Collect for the Sunday after Ascension Day.

were engaged in the service of the Church. "Dear master," said the little scholar, "one chapter is still wanting, but it seems hard that I should ask you questions." "It does not trouble me," was the answer, "take your pen, listen, and write quickly." At three o'clock he summoned the brethren of the monastery to his bedside, and made over to them such little treasures and keepsakes as he possessed, trifling things, as he said, and yet such as God had given him. "The rich men of this world are anxious to make presents of gold and silver, and other precious things; but I with much love and joy give to my brethren what I have received from God." As each brother was called to his bedside a few kind words were spoken—words which must have been treasured up as a precious legacy by all that heard them—and Bæda asked each one for his prayers. They stood round his bedside weeping, but he told them that it was time for him to die, and that he longed to depart, and be with Christ. "I have had a long life upon earth," said he, "and the merciful Judge has been pleased to ordain for me a happy life; but now the time of my departure is at hand."

The day was now drawing to a close, and the

shadows of evening lengthening, when the little scribe who took down his words as he translated the Gospel of St. John, looked up and said, "Still one sentence, dear master, remains unwritten." "Write quickly," was the master's reply. And then after a pause the boy exclaimed, "Now the sentence is finished." "You have spoken the truth—it is finished. Raise my head in your hands, for I want to lie opposite the spot where I used to pray, that, while resting there, I may call upon God my Father." And being placed upon the pavement of his cell, he said, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit." And as soon as he had named the Holy Spirit, he breathed out his own spirit, and so departed to the kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

ARCHBISHOPS EGBERT AND ALBERT.

THE death of Bæda brings us very near to the end of the flourishing period of the Anglo-Saxon Church. We have seen in these pages what a succession of great men was raised up for the service of God's Church throughout the seventh century of the Christian era. Bæda's life carries us on through the first thirty years of the eighth century, but with him the list is almost ended. But as often a flame will suddenly blaze up bravely, and shed abroad a new and brighter light before it sinks down and finally dies away in darkness, so there was a sudden flash of light in the Northumbrian Church before the darkness of the eighth and ninth centuries fell upon it; and Bæda's dying eyes were turned to the city of York as the

spot where the lamp of God's truth was shining steadily, and from whence he hoped that it might spread once more throughout the country.

Almost his last act was to send to the newly appointed Bishop Egbert, a young and ardent member of the royal family of Northumbria, a letter full of wise counsel and advice, urging him to great exertions and unsparing labours in the work of his vast diocese, but giving a mournful picture of the spiritual destitution of a great part of the kingdom, and of the neglect and contempt with which God's holiest ordinances were only too frequently treated. "It is the common report that there were many villages situated in inaccessible mountains and bushy defiles which for many years have never been visited by a bishop, to administer and preach the comforts of heavenly grace. And not only are such places without a bishop to confirm the baptized by the imposition of his hands, but without any teacher to instruct them in the true faith or in the difference between right and wrong." Monastic discipline was sadly relaxed, so that there were numberless places with the name of monasteries ascribed to them, but yet with nothing of the monastic mode of life. And bitterly does Bæda lament the neglect

of the Holy Eucharist by a great number of the laity; "even the more religious," he tells Egbert, "do not presume to communicate in the holy mysteries, except at Christmas, Epiphany, and Easter Day, though there are numberless innocent boys and girls of pure lives, young men and young women, old men and old women, who, without any scruple or controversy, might partake of these heavenly mysteries every Lord's day, and also on the birthdays of the holy apostles and martyrs."

Such was the state of things when Bæda wrote, and earnestly did he exhort the newly appointed bishop to diligence in the work of his ministry. "Again, and again, I earnestly beseech you in the Lord, to protect the flock committed to your charge from the violence of invading wolves; and to remember that you are ordained to be not a hireling but a shepherd, proving your love for the Great Shepherd by the careful feeding of His sheep, and by being prepared, if occasion so demand, to lay down your life for them with the blessed chief of the apostles. I pray you anxiously to beware lest, when the same chief of the apostles and the other leaders of the faithful flocks offer to Christ in the day of judgment the plenteous fruits of

their pastoral care, some part of your sheep may justly deserve to be set apart among the goats at the left hand of the Judge, and depart with the curse into eternal punishment."

Again he says elsewhere, "Because the extent of country, over which the diocese committed to your government extends, precludes the possibility of your personally visiting the whole of it, and preaching the Word of God in every village and farmstead, even within the course of a whole year, it is very necessary that you should associate with yourself a greater number of assistants in the holy work, by ordaining priests and appointing teachers, who may apply themselves in every village to preaching the word of God and consecrating the heavenly mysteries, and above all to performing the office of holy Baptism when opportunity occurs. And with regard to this preaching to the people, I am of opinion that above all things the utmost diligence and care should be used that the Catholic faith, as it is contained in the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, which the Scriptures of the holy Gospel teach us, should be rootedly fixed in the memories of all those who are subject to your rule. For by this means the whole body of the faithful will learn

the grounds upon which they believe, and that steadfastness of faith by which they ought to fortify and arm themselves in their conflicts with unclean spirits; so that the whole band of those who make their supplications unto the Lord may know what requests are the most fitting to be asked of the Divine Mercy."

The kindly admonition of the aged priest was received in the spirit in which it was offered, and Egbert set himself at once to do his utmost for the reformation of the diocese committed to his charge; and in the year of Bæda's death he was able to restore the see of York to its proper position as the Metropolitan see of the north of England. More than a century had passed away since Paulinus, the head of the Roman mission, had fled into Kent, carrying with him his pall, which was at that day the mark of the rank of an Archbishop; and since that time no one had sought for the lost honour till Egbert, in the year 735, applied for it, and not without success, and thus became the second Archbishop of York, and the first of that unbroken series that has lasted till the present day. It was no mere increase of personal dignity that he sought; but the possession of the pall gave him increased authority, that brought with it increased oppor-

tunities for good and for carrying out the reforms on which his heart was set.

It is a matter for lasting regret that we have no full account of his episcopal labours; if only Bæda's invaluable history could have been prolonged for some years, I doubt not that we should have had full details of Egbert's life and work; but as it is, we must remain in ignorance as to the extent to which he was enabled to carry out Bæda's suggestions of reform. But we do know that he was active and diligent in his studies; his fertile pen was continually occupied in writing works for his own use and for the use of his clergy, which show us how thoroughly he had the interests of his diocese at heart; and to him is attributed, with some probability, the introduction of the parochial system into the north of England. But the work on which his lasting claim to the gratitude of posterity must rest is the foundation of the famous school of York, which carried on the work that Bæda had begun at Jarrow, and kindled the flame of learning in the West at the moment that it seemed both in France and Ireland to be expiring. Here was trained up under his eye a band of scholars who should go forth into his diocese, and beyond its limits, and carry out in their lives the lessons

they had learned within its walls. There was no nobler place of education at that time in England. From all parts of Europe youths of noble birth found their way to the seat of the Northern Primacy, to be taught by the Prince Bishop. Egbert himself watched over the school with the enthusiastic interest and tender care that none but its founder could give; and whenever he could spare time from his diocesan labours, loved to take his part in the education of the students, reserving for his own portion the instruction in divinity, while the care of the other studies, of grammar and the arts and sciences, was after a time intrusted to his favourite pupil, Albert, who was afterwards to succeed him in the see of York.

Under the fostering care of these two good men the school grew and prospered, its management passing gradually from the hands of the Archbishop to those of Albert, who soon proved himself an able and worthy successor of his former master; and before Egbert died, in the autumn of 766, having ruled over his see for thirty-four winters, he could feel with satisfaction that the great work which he had so happily begun was securely established, and that its success would no longer be imperilled by the death of its founder.

Albert, as we have already seen, was now appointed to the see of York, and was succeeded in the mastership of the school by a still more distinguished divine, Alcuin, the greatest scholar of his age, and one of the brightest stars in the Anglo-Saxon Church. He was a native of York, and, like Albert, had received his education in Archbishop Egbert's school. When he was but a boy, Egbert had marked him out as a promising scholar, and, it is said, had prophesied his future greatness. It is certain that he was one of Egbert's favourite scholars, and even before the Archbishop's death he had been admitted to a share in the work of teaching; and now that the care of the vast Northumbrian diocese devolved upon Albert, Alcuin stepped into his place, and for a time, at least, undertook the government of the school.

Albert, though debarred by a press of other duties from any longer taking his place as a master, by no means lost his interest in the school in which he had received his education. Egbert had long ago collected a few books for the use of the students, but to Albert belongs the chief honour of collecting the splendid library which was in the eighth century one of the main glories of Northumbria. To this work he gave

himself from the time of his first appointment as master. "To gather books together," says Canon Raine, "in that illiterate age was a noble enterprise; but Albert was not appalled by the difficulty of the undertaking. He threw himself into it with all the ardour of a bibliomaniac. The English collections could not allay his thirst for literature. More than once did he cross the sea with Alcuin as his companion, never caring for the perils with which the traveller was beset, if only he could secure some of the precious tomes that he saw for his library at home. . . . . Albert had a welcome everywhere, for his reputation had preceded him. Fain would they have detained him in Italy, to scatter there the rich seeds of learning which were springing up in England, but he would not desert his scholars and his school. He came back to York, bringing with him the treasures he had collected. Alcuin speaks with raptures of these precious volumes in a well-known passage, which describes the contents of the library at York, which he calls in another place the flowers of Britain." The authors of the ancient world were very fairly represented in the collection. There were the historians of the Roman Commonwealth and Empire; there were the great Latin poets and

orators; there were the philosophers of Greece, and the grammarians of antiquity; and above all there were the works of the great Christian Fathers and Doctors; Augustine, Hilary, Jerome, Gregory, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Basil, and many another. Nor were more modern writers excluded, as Alcuin expressly tells us that on its shelves were found the works of Bæda, and of Aldhelm, almost the earliest of our English sacred poets. The collection of this splendid library is then the great work on which the fame of Archbishop Albert rests.

Of his episcopate we know but little, and indeed of the man himself, and of his success as a schoolmaster, we should know little more were it not for a few notices in the writings of his more famous pupil and successor, Alcuin. But there is one work of his episcopate that cannot entirely be passed over. The Minster at York has suffered perhaps more than any other church in England from fire, and on no less than four several occasions has it thus been almost destroyed. The first of these was shortly before Albert was called to the office of Archbishop. The church must have been nearly in ruins when he was consecrated, and it became necessary for him to rebuild it almost from the foundations. Into this

work he threw himself with characteristic energy. The little chapel in which Paulinus had baptized Edwin a century and a half before was carefully and lovingly repaired. The great altar in it he renovated and dedicated to St. Paul, and he made another near it. All the sacred vessels and crucifixes were of silver or gold, and were inlaid with precious stones. Around this little shrine Albert began and completed a new church, a good work which won for him the title of one of the founders of the Minster. It contained as many as thirty altars, and was probably of that Byzantine style of architecture which was then so prevalent abroad. This church seems to have lasted till the Norman Conquest, and then, like the one it had superseded, it was in its turn destroyed by fire. The work of restoration was finished in the year 781, and in the autumn the church was solemnly dedicated to God's service. Archbishop Albert was now growing old and feeble, and for two years past he had given up all active work to a suffragan bishop, Eanbald. But now for the last time he came forth from his retirement and joined in the dedication festival. It was almost his last act. Ten days after his eyes were closed in death.

CHAPTER X.

ALCUIN OF YORK.

WITH Alcuin the list of Northumbrian saints is brought to a close; and of his life the most important events stand in connexion rather with the general history of Europe than with the tale of the little Northern kingdom. It was told in the last chapter how he was trained in Archbishop Egbert's school; how he was joined with Albert in the mastership of it; and how he finally took his place at its head, when Egbert was succeeded by Albert in the Archbishopric about the year 767. For some years Alcuin laboured as head-master of the school of York, and when Albert gave up the administration of his see in 780 he handed over to him the charge of his famous library. This, however, was to remain in Alcuin's hands for no long time. He was sent by the new Bishop Eanbald

to Rome to apply for the pall, and on his journey fell in with the Frankish King Charles, afterwards crowned Emperor, and best known to Englishmen under the title of Charlemagne, or Charles the Great. Charles was the foremost patron of literature in Europe, and delighted in cultivated society and literary pursuits, although, curiously enough, he himself could never succeed in learning to write. Scholars and students were sure of a warm welcome at his Court, and here in 780 or 781 Alcuin found himself. The two men were no strangers to each other, they had met once or twice before this, when Alcuin was abroad for literary purposes, and Charles was fully aware of his reputation and real ability. He therefore earnestly pressed him to give up his post at York, and attach himself to his Court, where he might take charge of the Palatine School, to which the young Frankish nobles were sent for education. There was much in the offer to attract such a man as Alcuin, and it was accepted.

He returned to England to obtain leave of absence, and having rejoined Charles in 782, remained for eight years a member of his household. During this period Alcuin was busily employed in teaching, in writing and revising books for educational and ecclesiastical uses, and in

organizing schools on the model of the Palatine School, in which Charles might carry out his design of restoring the knowledge of the sacred languages, the text of the Bible and Service books, and the moral rigour of ecclesiastical discipline. How laboriously Alcuin fulfilled the duties thus incurred the list of his writings will show; the extent of his influence is proved by his letters, and the success of his work by the literary history of the following century.

And so the last great Northumbrian of those early days passes away from English ground and English history. One more visit he paid to his native land for a year or two, about 790, but the necessities of the Church soon called him away again to the Continent. He never returned to England, but spent the remaining years of his life in the reformation of the religious houses which were intrusted to him by Charles, and in the cultivation of learning and sanctity. He died at Tours, a Frankish monastery which for some years he had governed as Abbot, on Whit-Sunday, May 19, 804.

And now it only remains for me to tell in a few words the tale of Northumbria's decline, and of the miseries that befell that unhappy kingdom. The days of a strong government were no more.

Edwin and Oswald and Oswy had made their power felt far and wide, so that lawlessness and wrongdoing were put down with a high hand, and the proverb ran that in King Edwin's day "a woman and her babe might walk throughout the island from sea to sea, if she would, without receiving any harm." Such days seemed now gone for ever. In 738 Ceolwulf (the king to whom Bæda had dedicated his history) resigned his crown, and "was shorn," as the old chronicler puts it, meaning thereby that he took the vows of a monk, and retired into a monastery for the rest of his life. In 757 Eadbert, the next king (the brother of Archbishop Egbert) followed his predecessor's example, and became "an exquisitely pious monk." Eight years later King Moll abdicated, and then the deluge of troubles began. The Chronicles of the last thirty years of the eighth century form a dreary record of civil discord and anarchy, of king succeeding king in rapid succession, of each of whom we hear but little save that he was "driven out by his own folk," or "slain by his household." And to such a pitch did the confusion reach, that at last within five years no less than three kings were foully murdered by their own people, and bishops deserted their sees and fled in horror

from a country that seemed accursed, and given over to ruin and destruction.

It was in the midst of such anarchy and riot as this that in the year 787 there appeared off the English coast three strange sails. We are not told the spot where the strangers landed, but it was probably somewhere along the eastern coast. The king's reve (i.e. the local magistrate) rode to the place, and would have driven them to the king's town because he wist not who they were, but they turned upon him, and being the stronger party slew him. And the chronicler, writing probably with the horrors of later Danish invasions fresh in his memory, ends his account with the significant words, "these were the first ships of Danish men that sought the land of the English nation."

The first indeed, but not the last. The strangers sailed away for the time, but the century had not run out before their ships were seen once more off the English coast, and the rich Abbey of Lindisfarne went up in flames. St. Cuthbert on his death-bed had charged the monks of the Isle that, if ever they were obliged to desert their home, his remains should accompany them wherever they went. The attack of the Danes was so sudden and unexpected that

they were on this occasion unable to fulfil his injunctions. Some few of the monks made good their escape, and returned after the marauders had taken their departure, to find the body of the saint untouched, but their brethren who had stayed behind all slain, and their church plundered and destroyed.

The account of this outrage in the pages of the old monkish Chronicles of Durham is worth quoting. It runs as follows: "In this year the pagans from the Northern region came with a naval armament to Britain, like stinging hornets, and overran the country in all directions, like fierce wolves, plundering, tearing, and killing not only sheep and oxen, but priests and Levites, and choirs of monks and nuns. They came to the church of Lindisfarne, and laid all waste with dreadful havoc, trode with unhallowed feet the holy places, dug up the altars, and carried off all the treasures of the holy church. Some of the brethren they killed; some they carried off in chains; some they cast out, naked and loaded with insults; some they drowned in the sea."

The havoc of these Danish pirates was repeated in the following year. "The heathens ravaged among the Northumbrians and plun-

dered Egferth's monastery at Done-mouth; and there one of their leaders was slain; and also some of their ships were broken by a tempest, and many of them were drowned; and some came on shore alive, and they were soon slain at the river's mouth." Year by year were these outrages repeated. Every spring the sight of the black sails and long keels of the Danes spread terror along the English coast. Every summer the abbeys of Northumbria and of the Fen country afforded rich spoil to these pirates. And every autumn they sailed away to their own country, gorged and glutted with the spoils they had taken, and with their hands dyed red with English blood, to drink through the short days, and sleep through the long nights of a northern winter; and to stir and rouse themselves with the coming spring to repeat the ghastly round of butchery and bloodshed, and pillage and plunder.

It was in the midst of the black clouds and lurid glare of such horrors as these that the sun of the Northumbrian Church went down. The light of learning and piety seemed extinguished, not only in Northumbria but throughout all England. For a century our country lay in almost total darkness, and the light was only

re-kindled at length owing to the genius and energy of the great Alfred. "When I came to the throne," he writes, "I cannot remember a single priest south of the Humber who could explain his service-book in English." And if there were none in the south country who could do this, I fear that we cannot pretend that any large number north of the river were better educated than their fellows in the more settled districts, even if here and there some traces of the learning of the great schools of Jarrow and York lingered on for a time.

The ninth century up to the peace of Wedmore (878), which freed England from the ravages of the Danes, is a dreary page in the annals of English history, unrelieved by a single great name eminent for learning or piety, and the darkness is only rendered more dark by the brightness of the period that preceded it. The Christian heroism of the three Northumbrian kings, Edwin and Oswald and Oswy; the saintly lives and the winning sweetness of Aidan and Cuthbert and Chad and Cedd; the dauntless energy and the fiery zeal of Wilfrid; the sacred songs of Cædmon, and the gentle firmness of the "Mother" Hilda; the untiring labours of Benedict Biscop; the loving and patient toil and the

"quiet grandeur" of the life of Bæda; the learning and educational zeal of Egbert and Albert and Alcuin: these are monuments of which any Church and any age might be proud. It is a great past on which we have been looking back. And if more than hitherto we are led to emulate our fathers in holiness and zeal and diligence, the story of their lives will not have been told in vain.

THE END.

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