

THE LIFE  
OF  
**SAINT ELIZABETH**  
OF HUNGARY, DUCHESS OF THURINGIA  
BY THE  
COUNT DE MONTALEMBERT

TRANSLATED BY MARY HACKETT

INTRODUCTION BY MRS. J. SADLIER

P. J. KENEDY & SONS  
44 BARCLAY STREET, NEW YORK

Reformatted, 04 March 2004 A. D.

# P R E F A C E

## TO THE SECOND AMERICAN EDITION.

Count de Montalembert's *Life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary* has been now some years before the public, and, though more recently translated into English, its merits are not unknown to the Catholic world. It is a work of such rare merit, in its kind, that wherever it goes it will be sure to make friends and admirers for itself, and requires not a word of commendation. There is a winning charm, a soft poetic halo around the whole narrative, that is in admirable keeping with the life and character of the charming princess whose brief mortal career it chronicles. It required a Montalembert to write the *Life of Elizabeth*, and it would also require a master's hand to render it faithfully into a new language. It is by no means so easy as some imagine to translate a book, especially if it be a work of genius, for not only does it require an intimate acquaintance with both languages, but also a certain portion of the creative genius which brought it forth from nothing. When Miss Hackett translated the *Life* itself; she omitted the *Introduction* of the noble author, which is certainly a valuable appendage to the work, presenting, as it does, a beautiful and graphic picture of the Christian world during the half century which included the brief career of Elizabeth. This omission I endeavored to supply to the best of my ability, fully conscious at the same time, that I could hardly do justice to so admirable a composition.

In preparing this second edition for the press, I have carefully compared the *whole work* with the original, and I trust it will be found comparatively free from the typographical and other errors which disfigured the former edition.

Mrs. J. Sadlier




## CONTENTS.

Introduction.....	7
I. How Duke Hermann reigned in Thuringia, and King Andrew in Hungary, and how the dear St. Elizabeth was born at Presburg, and was brought to Eisenach .....	87
II. How the dear St. Elizabeth honored God in her Childhood.....	97
III. How the dear St. Elizabeth had to suffer for God.....	102
IV. How the young Louis was faithful to the dear St. Elizabeth, and how he married her .....	107
V. How the Duke Louis, husband of the dear St. Elizabeth, was agreeable to God and man.....	112
VI. How the Duke Louis and the dear St. Elizabeth lived together before God in the holy state of marriage.....	118
VII. How the dear St. Elizabeth practiced the virtue of mortification.....	122
VIII. Of the great charity of the dear St. Elizabeth, and of her love of poverty ....	128
IX. Of the great devotion and humility of the dear St. Elizabeth.....	137
X. How the dear St. Elizabeth was known and cherished by the glorious St. Francis and how she had for spiritual director Master Conrad of Marburg.....	144
XI. How the Lord was pleased to manifest His grace in the person of the dear St. Elizabeth .....	155
XII. How the Duke Louis protected his poor people.....	162
XIII. How a great famine devastated Thuringia, and how the dear St. Elizabeth practiced all the works of mercy.....	167
XIV. How Duke Louis returned to his wife, and how he rendered true Justice to his dear monks of Reinhartsbrunn.....	174
XV. How the good Duke Louis took up the Cross, and of the great grief where-with he bade farewell to his friends, his family, and the dear St. Elizabeth .....	180
XVI. How Duke Louis died on his way to the Holy Land.....	193
XVII. How the dear St. Elizabeth heard of the death of her husband, and of her great agony and tribulation .....	198
XVIII. How the dear St. Elizabeth was driven out of her castle with her little children, and reduced to extreme misery, and of the great ingratitude of men towards her .....	202

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIX. How the All-merciful Jesus consoled the dear St. Elizabeth in her loneliness and misery, and how the sweet and most clement Virgin Mary came to Instruct and fortify her.....	210
XX. How the dear St. Elizabeth refused to marry a second time, and how she consecrated her wedding garments to Jesus, the spouse of her soul.....	221
XXI. How the dear St. Elizabeth received the remains of her husband, and how they were interred at Reinhartsbrunn.....	227
XXII. How the Thuringian knights made Duke Henry repent of his wickedness, and made him render ample justice to the dear St. Elizabeth.....	232
XXIII. How the dear St. Elizabeth renounced the worldly life, and, retiring to Marburg, assumed there the habit of the Order of the glorious St. Francis.....	236
XXIV. Of the great poverty in which the dear St. Elizabeth lived, and how she advanced in humility and mercy towards all creatures.....	245
XXV. How the dear St. Elizabeth refused to return to her father's kingdom, in order that she might more surely enter the kingdom of Heaven.....	257
XXVI. How the dear St. Elizabeth distributed all her property amongst the poor.....	260
XXVII. How the dear St. Elizabeth learned from Master Conrad, how in all things to destroy self-will.....	264
XXVIII. How the Lord exercised his power and mercy at the intercession of the dear St. Elizabeth, and of the marvelous efficacy of her prayers.....	274
XXIX. How the dear St. Elizabeth, when aged twenty-four years, was summoned to the eternal wedding feast.....	287
XXX. How the dear St. Elizabeth was buried in the church near her Hospital, and how even the little birds of heaven celebrated her obsequies.....	294
XXXI. Of the wonderful miracles obtained from God by the intercession of the dear St. Elizabeth, and how anxiously her brother-in-law, Duke Conrad, wished to have her canonized.....	298
XXXII. How the dear St. Elizabeth was canonized by Pope Gregory, and of the great joy and veneration of the faithful in Germany, on the occasion of the exaltation of her relics at Marburg.....	310
XXXIII. Of what became of the children and relatives of the dear St. Elizabeth after her death, and of the great saints that sprung from her race.....	330
XXXIV. Of the noble Church that was erected at Marburg in honor of the dear St. Elizabeth; and how her precious relics were profaned; and also the conclusion of this history.....	346

## INTRODUCTION.

 ON the 19th of November, 1833, a traveler arrived at Marburg, a city of Electoral Hesse, situated on the pleasant banks of the Lahn. He stopped there in order to study the Gothic Church which it contains, celebrated not only for its rare and perfect beauty, but also because it was the first in Germany wherein the ogee prevailed over the full arch, in the great revival of art in the 13th century. This basilica bears the name of St. Elizabeth, and it happened that the traveler in question arrived on the very day of her feast. In the church, — now Lutheran, like all the country around, — there was seen no mark of solemnity; only, in honor of the day, it was open, contrary to the practice of Protestants, and children were amusing themselves by jumping on the tombstones. The stranger passed along its vast naves, all deserted and dismantled, yet still young in their lightness and elegance. He saw resting against a pillar the statue of a young woman in a widow's dress, her face calm and resigned, one hand holding the model of a church, and the other giving alms to an unhappy cripple; further on, on bare and naked altars, from which no priestly hand ever wiped the dust, he carefully examined some ancient painting on wood, half effaced, and sculptures *in relieve*, sadly mutilated, yet all profoundly impressed with the simple and tender charm of Christian art. In these representations, he distinguished a young woman in great trepidation, showing to a Crowned warrior the skirt of her cloak filled with roses; in another place, that same knight angrily drew the covering from his bed, and beheld Christ stretched on the cross; a little farther, the knight and the lady were reluctantly tearing themselves asunder after a fond embrace; then again was seen the young woman, fairer than ever, extended on her bed of death, surrounded by priests and weeping

nuns; in the last place, bishops were taking up from a vault a coffin on which an Emperor was placing his crown. The traveler was told that these were incidents in the history of St. Elizabeth, one of the sovereigns of that country, who died just six hundred years ago, in that same city of Marburg, and was buried in that same church. In the corner of an obscure sacristy, he was shown the silver shrine, richly sculptured, which had contained the relics of the Saint, down to the time when one of her descendants, having become a Protestant, tore them out and flung them to the winds. Under the stone canopy which formerly overhung the shrine, he saw that every step was deeply hollowed, and he was told that these were the traces of the innumerable pilgrims who came of old to pray at the shrine, but none within the last three hundred years. He knew that there were in that city some few of the faithful and a Catholic priest; but neither Mass nor any other visible commemoration of the Saint to whom that day was consecrated.

The stranger kissed the stone hallowed by the knees of faithful generations, and resumed his solitary course; but he was ever after haunted by a sad yet sweet remembrance of that forsaken Saint, whose forgotten festival he had unwittingly come to celebrate. He set about studying her life;\* he successively ransacked those rich depositories of ancient literature which abound in Germany. Charmed more and more every day by what he learned of her, that thought gradually became the guiding star of his wanderings. After having drawn all he could from books and chronicles, and consulted manuscripts the most neglected, he wished, after the example of the first historian of the Saint, to examine places and popular traditions. He went, then, from city to city, from castle to castle, from church to church, seeking everywhere traces of her who has always been known in Catholic Germany as *the dear Saint Elizabeth*. He tried in vain to visit her birth-place, Presburg, in farther Hungary; but he was, at least, able to make some stay at that famous castle of Wartburg, whither she came a child, where her girlish days were spent, and where she married a

---

\* These researches have since been completed by others in various libraries of Italy and Flanders, especially in the Vatican and the Laurentian.



husband as pious and as loving as herself; he could climb the rough paths by which she went on her errands of charity to her beloved friends, the poor; he followed her to Kreuzburg, where she first became a mother; to the monastery of Reinhartsbrunn, where at twenty years of age she had to part with her beloved husband, who went to die for the Holy Sepulcher; to Bamberg, where she found an asylum from the most cruel persecutions: to the holy mountain of Andechs, the cradle of her family, where she made an offering of her wedding-robe when the cherished wife had become a homeless and exiled widow. At Erfurth he touched with his lips the glass which she left the humble nuns as a memento of her visit. Finally, he returned to Marburg, where she consecrated the last days of her life to the most heroic works of charity, and where she died at twenty-four — to pray at her desecrated tomb, and to gather with difficulty some few traditions amongst a people who, with the faith of their fathers, have lost their devotion to their sweet patroness.

The result of these protracted researches, of these pious pilgrimages, is contained in this book.

Often, when wandering through our plastered-up cities, or our rural districts, despoiled of their ancient ornaments, and fast losing all traces of ancestral life, the sight of a ruin which has escaped the spoilers, of a statue lying in the grass, — an arched door-way, — a staved rosace, will arouse the imagination; the mind is struck, as well as the eye; our curiosity is excited; we ask ourselves what part did that fragment play in the whole; we unconsciously fall into contemplation: by degrees, the entire fabric rises before our mental vision, and when the work of interior reconstruction is completed, we behold the Abbey, the Church, the Cathedral, towering aloft in all its majestic beauty; we see the sweep of its vaulted roof, and mingle in the crowd of its faithful people, amid the symbolic pomp and ineffable harmony of ancient worship.

Thus it is that the writer of this book, having traveled long in foreign countries, and pondered much on past ages, has picked up this fragment, which he offers to those who have the same faith and the

same sympathies as himself, to aid them in reconstructing in their mind the sublime edifice of the Catholic ages.

Thanks to the many invaluable monuments of the life of St. Elizabeth, which are found in the great historical collections of Germany as well as in the manuscripts of its libraries; thanks to the numerous and minute details transmitted to us by biographers, some of them contemporaries of St. Elizabeth, and others attracted by the charm which her character and her destiny are so well calculated to exercise over every Catholic mind; thanks to this singular combination of auspicious circumstances, we are able to effect a double purpose in writing this life. While closely adhering to the fundamental idea of such a work, viz., to give *the life of a Saint, a legend of the ages of Faith*, we may also hope to furnish a faithful picture of the manners and customs of society at a period when the empire of the Church and of chivalry was at its height. It has long been felt that even the purely profane history of an age so important for the destinies of mankind, might gain much in depth, and in accuracy, from particular researches on the object of the most fervent faith and dearest affections of the men of those times. We may venture to say that, in the history of the middle ages, there are few biographies so well adapted to carry out that view, as the history of St. Elizabeth.

On the other hand, before we say more of this Saint, and the ideas which she represents, it seems to us that we should give a sketch of the state of Christianity at the time in which she lived, for her life would be totally inexplicable to those who neither knew nor could appreciate her age. Not only is it that her destiny, her family, and her name, are connected, more or less, with a host of the events of those times, but that her character is so analogous to what the world then saw on a grander scale, that it becomes indispensably necessary for the reader to recall, as he goes along, the principal features of the social state wherein her name holds such a distinguished place. We must, therefore, be allowed to turn aside for a moment, before commencing the life of St. Elizabeth, in order to depict her contemporaries and her times.

St. Elizabeth was born in 1207, and died in 1231, so that her brief career occurs during that first half of the 13th century, which is, perhaps, of all other periods, the most important, the most complete, and the most resplendent, in the history of Catholic society. It would be, it seems to us, difficult to find, in the glorious annals of the Church, a time when her influence over the world and over mankind, in all its developments, was more vast, more prolific, more incontestable. Never, perhaps, had the Spouse of Christ reigned with such Absolute dominion over the mind and heart of nations; she saw all the ancient elements, against which she had so long struggled, at length subdued and prostrate at her feet; the entire West bowed with respectful love under her holy law. In the long struggle which she had had to sustain, even from her divine origin, against the passions and repugnances of fallen humanity, never had she more successfully fought, nor more vigorously pinioned down her enemies. It is true, her victory was far from being, and could not be, complete, since she is here below only to fight, and expects to triumph only in Heaven; but certain it is that then, more than at any other moment of that protracted warfare, the love of her children, their boundless devotion, their numbers and their daily increasing courage, the Saints whom she every day saw coming to light amongst them, gave to that immortal mother strength and consolation, of which she has since been but too cruelly deprived.

The thirteenth century is the more remarkable, on this point, inasmuch as the close of the twelfth was far from being auspicious. In fact, the echo of St. Bernard's voice, which seems to have wholly filled that age, had grown feeble towards its end, and with it failed the exterior force of the Catholic thought. The disastrous battle of Tiberiad, the loss of the true Cross, and the taking of Jerusalem by Saladin (1181), had shown the West overcome by the East, on the sacred soil which the Crusades had redeemed. The debauchery and tyranny of Henry II of England, the murder of St. Thomas à Becket, the captivity of Richard *Cœur de Lion*, the violence exercised by Philip Augustus towards his wife Ingerburge, the atrocious cruelties of the Emperor Henry VII in Sicily — all these triumphs of brute force

indicated, but too plainly, a certain diminution of Catholic strength; whilst the progress of the Waldensian and Albigensian heresies, with the universal complaints of the relaxation of the clergy and the religious orders, disclosed a dangerous evil in the very bosom of the Church. But a glorious reaction was soon to set in. In the last years of that century (1198,) the chair of St. Peter was ascended by a man in the prime of life, who, under the name of Innocent III was to struggle with invincible courage against the enemies of justice and the Church, and to give to the world perhaps the most accomplished model of a Sovereign Pontiff, the type, by excellence, of the vicar of God. As this grand figure stands out in bold relief from all that age which he himself inaugurated, we must be allowed to give a sketch of his character. Gracious and benign in his manners — endowed with uncommon personal beauty — warm and confiding in his friendships — liberal to excess in his alms and in his foundations — an eloquent and persuasive orator — a learned and ascetic writer\* — a poet even, as we see by his fine prose, *Vetzi*, *Sancte Spiritus*, and the *Stabat Mater*, that sublime elegy composed by him — a great and profound jurisconsult, as it behoved the supreme judge of Christendom to be — the zealous protector of science and of Christian literature — a stern disciplinarian, vigorously enforcing the laws and the discipline of the Church — he had every quality that might make his memory illustrious, had he been charged with the government of the Church at a calm and settled period, or if that government had then been confined to the exclusive care of spiritual things. But another mission was reserved for him. Before he ascended the sacerdotal throne, he had understood, and even published in his works, the end and destiny of the supreme Pontificate, not only for the salvation of souls and the preservation of Catholic truth, but for the good government of Christian society. Nevertheless, feeling no confidence in himself, scarcely is he elected when he earnestly demands of all the priests of the Catholic world their special prayers that God might enlighten and fortify him; God heard that universal prayer, and gave him strength to prosecute and to accomplish the great work of St. Gregory VII. In his

---

\* See his *Sermons* and his treatises *De contempta mundi*, and the *Seven Penitential Psalms*.

youth, whilst studying in the University of Paris, he had made a pilgrimage to Canterbury, to the tomb of St. Thomas the Martyr, and it is easy to imagine what inspiration there was for him in those sacred relics, and what a fervent zeal he conceived for the freedom of the Church, whose victorious champion he afterwards was. But whilst he was defending that supreme liberty, the constitution of Europe at that time conferred upon him the glorious function of watching, at the same time, over all the interests of nations, the maintenance of their rights, and the fulfillment of all their duties. He was, during his whole reign of eighteen years, at the very height of that gigantic mission. Though incessantly menaced and opposed by his own subjects, the turbulent people of Rome, he presided over the Church and the Christian world with immoveable tranquility, with ceaseless and minute attention, keeping his eye on every part as a father and a judge. From Ireland to Sicily, from Portugal to Armenia, no law of the Church is transgressed but he takes it up, no injury is inflicted on the weak but he demands reparation, no legitimate security is assailed but he protects it. For him, all Christendom is but one majestic unity, but one single kingdom, undivided by boundary lines, and without any distinction of races; of which he is, without, the intrepid defender, and, within, the impartial and incorruptible judge. To shield it against external enemies, he arouses the failing ardor of the Crusades; he shows himself inflamed, beyond all men, with that holy desire to battle for the Cross, which St. Gregory VII had first conceived, and which had animated all the Roman Pontiffs till Pius II died a Crusader. The heart of the Popes was then, as it were, the focus whence that holy zeal radiated over all the Christian nations; their eyes were ever open to the dangers by which Europe was surrounded, and while Innocent endeavored, every year, to send a Christian army against the victorious Saracens of the East, in the North he propagated the faith amongst the Slavs and Sarmatians, and in the West, urging upon the Spanish princes the necessity of concord amongst themselves, and a decisive effort against the Moors, he directed them on to their miraculous victories. He brought back to Catholic unity, by the mere force of persuasion, and the authority of his great character,

the most remote kingdoms, such as Armenia and Bulgaria, which, though victorious over the Latin armies, hesitated not to bow to the decision of Innocent. To a lofty and indefatigable zeal for truth, he well knew how to join the highest toleration for individuals; he protected the Jews against the exactions of their princes and the blind fury of their fellow-citizens, regarding them as the living witnesses of Christian truth, imitating in that respect all his predecessors, without one exception. He even corresponded with Mahometan princes, for the promotion of peace and their salvation. While struggling with rare sagacity and unwearied assiduity against the numberless heresies which were then breaking out, menacing the foundations of order, social and moral, he never ceased to preach clemency and moderation to the exasperated and victorious Catholics, and even to the Bishops themselves. He long applies himself to bring about, by mildness and conciliation, the reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches; then, when the unexpected success of the fourth Crusade, overthrowing the empire of Byzantium, had brought under his dominion that erring portion of the Christian world, and thus doubled his power, he recommends mildness towards the conquered Church, and far from expressing a single sentiment of joy or pride on hearing of that conquest, he refuses to have any share in the glory and triumph of the victors; he rejects all their excuses, all their pious pretences, because, in their undertaking, they had violated the laws of Justice, and forgotten the Sepulcher of Christ! It is that for him religion and justice were all, and that with them he identified his life. His soul was inflamed with a passionate love of justice which no exception of persons, no obstacle, no check, could either diminish or restrain; counting defeat or success as nothing, when right was at stake — mild and merciful towards the vanquished and the feeble — stern and inflexible towards the proud and the mighty — everywhere and always the protector of the oppressed, of weakness, and of equity, against force triumphant and unjust. Thus it was that he was seen resolutely defending the sanctity of the marriage tie, as the keystone of society and of Christian life. No outraged wife ever implored his powerful intervention in vain. The world beheld him with admiration

struggling for fifteen years against his friend and ally, Philip Augustus, in defense of the rights of that hapless Ingerburge who had come from remote Denmark to be the object of that monarch's contempt. Deserted by all, shut up in prison without one friend in that foreign land, she was not forgotten by the Pontiff, who at length succeeded in reseating her on her husband's throne, amid the acclamations of the people, who exulted in the thought that there was, even in this world, equal justice for all.

It was in the same spirit that he watched, with paternal solicitude, over the fate of royal orphans, the lawful heirs of crowns, and that even in countries the most remote. We see that he knew how to maintain the rights and preserve the patrimony of the princes of Norway, of Holland, and of Armenia (1199), the Infantas of Portugal, the young king Ladislaus of Hungary, and even to the sons of the enemies of the Church, such as James of Aragon, whose father had been killed fighting for the heretics, and who, being himself the prisoner of the Catholic army, was liberated by order of Innocent; such, also, as Frederic II, sole heir of the imperial race of Hohenstaufen, the most formidable rival of the Holy See, but who, being left an orphan, to the care of Innocent, is brought up, instructed, defended by him, and maintained in his patrimony with the affectionate devotion, not only of a guardian, but of a father. But still more admirable does he appear to us, when offering an asylum, near his throne, to the aged Raymond de Toulouse, the old and inveterate enemy of Catholicity, with his young son; when he himself pleads their cause against the Prelates and the victorious Crusaders when, after enriching the young prince with his wise and loving counsels, after seeking in vain to soften his conquerors, he assigned to him, notwithstanding their murmurs, the Earldom of Provence, in order that the innocent son of a guilty father might not be left without some inheritance. Is it, then, surprising that, at a period when faith was regarded as the basis of all thrones, and when justice, thus personified, was seated on the chair of St. Peter, kings should seek to unite themselves to it as closely as they could? If the valiant Peter of Aragon thought he could not better secure the young independence of

his crown than by crossing the sea to lay it at the feet of Innocent, and to receive it as a vassal from his hand — if John of England, pursued by the just indignation of his people, also proclaims himself the vassal of that Church which he had so cruelly persecuted, sure of finding there that refuge and that pardon which men denied him — or if, besides those two kingdoms, those of Navarre, of Portugal, of Scotland, of Hungary, and of Denmark, gloried in belonging, in some measure, to the Holy See by a special bond of protection? It was known to all that Innocent respected the rights of kings, in regard to the Church, as he did those of the Church herself against kings. Like his illustrious predecessors, he united to his love of equity a lofty and sagacious policy. Like them, by opposing the heirship of the empire in the house of Swabia, by maintaining the freedom of elections in Germany, he saved that noble country from monarchical centralization, which would have changed its whole nature, and stifled the germs of that prodigious intellectual fecundity of which she is justly proud. Like them, by re-establishing and steadfastly defending the temporal authority of the Holy See, he preserved the independence of Italy, as well as that of the Church. He formed, by his precepts and his example, a whole generation of Pontiffs, equally devoted to that independence, and worthy of being his auxiliaries. Such were Stephen Langton in England, Henry of Gnesen in Poland, and Roderick of Toledo in Spain, Foulquet of Toulouse, in the midst of heretics; or worthy of dying for that holy cause, like St. Peter Parentice, and Peter de Castelneau.<sup>1</sup> The glorious life of Innocent III terminates with the famous Council of Lateran (1215), which he conducted and presided over; in which all the relations of the Church were made fast; in which the *judgments of God*, having degenerated into an abuse of force, were definitely abolished; in which the paschal communion was prescribed; in which was established that criminal process<sup>2</sup> which has served as a model for all secular tribunals; finally, wherein were introduced, so to speak, to the Christian world, those two great orders of St. Dominick and St. Francis, which were to infuse into it a new life. Innocent had

---

<sup>1</sup> Killed by the heretics, the former at Orvieto, in 1199; the latter in Languedoc, in 1209.

<sup>2</sup> In the eighth canon of this council.



the glory and the consolation of seeing both these illustrious orders spring up under his Pontificate.<sup>1</sup>

The successors of this great Pope were not unworthy of him, and exhibited, for upwards of half a century, the sublime spectacle of a struggle sustained, with faith and justice alone, against all the resources of genius and of human power, concentrated in the Emperor Frederic II, and employed for the success of material force. Honorius III has first to contend with that ungrateful ward of the Holy See. Mild and patient, he seems placed between two stern and inflexible combatants, Innocent III and Gregory IX, as if to show how far Apostolical meekness may go. He preached to kings his own gentleness; he exhausted his treasury to furnish the expenses of the Crusade. He had the happiness of confirming the three holy orders which were, in some manner, to revive the fire of charity and faith in the heart of Christian nations; the Dominicans (1226), the Franciscans (1223), and the Carmelites (1226). Notwithstanding his mildness, he was forced to place the Emperor for the first time under the ban of the Church, leaving Gregory IX to carry on the contest. The latter, who was eighty years old when his brow was encircled with the tiara (1227), showed, during his reign of fifteen years, the most indomitable energy, as though he grew young again in becoming the depository of the delegated power of the Eternal. He it was who was the friend and protector of that St. Elizabeth who has brought us to the study of this age; he made her acquainted with St. Francis of Assisium, whose heroic virtue she well knew how to imitate; he protected her in her widowhood and cruel desertion; and when God had called her to Himself, he proclaimed her right to the perpetual veneration of the faithful, and placed her name upon the calendar. But he was, also, the protector of the helpless and the oppressed in every rank of life; and, whilst he gave his support to the royal widow of Thuringia, he extended his paternal solicitude over the meanest serfs of remotest Christendom, as shown by his letter to the Polish nobles,

---

<sup>1</sup> It is well known that M. Hurter, a Protestant writer, has, by his *Life of Innocent III and his Contemporaries*, raised a monument to the glory of that great Pontiff and the Church, and merits the gratitude of every friend of truth.

wherein he bitterly reproaches them for wearing away the life of their vassals, redeemed and ennobled by the blood of Christ, in training falcons or birds of prey. The zealous friend of true science, he founds the University of Toulouse, and has that of Paris re-established by St. Louis, not without a wise protest against the encroachments of profane philosophy on theology. By the collection of the Decrees, he has the glory of giving the Church her code, which was then that of society at large. The worthy nephew of Innocent III, he always knew how to unite justice and firmness; being reconciled with Frederic II, after having at one time excommunicated him, he sustained him with noble impartiality against the revolt of his son, Henry (1235), and even against the exacting demands of the Lombard cities, though they were the most faithful allies of the Church (1231). When the Emperor subsequently violates his most solemn engagements, and that he is once more obliged to excommunicate him, how beautiful it is to see that old man, almost a hundred years old, bracing himself up for a desperate struggle, yet charging be most careful of the prisoners; then, when conquered and abandoned by all, besieged in Rome by Frederic, leagued with the Romans themselves against him, he finds at that terrible moment, and in the bosom of human weakness, that strength which belongs but to things divine. Taking forth the relics of the holy Apostles, he has them carried in procession through the city, and demands of the Romans whether they will permit that sacred deposit to perish before their eyes, since he could no longer defend them without their assistance; immediately their heart is touched — they swear to conquer or die for their holy Pontiff — the Emperor is repulsed, and the Church delivered.

After him came Innocent IV (1242), who, though up to the very moment of his election a friend and partisan of Frederic, is no sooner elected than he sacrifices all his former ties to the august mission confided to him, and that admirable unity of purpose which had for two hundred years animated all his predecessors. Persecuted, menaced, shut up between the Imperial columns which, from Germany in the north, and Sicily in the south, gather around the doomed city which is now his prison. He must endeavor to escape.

Where is he to find an asylum? Every sovereign in Europe, even St. Louis, refuses to receive him. Happily, Lyons is free, and belongs only to an independent Archbishop. There Innocent assembles all the Bishops who would escape from the tyrant, and his venerable brothers, the Cardinals; to the latter he gives the scarlet hat, to denote that they should always be ready to shed their blood for the Church; and then, from that supreme tribunal which Frederic had himself invoked and recognized, and before which his advocates came solemnly to plead his cause, the fugitive Pontiff fulminates, against the most powerful sovereign of that time, the sentence of deposition, as the oppressor of religious liberty, the spoiler of the Church, a heretic and a tyrant. Glorious and ever-memorable triumph, of right over might — of faith over material interest! — The third act of that sacred drama, wherein St. Gregory VII and Alexander III had already trampled under foot the rebellious element, amid the acclamations of saints and men! We all know how Providence took upon itself the ratification of this sentence; we are familiar with the fall of Frederic and his latter years, the premature death of his son, and the total ruin of that formidable race.

As an admirable proof of the entire confidence placed in the integrity of the Holy See, it is worthy of remark that, as Frederic himself was left, when an orphan, in his cradle, to the care of Innocent III, so the friends and allies of his grandson, Conradine, the last of the house of Swabia, would not entrust him to any other guardian than the very Pontiff who had deposed him grandsire; and who managed his trust loyally and well, till it was torn from his grasp by the perfidious Mainfroy.

The struggle continues against the latter, and all the other enemies of the Church, carried on with the same intrepidity, the same perseverance, under Alexander IV (1254), a worthy descendant of that family of Conti, which had already given to the world Innocent III and Gregory IX; and after him, under Urban IV (1261), that shoemaker's son who, far from being ashamed of his origin, had his father painted on the church windows of Troyes, working at his trade; who had the honor of providing a new aliment for Catholic piety by instituting the

Feast of the Most Holy Sacrament (1264); and who, unshaken in the midst of the greatest dangers, dies, not knowing where to rest his head, but leaving to the Church the protection of the brother of St. Louis, and a French monarchy in the Sicilies. This conquest is completed under Clement IV, who sues in vain for the life of Conradine, the innocent and expiatory victim of the crimes of his family. And thus ends for a while that noble war of the Church against State oppression, which was to be renewed with far different results, but not less gloriously, under Boniface VIII.

It must not be forgotten that, whilst these great Pontiffs were carrying on this warfare to the very utmost, far from being wholly engrossed by it, they gave to the internal organization of the Church, and of society, as much attention as though they were in a state of profound peace. They continued, one after another, with invincible perseverance, the colossal work wherewith they were charged since the fall of the Roman empire — the work of grinding and kneading together all the divers elements of those Germanic and northern tribes who had overrun and conquered Europe, distinguishing therein all that was good, pure, and salutary, in order to sanctify and civilize it, and rejecting all that was truly barbarous. At the same time, and with the same constancy, did they propagate science and learning, placing them within reach of all; they consecrated the natural equality of the human race, calling to the highest dignities of the Church men born in the lowest classes, for whatever little learning or virtue they might have; they fabricated and promulgated the magnificent code of ecclesiastical legislation, and that clerical jurisdiction, the benefits of which were the more sensibly felt, inasmuch as it alone knew neither torture nor any cruel punishment, and that it alone made no exception of persons amongst Christians.

It is true that, in the bosom of the Church which had such chiefs, many human miseries were found mixed up with so much greatness and sanctity; it will always be so whilst things divine are entrusted to mortal hands; but we may be allowed to doubt whether there was less at any other period, and whether the rights

of God and those of humanity were defended with nobler courage, or by more illustrious champions.

In front of that majestic Church arose the *second power*, before which the men of those times bent in homage; that Holy Roman Empire, from which all secondary royalties seemed to flow. Unhappily, since the end of the Saxon dynasty, in the eleventh century, it had passed into the hands of two families, in whom the great and pious spirit of Charlemagne was gradually extinguished — those of Franconia and Swabia. These substituted a new spirit, impatient of all spiritual restraint, glorying only in the force of arms and the feudal system, and always aiming at the amalgamation of the two powers, absorbing the Church in the Empire. That fatal purpose, defeated by St. Gregory VII, in the person of Henry IV, and by Alexander III in that of Frederick Barbarossa, made a new effort in Frederick II; but he, too, found his conquerors on the chair of St. Peter. This Frederick II occupied all that half-century which his reign almost wholly embraces.<sup>1</sup> It seems to us impossible, even for the most prejudiced mind, not to be struck by the immediate difference between the commencement of his reign, in the days when he was faithful to the Roman Church, which had so carefully watched over his minority,<sup>2</sup> and the last twenty years of his life, during which the glory of his earlier years was tarnished and their high promise cruelly blighted. Nothing could be more splendid, more poetical, more grand, than that imperial court presided over by a young and gallant prince, endowed with every noble quality both of mind and body — an enthusiastic lover of the arts, of poetry, and of literature; himself acquainted with six languages, and well versed in many of the sciences; bestowing on the kingdom of Sicily, whilst the Pope crowned him in Rome (1220), a code of laws the wisest and best framed, and altogether remarkable for their perfection; and subsequently, after his first reconciliation with the Holy See, publishing at Mayence the first laws that Germany had had in its own

---

<sup>1</sup> King of Sicily in 1198; Emperor in 1215; died in 1250.

<sup>2</sup> Innocent III, Honorius III, and Gregory IX had, all three, a share in bringing him up—the first as Pope, and the other two as Cardinals.

tongue; gathering around him the flower of the chivalry of his vast dominions, giving them the example of valor and poetic genius in the royal halls of Sicily, wherein were brought together the divers elements of Germanic, Italian and Eastern civilization. It was this very mixture that caused his ruin. He would have been, says a chronicler of those times, without an equal on Earth, *had he but loved his own soul*, but he had an unfortunate predilection for Eastern life. He who was at one time thought of as a husband for St. Elizabeth, when she was left a widow, and who was actually a suitor for the hand of St. Agnes of Bohemia,<sup>1</sup> soon after shut himself up in a disgraceful *seraglio*, surrounded by Saracen guards. By the side of this moral sensualism, he speedily proclaims a sort of political materialism which was, at least, premature in the thirteenth century. He shocks all the ideas of Christianity, by going to the Holy Sepulcher as the ally of the Mussulman princes, and no longer as the conqueror of the Holy Land. On his return to Europe, not satisfied with the magnificent position of a Christian Emperor, the first amongst the mighty and the powerful, and not the master of a multitude of slaves — the *protector* of the Church, and not her oppressor, he begins to scatter amongst men the seeds of those fatal doctrines which have since borne but too abundant fruit. Intoxicated by the height of his power, like Louis XIV and Napoleon in after times, he could not endure the intervention of spiritual power; and he caused his Chancellor, Peter des Vignes, to proclaim that the disposal of all things, both human and divine, belonged of right to the Emperor. That age, however, was still too Christian to tolerate such an invasion of the vital force of Christianity. A far different spirit was then required, even in the lay power, to govern minds and convictions; such was found in St. Louis of France. Hence, we see this Frederic, who, according to that holy king, had *made war on God with his own gifts*, stricken with the anathemas of the Church, progressing every day in cruelty, perfidy, and duplicity;<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> She refused him in order to become a Franciscan nun; the Emperor, on hearing it, said: "If she had preferred any other man to me, I would have been revenged, but since she has only preferred God, I can say nothing."

<sup>2</sup> For instance, the torture inflicted on the son of the Doge Tiepolo, on the Bishop of Arezzo, and the imprisonment of the Cardinals who repaired to the Council which himself had demanded.

loading his people with fines and taxes; giving every reason to doubt his faith by his excessive debauchery, and, finally, dying in retirement at the extreme end of Italy, smothered by his own son, in the very midst of his Saracens, whose attachment only served to make him suspected by Christians. Under his reign, as under those of his predecessors, Germany (which, indeed, saw but little of him) was in a flourishing condition; she saw the power of the Wittelsbachs grow in Bavaria; she admired the splendor of the Austrian princes, — Frederic the Victorious, and Leopold the Glorious, who was said to be *brave as a lion, and modest as a young virgin*; she extolled the virtues of the house of Thuringia, under the father-in-law and the husband of St. Elizabeth; she saw in the Archbishop Engelbert of Cologne a martyr to justice and public safety, whom the Church hastened to enroll amongst her Saints. Her cities, like those of the Low Countries, were developing themselves with a mighty and a fruitful individuality; Cologne and Lübeck were at the height of their influence, and the famous Hansa league was beginning to be formed. Her legislation was grandly developed under the two dynasties of Saxony and Swabia, together with a number of other local codes, all based on respect for established rights and ancient liberties, and breathing such a noble mixture of the Christian thought with the elements of old Germanic right, yet unaltered by the Ghibelline importation of the Roman right. In fine, she already reckoned amongst her knights a true Christian monarch; for, under the shadow of the throne of the Hohenstaufens, there was silently springing up, in the person of Rudolph of Hapsburg, a prince worthy to be the founder of an imperial race, since he saved his country from anarchy, and displayed to the world a fitting representative of Charlemagne. It is easy to guess what his reign must be, when, at his consecration, finding no scepter, he seized the crucifix on the altar, and exclaimed, “Behold my scepter! I want no other.”

If the Empire seemed to have departed from its natural course, it was in some measure replaced by France, who took from her that character of sanctity and grandeur which was to shed so much luster on the Most Christian monarchy. Yet she herself contained within her

bosom a deep wound which must be healed at any cost, if she would maintain her unity, and carry out her high destiny. We allude to that nest of heresies both anti-social and anti-religious which disgraced the south, and had its seat amongst those corrupt masses known to history as the Albigenses. The world is now well acquainted with the character and the doctrines of those men, who were worthily represented by princes whose debaucheries make us shudder, and who have been so long extolled by lying historians at the expense of religion and truth. It is well known that they were at least as much persecutors as they were persecuted; and that they were the aggressors against the common law of society at that time. Not only France, but even Spain and Italy, would have been then lost to faith and true civilization, if the Crusade had not been victoriously preached against that iniquitous center of Pagan and Oriental doctrines. There is no doubt that, in putting down that rebellion against Christianity, means were too often employed which Christian charity could not approve, and which were censured by the Holy See even at the height of that fierce contest. But it is now acknowledged that those cruelties were, at least, reciprocal; and no one has yet, as far as we know, devised the means of making war, and especially religious war, with mildness and lenity. It is true that Simon de Montfort, who was, during that terrible struggle, the champion of Catholicity, did somewhat tarnish his glory by a too great ambition and a severity which we cannot excuse; but enough remains to warrant Catholics in publishing his praise. There are few characters in history so great as his, whether in energy, perseverance, courage, or contempt of death; and when we think of the fervor and humility of his piety, the inviolable purity of his morals, with that inflexible devotion to ecclesiastical authority, which made him retire alone from the camp of the Crusaders before Zara, because the Pope had forbidden him to make war on Christians, we may then make allowance for his feelings toward those who disturbed the peace of consciences and overturned all the barriers of morality. His own character and that of his age are conjointly depicted in the words which he pronounced when about to undertake an unequal contest. "The whole Church prays for me — I cannot fail." And again,



when pursued by the enemy, and having, with his cavalry, crossed a river which the infantry could not pass, he went back again with five men only, crying out: "The little ones of Christ are exposed to death, and shall I remain in safety? Let God's will be done — I must certainly stay with them."

The decisive battle of Muret (1212), which secured the triumph of faith, likewise shows the nature of that struggle, by the contrast of the two leaders; on the one side, de Montfort, at the head of a handful of men, seeking in prayer and the sacraments the right of demanding a victory, which could only come by miracle; on the other, Peter of Aragon, coming there, enfeebled by debauchery, to fight and be slain in the midst of his numerous army.

Whilst this struggle was drawing to a close, and preparing for the direct reunion of the conquered provinces with the crown of France, a king worthy of his surname — Philip Augustus — was investing that crown with the first rays of that glory and that moral influence, "based on religion," which it was so long to maintain. While still young, he was asked what it was that occupied his mind during his long and frequent reveries? "I am thinking," he replied, "of the means of restoring to France the power and the glory which she had under Charlemagne," and during his long and glorious reign he never ceased to show himself faithful to that great thought. The reunion of Normandy and the provinces, wrested away by the unprincipled John Lackland, laid the first foundation of the power of the French monarchs. After having done his best for the cause of Christ in the Crusades, he showed himself, during his whole life, the friend and faithful supporter of the Church; and he proved it by the most painful sacrifice in overcoming his rooted aversion for the wife whom Rome imposed upon him. Reconciled with his people through his reconciliation with her, he soon after received his reward from Heaven, in the great victory of Bouvines (1215); a victory as much religious as national, obtained over the enemies of the Church as over those of France. This is sufficiently proved by all that historians have transmitted to us, regarding the impious projects of the confederates, who were all excommunicated — by the fervent prayers of the priests

during the battle, and by the noble words of Philip to his soldiers — “The Church prays for us: I am going to fight for her, for France, and for you.” Around him fought all the heroes of French chivalry — Matthieu de Montmorency, Enguerrand de Coucy, Guillaume des Barres, and Guérin de Senlis, at the same time pontiff, minister, and warrior. The enemy being defeated, they joined their king in founding, in honor of the Blessed Virgin, the abbey of Notre Dame de la Victoire, intended to consecrate, by the name of the Virgin, the memory of a triumph which had saved the independence of France.

The greatness of the French Monarchy, and its sway over the southern provinces which it was finally to absorb, continued to increase under the short but prosperous reign of Louis VIII, and under the brilliant regency of Blanche of Castile — that most tender mother and wise sovereign — who said she would rather see all her children dead than to know them to be guilty of one mortal sin, and who was not less solicitous for their temporal than their spiritual welfare, Blanche, the worthy object of the romantic love of Thibaut de Champagne, the poet-king, and who had such a tender devotion for our St. Elizabeth. This regency worthily announces the reign of St. Louis, that model of kings, to whom the historian’s mind reverts as, perhaps, the most accomplished personage of modern times, whilst the Christian venerates him as having possessed every virtue that can merit Heaven. While reading the history of that life, at once so touching and so sublime, we ask if ever the King of Heaven had on Earth a more faithful servant than that angel, crowned for a time with a mortal crown, in order to show the world how man can transfigure himself by charity and faith. What Christian heart is there that does not throb with admiration, while considering the character of St. Louis? — that sense of duty so strong and so pure, that lofty and most scrupulous love of justice, that exquisite delicacy of conscience, which induced him to repudiate the unlawful acquisitions of his predecessors, even at the expense of the public safety, and the affection of his subjects—that unbounded love of his neighbor, which filled his whole heart; which, after pouring itself out on his beloved wife, his mother and his brothers, whose death he so bitterly mourned,

extended itself to all classes of his subjects, inspired him with a tender solicitude for the souls of others, and conducted him in his leisure moments to the cottage of the poor, whom he himself relieved! Yet, with all these saintly virtues, he was brave even to rashness; he was at once the best knight and the best Christian in France, as he showed at Taillebourg and at Massoure. It was because death had no terrors for him, whose life was devoted to the service of God and his justice; who spared not even his own brother when he violated its holy rules; who was not ashamed, before his departure for the Holy Land, to send mendicant monks throughout his kingdom, in order to inquire of the meanest of his subjects if any wrong had been done them in the king's name, and if so, to repair it immediately at his expense. Hence, as though he were the impersonation of supreme justice, he is chosen as the arbitrator in all the greatest questions of his time — between the Pope and the Emperor — between the English barons and their king — a captive in the hands of the infidels, he is still taken as judge. Drawn twice by his love of Christ to the land of the barbarians, he first meets captivity, and then death — a species of martyrdom it was — the only martyrdom he could have obtained — the only death that was worthy of him. On his death-bed he dictates to his son his memorable instructions, the finest words ever spoken by the mouth of a king.

Just before he expired, he was heard to murmur, “O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!” Was it the heavenly or the earthly Jerusalem that he thus apostrophized in regret, or in sublime hope? He would not enter the latter by treaty, and without his army, lest his example should authorize other Christian kings to do the same. But they did better: not one went there after him. He was the last of the Crusader kings — the truly Christian kings — the last, and assuredly the greatest. He has left us two immortal monuments — his oratory and his tomb — the Holy Chapel and St. Denis — both of them pure, simple, and pointing heavenward like himself. But he left one still fairer and more lasting in the memory of the nations — the oak of Vincennes.

In England, the perverse race of the Norman kings — all oppressors of their people, and furious oppressors of the Church — had only to

oppose to Philippe Auguste the infamous John *Sans Terre* (Lackland), and to St. Louis only the pale and feeble Henry III. But if royalty is there at its lowest ebb, the Church shines in all her splendor, and the nation successfully defends her most important rights. The Church had been happily blessed in England with a succession of great men in the primatial see of Canterbury, perhaps unequaled in her annals. Stephen Langton was, under the reign of John, the worthy representative of Innocent III, and the worthy successor of St. Dunstan, de Lanfranc, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas à Becket. After having courageously defended the ecclesiastical privileges, he places himself at the head of the insurgent barons, and raised an army for God *and the holy Church*, which forced from the king that famous *Magna Charta* — the basis of that English constitution which the moderns have so much admired, forgetting, doubtless, that it was but the effect of feudal organization, and that this very charter, far from being an innovation, was only the re-establishment of the laws of St. Edward, a confirmation of the public right in Europe at that time, founded on the maintenance of all ancient and individual rights. Under Henry III, who was only kept on his tottering throne by the power of the Holy See preventing the reunion with France, which would have followed the conquest of the son of Philip Augustus, the Church had then, too, her courageous defenders, and her noble victims, in St. Edmund of Canterbury, who died in exile in 1242, and St. Richard of Winchester; and the nation accomplished the achievement of her liberties, under the leadership of the noble son of Simon de Montfort, brave and pious as his father, who was defeated and killed at the end of his career, but not before he had made that popular war a Crusade, and introduced the delegates of the people into the first political assembly which bore that name, since so glorious — the *British Parliament* — (1258.)

About the same time, there was seen in Scotland the pious King William, an ally of Innocent III, commanding that all laborers should rest from their toil on the afternoon of every Saturday; this in order to testify his love of God and the Blessed Virgin — (1202.) In the Scandinavian kingdoms, the thirteenth century commences under the

great Archbishop Absalom de Lund (1201) — an intrepid warrior and a holy pontiff — the benefactor and civilizer of those northern tribes. Sweden was progressing under the grandson of St. Eric; and Norway, which had retained the most traces of the old Germanic constitution, was enjoying unwonted peace, under Håkon V (1217-1263), her principal legislator. Waldemar the Victorious (1202-1252), the most illustrious of the kings of Denmark, extended his empire over all the southern coasts of the Baltic, and preludeing the union of Calmar, conceived, and was on the point of executing, the grand project of uniting, under one chief, all the countries bordering on the Baltic, when the battle of Bornhoveden (1221) gave the Germanic tribes the supremacy over the Scandinavians. But, throughout all his conquests, he never lost sight of the conversion of heathen nations, of which he was constantly reminded by the Holy See. His exertions for the propagation of the faith in Livonia were seconded by those of the order of Porte-Gladius, founded solely for the purpose in 1203, and afterwards by those of the Teutonic knights. The removal of the chief strength of this last order into Prussia, in order to implant Christianity there (1234), is an immense fact in the history of religion and of the civilization of Northern Europe. If human passions found their way all too soon into that Crusade, which lasted for two centuries, we still must bear in mind that it was only through it that Christianity found its way amongst those obstinate and self-willed tribes, while, at the same time, we must admire what the Popes did to soften the rule of the conquerors.<sup>1</sup>

Casting our eye along the same geographical line, we see Poland already manifesting the foundations of the *orthodox kingdom*:<sup>2</sup> Archbishop Henry of Gnesen, the legate of Innocent III, restored discipline and ecclesiastical freedom, despite the opposition of Duke Ladislaus: St. Hedwige, aunt of our Elizabeth, seated on the Polish throne, gave the example of the most austere virtues, and offered up, as a holocaust, her son, who died a martyr for the faith, fighting

---

<sup>1</sup> In 1219, a legate from the Pope went to Prussia, to secure to the conquered people the freedom of marriage and successions, etc.

<sup>2</sup> The title since given by the Pope to Poland.

against the Tartars. Poland, presenting an impassable barrier against the advance of those terrible hordes, who had enslaved Russia, and overrun Hungary, poured out rivers of her best blood during all that century — thus preparing to become what she has ever since been, the glorious martyr of Christendom.

Descending once more towards the south of Europe, and contemplating that Italy which was wont to be the most brilliant and the most active of the Christian nations, the soul is at first saddened at the sight of those cruel and interminable struggles of the Guelphs and Ghibellines, and all that vast empire of hatred which diffused itself throughout the land under favor of that war of principles in which those parties had their origin. It is this fatal element of hatred which seems to predominate at every period of the history of Italy. It was connected with a certain pagan and egotistical policy — a lingering memory of the old Roman republic, which prevailed in Italy, through all the middle ages, over that of the Church or the Empire, and blinded the Italians in a great degree to the salutary influence of the Holy See, whose first subjects they should have been, and whose power and devotion they had a good opportunity of appreciating, during the long contest between the Emperors and the Lombard cities. But, however disgusted we may be by those dissensions which rend the very heart of Italy, we cannot help admiring the physical and moral energy, the ardent patriotism, the profound convictions impressed on the history of every one of the innumerable republics which cover its surface. We are amazed at that incredible fecundity of monuments, institutions, foundations, great men of all kinds, warriors, poets, artists, whom we behold springing up in each of those Italian cities, now so desolate and forlorn. Never, assuredly, since the classic age of ancient Greece, was there seen such a mighty development of human will, such a marvelous value given to man and his works, so much life in so small a space! But when we think of the prodigies of sanctity which the thirteenth century saw in Italy, we easily understand the bond which kept all those impetuous souls together, we remember that river of Christian charity which flowed on, deep and incommensurable, under those wild storms and raging seas. In the midst of that universal

confusion, cities grow and flourish, their population is often tenfold what it now is — masterpieces of art are produced — commerce every day increases and science makes still more rapid progress. Unlike the Germanic States, all political and social existence is concentrated with the nobles in the cities, none of which, however, was then so predominant as to absorb the life of the others; and this free concurrence amongst them may explain, in part, the unheard of strength which they had at command. The league of the Lombard cities, flourishing since the peace of Constance, successfully withstood all the efforts of the imperial power. The Crusades had given an incalculable stimulus to the commerce and prosperity of the maritime republics of Genoa and Venice; the latter, especially, under her doge, Henry Dandolo, a blind old hero of four score, became a power of the first order by the conquest of Constantinople, and that *quarter and half* of the Eastern Empire, of which she was so long proud. The league of the Tuscan cities, sanctioned by Innocent III, gave new security to the existence of those cities whose history equals that of the greatest empires — the cities of Pisa, Lucca, and Sienna, which solemnly made themselves over to the Blessed Virgin before the glorious victory of Arbia, and Florence especially, perhaps the most interesting coalition of modern times. At every page of the annals of these cities, one finds the most touching instances of piety, and of the most elevated patriotism. To quote but one amongst a thousand, when we see people complain, like those of Ferrara, that they are not taxed heavily enough for the wants of the country, we cannot bring ourselves to be severe on institutions which allow of such a degree of disinterestedness and patriotism. By the side of this purely Italian movement, it is certain that the great struggle between the spiritual and the temporal power was nowhere so manifested as there; and, indeed, the latter, reduced to the necessity of being represented by the atrocious Eccelin, the lieutenant of Frederick II, sufficiently demonstrates the moral superiority of the cause of the Church. The South of Italy, under the scepter of the house of Swabia, was indebted to Frederick II and his Chancellor, Pierre des Vignes, for the benefit of a wise and complete legislation, with all the splendor of

poetry and the arts; but at the same time it was overrun, through that Emperor and his son, Mainfroi, with Saracen colonies, until Rome called in a new French race — the house of Anjou — which came, like the brave Normans of old, to maintain the independence of the Church, and close that gate of Europe against the infidels.

But if the Catholic historian has much to deplore in studying the history of Italy, he finds in the Spain of the thirteenth century an object of unmixed admiration. That was, in every respect, the heroic age of that most noble nation, the age in which it gained both its territory and independence, with the glorious title of the *Catholic monarchy*. Of the two great divisions of the Peninsula, we first see in Aragon, after that Peter III, whom we have seen voluntarily holding his crown from Innocent III, and yet dying at Muret in arms against the Church, his son, Don James the Conqueror, whose wife was a sister of St. Elizabeth, who won his surname by taking Majorca and Valencia from the Moors, who wrote, like Caesar, his own chronicle, and who, during a reign of sixty-four years of unceasing warfare, was never conquered, gained thirty victories, and founded two thousand churches. In Castile, the century opens with the reign of Alphonso the Short, founder of the order of St. James, and of the University of Salamanca. Those two great events redound to the fame of the illustrious Roderick Ximenes, Archbishop of Toledo (1208-1215), the worthy precursor of him who wars two centuries later, to immortalize the same name; he was, like many of the prelates of that age, an intrepid warrior, a profound politician, an eloquent preacher, a faithful historian, and a bountiful almoner. This king and his primate were the heroes of the sublime achievement of las Navas de Toloso (16th July, 1212,) when Spain did for Europe what France had done under Charles Martel, and what Poland afterward did under John Sobieski, when she saved her from the irruption of four hundred thousand Mussulmans, coming on her from the rear. The sway of the Crescent was broken in that glorious engagement — the true type of a Christian battle — consecrated in the memory of the people by many a miraculous tradition, and which the great Pope Innocent III could not worthily celebrate but by instituting the feast of the *Triumph of the*



*Cross*, which is even now solemnized on that day in Spain. Alphonso was succeeded by St. Ferdinand, — a contemporary and cousin-german of St. Louis, — who was no disgrace to his illustrious kindred, for, like St. Louis, he united all the merits of the Christian warrior to all the virtues of the Saint, and the most tender love for his people with the most ardent love for God. He would never consent to load his people with new taxes: “God will otherwise provide for our defense,” said he, “I am more afraid of the curse of one poor woman than of all the Moorish host.” And yet he carries on, with unequalled success, the work of national enfranchisement; he takes Cordova, the seat of the Caliphate of the West, and after having dedicated the principal mosque to the Blessed Virgin, he brings back to Compostella, on the shoulders of the Moors, the bells which the Caliph Almanzor had forced the Christians to carry away from it. Conquering the kingdom of Murcia in 1240, that of Jaen in 1246, of Seville again in 1248, he left the Moors only Grenada: but humble in the midst of all his glory, and extended on his bed of death, he weeping exclaims: — “O my lord! Thou hast suffered so much for love of me! and I — unhappy that I am! — what have I done for love of thee?”

Spain had her permanent crusade on her own soil; the rest of Europe went afar to seek it, either northward against the barbarians, or southward against the heretics, or eastward against the profaners of the Holy Sepulcher. That great thought prevailed from time to time over all local questions, all personal passions, and absorbed them all into one. It expired only with St. Louis; and was still in all its vigor during the first half of the thirteenth century. In its opening years, Foulques of Neuilly — the rival of Peter the Hermit and of St. Bernard, in eloquence and power of persuasion — going from tournament to tournament, makes all the French chivalry take up the Cross. An army of barons embarks at Venice, and in passing overthrows the empire of Byzantium, as the first stage to Jerusalem. Notwithstanding the disapproval of Innocent III, founded on strict equity, we cannot dispute the grandeur of this astonishing conquest, nor even the Christian sentiment by which it was inspired. We always

see the French knights laying down, as the basis of their negotiations, the reunion of the Greek Church with Rome, and making it the first result of their victory. This conquest was, moreover, but a just chastisement inflicted on the Greek Emperors for their perfidy, in having always betrayed the cause of the Crusades, and on their degenerate and sanguinary people, who were ever either the slaves or the assassins of their princes. Although the idea of the Crusade, bearing on different directions, must necessarily lose much of its force, yet that force is revealed to us by all those generous princes, who did not think their life complete until they had seen the Holy Land; such were Thibaut de Champagne, who celebrated that expedition in such noble verses; the holy Duke Louis, husband of our Elizabeth, whom we shall see die on the way; Leopold of Austria, and even the king of distant Norway, who would go in company with St. Louis. The wives of these noble knights hesitated not to accompany them on these distant pilgrimages, and there were almost as many princesses as princes in the camps of the Crusaders. Even boys were carried away by the general enthusiasm; and it is an affecting sight to see that crusade of boys in 1212 from all parts of Europe — whose result was most fatal, for they all perished — but still it was a striking proof of that love of sacrifice, of that exclusive devotion to creeds and convictions, which actuated the men of those times from the cradle to the grave. What those boys had attempted in their early age, worn-out old men failed not to undertake; witness that Jean de Brienne, king of Jerusalem, who, after a whole life consecrated to the defense of faith and the Church, even against his own son-in-law, Frederick II, sets out when upwards of four-score, to undertake the defense of the new Latin empire of the East; after almost miraculous success, he expires at the age of eighty-nine, worn out by conquest, still more than by age, having first stripped off the imperial purple and his glorious armor, to assume the habit of St. Francis, and to die under that insignia of a last victory (1237).

Besides these individual manifestations of zeal, Europe once more welcomed the appearance of that permanent militia of the Cross, the three great military orders, the martial brotherhoods of the Temple, of

St. John of Jerusalem, and St. Mary of the Germans. These last had for their grand master, during the first years of the thirteenth century, Hermann de Saltza, famous for his noble and indefatigable efforts to reconcile the Church and the Empire, and under whose government the first expedition of the Teutonic knights into Russia took place, whilst one of the principal seats of the Order, and subsequently its capital, was near the tomb of St. Elizabeth of Marburg.

Thus then, in the East, the taking of Constantinople, and the overthrow of the Greek Empire by a handful of Franks; in Spain, las Navas de Tolosa by St. Ferdinand; in France, Bouvines and St. Louis; in Germany, the glory and the fall of the Hohenstaufen line; in England, the Magna Charta; at the summit of the Christian world, the great Innocent III and his heroic successors; this is sufficient, it seems to us, to assign to the time of St. Elizabeth a memorable place in the history of humanity. If we seek its fundamental ideas, it will be easy to find them, on one side, in the magnificent unity of that Church whom nothing escaped; who proclaimed, in her most august mysteries as in her smallest details, the final supremacy of mind over matter; who consecrated, with wise and paternal solicitude, the law of equality amongst men; and who, by securing to the meanest serf the liberty of marriage and the inviolable sanctity of the family — by assigning him a place in her temples by the side of his masters — but, above all, by giving him free access to the highest spiritual dignities, placed an infinite difference between his condition and that of the most favored slave of antiquity. Then over against her rose the lay power — the Empire — royalty often profaned by the evil passions of those who exercised them, but restrained by a thousand bonds within the ways of charity, meeting at every turn the barriers erected by faith and the Church; not having yet learned to delight in those general legislatures which too often crush down the genius of nations to the level of a barren uniformity; charged, on the contrary, to watch over the maintenance of all the individual rights and holy customs of other days, as over the regular development of local wants and particular inclinations; finally, presiding over that grand feudal system which was wholly based on the sentiment of duty as involving right, and

which gave to obedience all the dignity of virtue and all the devotion of affection. The horrors perpetrated by John Lackland, during his long contest with the Church, the miserable decrepitude of the Byzantine Empire, clearly show what the lay power would have been if left to itself, whilst its alliance with the Church gave to the world crowned saints like St. Louis of France, and St. Ferdinand of Spain — kings whose equals have never since appeared.

So much for the political and social life of those times. The life of faith and of the soul — the interior life — in as far as we can separate it from the foregoing, presents a spectacle grander and more marvelous still, and is much more nearly approximated to the life of the saint whose virtues we have attempted to portray. By the side of those great events which change the face of empires, we shall see revolutions greater and far more lasting in the spiritual order; by the side of those illustrious warriors — those royal saints, we shall see the Church bring forth and send abroad for the salvation of souls, invincible conquerors and armies of saints drawn from every grade of Christian society.

In fact, there was a great corruption of morals creeping in amongst Christians; fostered in heresies of various kinds, it rose up with a threatening aspect on every side; piety and fervor were relaxed; the great foundations of the preceding ages, Cluny, Citeaux, Prémontrè, the Chartreux, were no longer sufficient to vivify the masses, whilst, in the schools, the very sources of Christian life were too often dried up by harsh, arid logic. The disease of Christendom required some new and sovereign remedy; its benumbed limbs required a violent shock; strong arms and stout hearts were require at the helm. This necessary and much-desired succor was speedily sent by God, who has sworn never to desert His spouse, and never will desert her.

They were, indeed, prophetic visions wherein Innocent III and Honorius III saw the basilica of Lateran, the mother and the cathedral of all Christian Churches,<sup>1</sup> about to fall, and supported either by an

---

<sup>1</sup> We read in the inscription, the sole remains of the ancient front, on the moderns portal of St. John of Lateran: “Dogmati papali datue ac simul imperiali, quod sim puncterum mater et caput ecclesiarum,” etc.

Italian friar or a poor Spanish priest. Behold him! — behold that priest descending from the Pyrenees into the south of France, overrun by heretics — going barefoot through briars and thorns to preach to them. It is the great St. Dominic de Guzman,<sup>1</sup> whom his mother saw, before his birth, under the form of a dog carrying a blazing torch in his mouth — prophetic emblem of his vigilance and burning zeal for the Church; a radiant star was shining on his brow when he was presented for baptism; he grew up in holiness and purity, having no other love than that divine Virgin whose mantle seemed to him to cover all the heavenly country; his hands exhale a perfume which inspires chastity in all who approach him; he is mild, affable, and humble towards all; he has the gift of tears in great abundance; he sells even the books of his library to relieve the poor; he would even sell himself to redeem a captive from the heretics. But, in order to save all the souls who were exposed to such imminent peril, he conceives the idea of a religious order, no longer cloistered and sedentary, but wandering all over the world seeking impiety to confound it; an order to act as *preachers* of the faith. He goes to Rome, in order to have his saving project confirmed; and, on the first night after his arrival, he has a dream, in which he sees Christ preparing to strike the guilty world; but Mary interferes, and, in order to appease her son, presents to him Dominick himself and another person unknown to him. Next day, going into a church, he sees there a man in tattered garments, whom he recognizes as the companion who had been given him by the Mother of the Redeemer. He instantly throws himself into his arms: “Thou art my brother,” said he, “and dost run the same course with me; let us work together, and no man can prevail against us.” And from that moment, the two had but one heart and one soul. That mendicant was St. Francis of Assisium, “the glorious beggar of Christ.”

He, too, had conceived the idea of re-conquering the world by humility and love, by becoming the *minor* — the least of all men. He undertakes to restore her spouse to that divine poverty, widowed since the death of Christ. At the age of twenty-five, he breaks asunder all the ties of family, of honor, of propriety, and descends from his

---

<sup>1</sup> Born in 1170; began to preach in 1200; died in 1221.

mountain of Assisium to offer to the world the most perfect example of the *folly of the Cross* which it had seen since the planting of that Cross on Calvary. But, far from repelling the world by that folly, he overcomes it. The more that sublime fool degrades himself voluntarily — to the end that, by his humility and contempt of men, he may be worthy of becoming the vessel of love — the more his greatness shines forth and penetrates afar off, — the more eagerly all men press on in his footsteps; some ambitious to strip themselves of all like him, others anxious, at least, to hear his inspired words. In vain does he go to seek martyrdom in Egypt; the East sends him back to the West, which he is to fructify, not with his blood, but with that river of love which escaped from his heart, and with those five wounds which had been impressed upon his pure body by Him who loved the world even unto death. Francis, too, embraced the whole world in his fervent love; first, all mankind, whom he loved to excess: “If I did not give,” said he, as he stripped off his only garment to cover a poor man — “If I did not give what I wear to him who was in more need of it than myself, I should be accused of robbery by the Great Almoner in Heaven.” Then all nature, animate and inanimate, — every creature, is to him as a brother or a sister, to whom he preaches the Word of their common Father, whom he would fain deliver from the oppression of man, and whose pains he would, if possible, relieve. “Why,” said he to a butcher, “why do you hang and torture my brethren, the lambs?” And to captive birds, “Ye doves, my dear little sisters, simple, innocent and pure, why did you allow yourselves to be caught thus?” “He knew,” says his biographer, a Saint, like himself, “that all creatures had the same origin as he; and he proved, by his tenderness toward them, as well as by their miraculous obedience towards him, what man, victorious over sin and restored to his natural connection with God, can do for that nature which is only degraded on his account and looks to him for its restoration.” Jesus and Mary open to him themselves all the treasures of the Church in that mean chapel of the Portiuncula, which remains to us as a precious relic of that poverty whose “desperate lover” he was, according to Bossuet,<sup>1</sup> the Pope

---

<sup>1</sup> Happy, a thousand times happy, is that humble Francis, the most ardent, the most passionate,

confirms these celestial favors on beholding the red and white roses which Francis presents to him in the midst of winter. He then ascends the heights of Alverno to receive the triumphant stigmas<sup>1</sup> which were to complete his conformity with the Savior, and to make him, in the eyes of Christian nations, the true Cross-bearer — the standard-bearer of Christ, whilst the Holy See, three centuries after, styled him the Angel of the East marked with the sign of the living God.

At sight of these two men, the world understood that it was saved — that new blood was to be infused into its veins. Innumerable disciples hastened to range themselves under their all-conquering banners. A long cry of enthusiasm and of sympathy arose, and was prolonged for ages, resounding everywhere, from the constitutions of the sovereign Pontiffs to the songs of the Poets. “When the reigning Emperor,” says Dante, “would save his army from a dangerous position, he sent these two champions to his wife’s assistance: their words, their influence, brought the people back to reason.” “These two orders,” says Sixtus IV, in 1479, after two centuries and a half of experience, “like the two first rivers of the terrestrial Paradise, have watered the soil of the universal Church by their doctrine, their virtues, and their merits, and render it every day more fruitful; they are, as it were, two seraphim, who, raised on the wings of sublime contemplation and angelic love above all earthly things, by the assiduous singing of the divine praises, by the manifestation of the immense favors conferred on man by the Supreme Artificer, do unceasingly gather into the granaries of the Holy Church abundant sheaves from the pure harvest of souls redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. They are the two trumpets whereof the Lord makes use to invite the nations to the banquet of His holy Gospel.”

Scarcely were these orders in existence, when their power and their propagation became one of the most important historical facts of the period. The Church suddenly finds herself mistress of two numerous armies, moveable and always available, ready at any moment to

---

and, if I may so speak, the most desperate lover of poverty that perhaps ever was in the Church.—Bossuet, *Panegyrique de St. François*.

<sup>1</sup> Corpore suo Christe triumphalis stigmata praeferenti.—BULL OF ALEXANDER IV, *Benigna*.

invade the world. In 1277, half a century after the death of St. Dominick, his order had already four hundred and seventeen convents in Europe. St. Francis, in his own lifetime, assembles five thousand of his monks at Assisium; and, thirty-five years after, in numbering the forces of the Seraphic Order at Narbonne, it is found that in thirty-three provinces, it already reckons eight hundred monasteries, and at least twenty thousand religious. A century later, its numbers were computed at one hundred and fifty thousand. The conversion of pagan nations is renewed: Franciscans, sent by Innocent IV and St. Louis, penetrate to Morocco, to Damascus, and even amongst the Mongols; but their chief care is to overcome the passions of paganism in the heart of Christian nations. They spread abroad over Italy, torn asunder by internal dissensions, seeking everywhere to reconcile opposite parties, to uproot errors, acting as supreme arbiters, according to the law of charity. They were seen, in 1233, traversing the whole Italian peninsula, with crosses, incense, and olive-branches, singing and preaching peace, reproaching cities, princes, and even the chiefs of the Church, with their faults and their enmities. The nations submit, at least for a time, to that sublime mediation; the nobles and the people of Plaisance are reconciled at the bidding of a Franciscan; Pisa and Visconti, at that of a Dominican; and on the plain of Verona two hundred thousand souls are seen crowding around the blessed John of Vicenza, a preaching friar sent by the Pope to quiet the disturbance in Tuscany, in Romagna, and in the Trevisan March. On this solemn occasion he takes for his text the words, "My peace I leave you; my peace I give unto you," and, before he ends, an outburst of tears and sobs shows that every heart is touched, and the chiefs of the rival houses of Este and Romano, embracing each other, give the signal for a general reconciliation. It is true that these happy results did not last long; but the evil was, at least, vigorously opposed — the sap of Christianity was revived in the souls of men — a gigantic struggle was everywhere and always carried on in the name of equity against the dead letter of the law — in the name of charity against the perverse inclinations of man — in the name of grace and faith against the dryness and the paucity of scientific reasoning. Nothing escaped



this new influence; it moved the scattered inhabitants of the rural districts; it shared the sway of the universities; it even affected the king on his throne. Joinville tells us how, at the first place where he landed on his return from the Crusade, St. Louis was welcomed by a Franciscan, who told him that “never was kingdom lost, save for want of justice, and that he must be careful to administer justice promptly and willingly to his people; and that everyone was mindful of the king.” It is well known how he sought to steal away from his dearly beloved wife, his friends, and counselors, to renounce the crown which he so gloriously wore, and go himself to beg his bread like St. Francis. But he was obliged to content himself with becoming a penitent of the third order; for in her all-conquering army they had a suitable place for everyone. Together with these battalions of monks, numerous monasteries were opened for virgins who aspired to the honor of immolating themselves for Christ, and the vast affiliations known under the name of *third orders* offered a place for princes, warriors, married people, fathers of families, in a word, to all the faithful of both sexes who wished to associate themselves, at least indirectly, in the great work of regenerating Christendom.

Tradition relates that the two glorious patriarchs of that regeneration had at one time an idea of uniting their efforts and their orders, apparently so much alike; but the celestial inspiration on which they acted revealed to them that there was room for two different powers — for two kinds of war against the invasion of evil. They seem to have divided their sublime mission, and also the moral world, in order to bring back charity and knowledge to the bosom of the Church, and to reconcile those two great rivals which cannot exist one without the other. This reconciliation was effected by them as it had never been before. Whilst the love that consumed and absorbed the soul of St. Francis has ever gained for him in the Church the name of the Seraph of Assisium, it would not be rash, perhaps, with Dante, to attribute to St. Dominick the power and the light of the Cherubim. Their children showed themselves faithful to this distinct tendency, which ended in the same eternal unity, and with some few notable exceptions, it may be said that, dating from that period of the

Church's history, the part which has especially fallen to the Seraphic Order was the distilling and diffusion of the treasures of love, the mysterious joys of sacrifice; whilst that of the Preachers was, as their name implies, to propagate, defend, and establish the truth. Neither one nor the other failed in its mission; and both in their adolescence, and in the course of the half century of which we speak, gave to the Church, perhaps, more Saints and Doctors than she had ever possessed in so short an interval, from the first ages of her existence. Following closely in the footsteps of St. Dominick — that holy champion of the faith — that coadjutor of the Eternal Laborer — comes all at once the Brother Jordan, worthy of being his first successor, and general of his order; then St. Peter of Verona, honored with the title of the martyr as if by excellence, and who, assassinated by the heretics, wrote on the ground, with the blood from his wounds, the first words of the Creed whose truth he maintained at the expense of his life; then St. Hyacinth, and Ceslas his brother, those young Polish nobles, who, meeting St. Dominick in Rome, were induced to renounce all worldly greatness, in order to carry that new light to their own country, whence it was to spread with lightning rapidity through Lithuania, Muscovy, and Prussia; then, St. Raymond de Peñafort, chosen by Gregory IX to assist in framing the legislation of the Church, the author of the *Decrees*, and successor of St. Dominick; finally, that Theobald Visconti, who was to preside over the affairs of the Church under the name of Gregory X, before he became eternally entitled to its prayers, as Beatified in Heaven. Abreast of these men whose sanctity the Church has consecrated, a host of others were distinguished for their talents and learning. Albert the Great, that colossus of learning, the propagator of Aristotle and the master of St. Thomas; Vincent de Beauvais, author of the great encyclopedia of the middle ages, Cardinal Hugues de Saint-Omer, who made the first concordance of the Scriptures; Cardinal Henri de Suzon, author of *La Somme Dorée*; and above all, in sanctity as in knowledge, the great St. Thomas d'Aquinas, the *Angelic Doctor*, the gigantic thinker, in whom there seems to be summed up all the science of the ages of faith, and whose magnificent synthesis has never since been equaled; who, with

all his rapt abstraction, is still an admirable poet, and merits to be chosen as the intimate friend and counselor of St. Louis in the most intricate affairs of his kingdom. "Thou hast written well of me," said Christ to him one day; "what reward dost thou ask?" "Yourself," replied the Saint. That word comprises his whole life and times.

The army of St. Francis marched to battle under chiefs no less glorious than those of the Dominicans; during his own lifetime, twelve of his first disciples went to gather the palms of martyrdom amongst the heathen. B. Bernard, B. Egidius, and B. Guy of Cortona, all of that company of Saints who were companions and disciples of the holy founder, survived him, and preserved the inviolable deposit of that spirit of love and humility wherewith he had been transported. Scarcely had the Seraph taken his place before the throne of God, when his place in the veneration of the world is occupied by him whom all proclaim as his first-born — St. Anthony of Padua, celebrated, like his spiritual father, for that control over nature which won for him the name of *Thaumaturgus*; he who was named by Gregory IX the *Ark of the Two Covenants*; who had the gift of tongues, like the Apostles; who, after having edified France and Sicily, spends his last years in preaching peace and union to the Lombard cities, obtains from the Paduans the privilege of the cession of funds for unhappy debtors, ventures also to upbraid the ferocious Eccelin with his tyranny, makes the ruthless oppressor tremble, as he himself confesses, and dies at thirty-six, in the same year with St Elizabeth. Somewhat later, Roger Bacon<sup>1</sup> reinstates and sanctifies the study of nature, classifies all the sciences, and foresees, if he does not even effect, the greatest discoveries of modern times. Duns Scotus disputes with St Thomas the empire of the schools; and that great genius finds a rival and a friend in St. Bonaventure, the *Seraphic Doctor*, who being asked by his illustrious rival, the *Angelic Doctor*, from what books he derived his amazing knowledge, pointed in

---

<sup>1</sup> Born in 1294. To him is attributed the discovery of gunpowder, the telescope, etc. It is known that he presented to Clement IV that plan of reforming the calendar which was afterwards adopted by Gregory XIII.

silence to his crucifix, and who was found washing the dishes in his convent when the Cardinal's hat was brought him.

But it is chiefly through women that the order of St. Francis sheds unequalled splendor on that age. That sex, emancipated by Christianity, and rising in the esteem of Christian nations, according as the devotion to the Blessed Virgin increased, could not fail to take an active part in the new developments of the power to which it owed its freedom. Thus, St. Dominick had introduced a fruitful reform into the rule of the spouses of Christ, and opened a new career to their virtues. But it was not until long after, that in Margaret of Hungary, Agnes of Monte-Pulciano, and Catherine of Sienna, this branch of the Dominican tree was to bring forth those prodigies of sanctity which have since been so numerous. Francis, more fortunate in this regard, finds at the outset a sister, an ally worthy of him. Whilst he, a merchant's son, commenced his work with some other humble citizens of Assisium, in that same city, Clara Sciffi, the daughter of a powerful Count, felt herself inspired with a similar zeal. She is only eighteen years of age, when, on a Palm-Sunday, whilst the palms borne by others are withered and faded, hers suddenly blooms anew. It is for her a precept and a warning from on high. That very night, she flies from her father's house, penetrates to the *Porziuncula*, kneels at the feet of St. Francis, receives from his hands the cord and the coarse woolen habit, and devotes herself like him to evangelical poverty. In vain do her parents persecute her; she is joined by her sister and many other virgins, who vie with her in their austerities and privations. In vain do the Sovereign Pontiffs entreat her to moderate her zeal, to accept some fixed rule, since her strict seclusion forbade her to go like the Friars Minors, to solicit charity from the faithful and reduced her to depend on chance assistance. She obstinately resists, and Innocent IV finally grants her *the privilege of perpetual poverty*, the only one, he said, that none had ever asked of him. "But He," he added, "who feeds the birds of the air, who clothes the Earth with flowers and verdure, can well feed and clothe you till the day when He shall give Himself for your eternal aliment — when He will embrace you with His victorious arm in the fullness of His glory and beatitude." Three

Popes and a multitude of other saintly and noble personages came to seek light and consolation from that humble virgin. In a few years she sees a whole army of pious women, with queens and princesses at their head, rising and encamping in Europe, under the rule of Francis of Assisium, living under her direction and called from her *Poor Clares*. But in the midst of this spiritual empire, her modesty is so great that she is never seen to raise her eyes but once, viz., when she asked the Pope's blessing. The Saracens come to besiege her monastery; sick and bed-ridden she arises, takes the ostensory in her hand, walks forth to meet them, and they immediately take to flight. After fourteen years of a holy union with St. Francis, she loses him; then, having long endured the most grievous infirmity, she dies after having dictated a most sublime testament; and the Sovereign Pontiff who had witnessed her death, proposes her at once to the veneration of the faithful, proclaiming her the resplendent light of the temple of God, the princess of poverty, and the duchess of humility.

As St. Francis found a friend and sister in St. Clare, so did St. Anthony of Padua in the blessed Helena Ensimelli; but, by a marvelous effect of divine grace, it is especially amongst the daughters of kings that the mendicant order finds its most eminent saints; whether they enter upon the strict observance of the *Poor Clares*, or, restrained in the bonds of marriage, can only adopt the rule of the third order. The first in date and in renown is that Elizabeth of Hungary, whose life we have written. It was not in vain, as we shall see, that Pope Gregory IX obliged St. Francis to send her his poor cloak; like Eliseus of old receiving that of Elias, she was to find therein the fortitude to become his heiress. Inflamed by her example, her cousin-german, Agnes of Bohemia, refuses the hand of the Emperor of the Romans, and that of the king of England, and writes to St. Clare, that she, too, has taken vows of absolute poverty. Saint Clare replies in an admirable letter, which has been preserved, and at the same time sends to her royal neophyte a cord to encircle her waist, an earthen bowl, and a crucifix. Like her, Isabella of France, sister of St. Louis, refuses to become the wife of the Emperor Conrad IV, to become a *Poor Clare*, and die a Saint like her brother. Marguerite, the

widow of that holy king, the two daughters of St. Ferdinand of Castile, and Helena, sister of the king of Portugal, follow that example. But, as if Providence would bless the tender bond which united our Elizabeth to St. Francis and St. Clare, whom she had taken for models, it is chiefly her family which offers to the Seraphic Order as it were a nursery of Saints. After her cousin Agnes, it is her sister-in-law, the blessed Salome, queen of Galicia; then her niece, St. Cunegunda, Duchess of Poland; and whilst another of her nieces, the blessed Margaret of Hungary, preferred the order of St. Dominick in which she dies at the age of twenty-eight, the grand-daughter of her sister, named after her Elizabeth, having become Queen of Portugal, embraces, like her, the third order of St. Francis, and like her merits the eternal veneration of the faithful.

In view of these Franciscans of royal birth, we must not lose sight of those whom the grace of God drew forth from the lowest ranks of the people. Such was St. Margaret of Cortona, who, from a prostitute, became the model of penitents; and especially, St. Rose of Viterbo, the illustrious and poetic heroine of the faith, who, though scarcely ten years old, when the fugitive Pope had not in Italy a spot where he might remain, went down to the public square of her native city, to preach the rights of the Holy See against the imperial power which she succeeded in shaking, merited to be exiled at fifteen, by order of Frederick II, and returned in triumph with the Church, to die at seventeen, the admiration of all Italy, where her name is still popular.

Those two great orders, which peopled Heaven by stirring up the Earth, met, notwithstanding the diversity of their characters and modes of action, in one common object — the love and veneration of Mary. It was impossible that the influence of this sublime belief in the Virgin-Mother, which had been steadily and rapidly increasing, since the proclamation of her divine maternity at the Council of Ephesus, should not be comprised in the immense spiritual movement of the thirteenth century; hence, it may be said that if, in the preceding century, St. Bernard had given the same impulse to the devotion of the people for the Blessed Virgin, that he had impressed on every noble instinct of Christianity, it was the two great mendicant orders who

raised that devotion to a position at once firm and exalted. Saint Dominick, by the establishment of the Rosary, and the Franciscans, by preaching the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, reared, as it were, two majestic columns, the one of practice, the other of doctrine, from the summit of which the gracious Queen of Angels presided over Catholic piety and Catholic science. Saint Bonaventure, the great and learned theologian, becomes a poet to sing her praise, and twice paraphrases the entire Psalter in her honor.<sup>1</sup> All the works and all the institutions of that period, and especially all the inspirations of art as they have been preserved to us in her great cathedrals and in the lays of her poets, manifest an immense development, in the heart of Christian people, of tenderness and veneration for Mary.<sup>2</sup>

In the very bosom of the Church, and even outside the two families of St. Dominick and St. Francis, the devotion to the Blessed Virgin brought forth effects as precious for the salvation of souls, as venerable for their duration. Three new orders were consecrated to her in their very origin, and placed under shelter of her sacred name. That of Mount Carmel,<sup>3</sup> emanating from the Holy Land, as the best production of that soil so fruitful in prodigies, gave, by the introduction of the Scapular, a sort of new standard to the followers of Mary. Seven merchants of Florence founded at the same time<sup>4</sup> that order whose very name denotes the pride they experienced, in that age of chivalric devotion, in bending beneath the sweet yoke of the Queen of Heaven; the order of the *Servites* or *Serfs* of Mary, which immediately gave to the Church St. Philip Benizzi, author of the touching devotion of the Seven Dolors of the Virgin. At length that

---

<sup>1</sup> Besides his *Speculum B. V. M.*, which is, perhaps, the most popular work of the middle ages, this Saint has written the *Psalterium Majus B. V. M.*, which is composed of one hundred and fifty psalms, analagous to those of David, and applied to the Blessed Virgin; then the *Psalterium Minus*, which consists of one hundred and fifty four-line stanzas; finally the *Laus B. V. M.*, and a paraphrase on the *Salva*, also in verse.

<sup>2</sup> It was in 1220 that the Margrave Henry of Moravia, and his wife Agnes, founded the first chapel at Mariazell, in Styria, even in our days a famous and popular pilgrimage in Germany. It was only in 1240 that the *Ave Maria* came into general use.

<sup>3</sup> He received his first rule from the patriarch Albert, in 1209, was confirmed in 1226, became a mendicant in 1247. The scapular was given by the Blessed Virgin to St. Simon Stock, who died about 1200.

<sup>4</sup> In 1289. The order was confirmed at the council of Lyon, in 1274.

cherished name was attached to an institution worthy of her maternal heart — the Order of Our Lady of Mercy,<sup>1</sup> intended for the ransom of Christian captives from the infidels. She had herself appeared, it was said, on the same night, to King James of Aragon, St. Raymond de Peñafort, and St. Peter Nolasquez, beseeching them to interest themselves for her sake in the fate of their captive brethren. All three obeyed; and Peter became the chief of the new order, which made a rapid progress, and soon after produced that St. Raymond Nonnat, who sold himself to redeem a slave, and who was gagged by the infidels, so invincible did they find his words.

This same object of mercy, with a desire for the propagation of the faith, had, in the preceding century, under the auspices of Innocent III, given rise to the order of the Trinitarians, by the united efforts of two Saints, a part of whose life belongs to the thirteenth century, St. John of Matha, and St. Felix of Valois, who was also the special servant of Mary. For six hundred years, and even down to our own times, these two orders have continued their peaceful but perilous crusade.

Here we have already no less than five new orders, all instituted within the first thirty years of that century; nor is this all; the desire to unite all energies for good, which had its principle in that love of God and the neighbor which every thing then tended to develop, was not yet satisfied; other *religions*, as they were thenceforward called, were daily formed in the bosom of the mother-religion. *Les Humiliés* received their definitive rule from Innocent III, in 1201; the Augustinians (in 1256) under Alexander IV, became the fourth branch of that great family of Mendicants, in which the Carmelites had already taken their place, by the side of the Friars Minors and Preachers. The Celestines, founded by Peter de Mouron, who was afterwards Pope and canonized under that same name of Celestine, was confirmed by Urban IV (in 1263). In a narrower and more local sphere, St. Eugene of Strigonia established the Hermits of St. Paul, in Hungary (in 1215); and three pious professors from the University of Paris retired to a sequestered valley in the diocese of Langres, to found there, with thirty-seven of their pupils, the new order of the *Val*

---

<sup>1</sup> Commenced in 1223, approved of in 1235.



*des Ecoliers* (the Vale of Scholars) (in 1218.) Besides all these numerous and divers careers offered to the zeal and devotion of those who wished to consecrate themselves to God; besides the great military orders of the East and of Spain, then in the height of their splendor, those Christians whom either duty or inclination retained in common and profane life, could not submit to lose their share in that life of prayer and sacrifice which constantly excited their envy and their admiration. They organized themselves, as much as possible, under an analogous form. This accounts for the appearance of the *Fratri gaudenti* or *Knights* of the Virgin (in 1233), who, without renouncing the world, applied themselves to restore peace and concord in Italy, in honor of the Virgin; that of the Beguins, still so numerous in Flanders, and who have taken St. Elizabeth for their patroness; finally, the immense multitude of the third orders of St. Dominick and St. Francis, composed of married persons and those who lived in the world, yet wished to draw near to God. It was the monastic life introduced into the family and society.

Then, as if this vast wealth of sanctity belonging to the new orders were not enough for that glorious time, illustrious Saints sprang forth simultaneously from the ancient orders, the Episcopacy, and all ranks of the faithful. We have already named St. Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury, and St Hedwige, of Poland, who became a Cistercian. By their side, in the order of Citeaux, it is proper to place St. Guillaume, Archbishop of Bourges, another famous defender of ecclesiastical freedom, and a preacher of the Crusade; St. Thibaut de Montmorency (1247); Etienne de Chatillon (1208) Bishop of Die, and Philippe Berruyer (1266), Archbishop of Bourges, both beatified; another St. Guillaume, abbot of the Paraclete in Denmark, whither he had brought the piety and learning of the canons of St. Genevieve of Paris, whence he had gone forth (died in 1209); in the order of St. Benedict, St. Sylvester d'Osimo and St. William of Monte-Virgine, authors of the reforms which have kept their names; in the order of Prémontré, the B. Hermann Joseph (1235), so famous for his ardent devotion to the Mother of God, and the striking graces which he received from her; finally, amongst the Augustinians, St. Nicholas of Tolentino (born in

1239), who, after a holy life of seventy years, heard every night the hymns of the celestial choirs, and was so transported by them that he could no longer restrain his impatience to die. Amongst the holy women, was the Blessed Mafalda, daughter of the King of Portugal; the B. Marie d'Oignes (1213), and that sweet St. Humility (born in 1210), abbess of Valombreuse, whose very name describes her whole life. Amongst the Virgins, St. Verdiana, the austere recluse of Florence, who extended even to serpents her invincible charity (died in 1222); St. Zita, who lived and died a humble servant in Lucca, and who was chosen as the patroness of that powerful republic; then in Germany, St. Gertrude (born in 1222), and her sister St. Mecthilda, who held in the thirteenth century the same place that St. Hildegarde did in the twelfth and St. Catherine of Siena in the fourteenth, amongst those virgins to whom the Lord has revealed the inner light of His holy law.

Lastly, we must not forget, amongst the wonders of Elizabeth's time, that work which every succeeding age has pronounced unequalled, *The Imitation of Christ*, whose author has never been clearly ascertained, but its presumed author, John Gersen, abbot of Verceil, lived at that time, and lived in the most perfect conformity with the spirit of that divine book. It is the most complete and sublime formula of ardent piety towards Christ, written at a period which had already brought forth the Rosary and the Scapular in honor of Mary, and which closed magnificently with the institution of the feast of the Holy Sacrament, which was first proposed by a poor Cistecian nun (St. Juliana, of Liège), confirmed by the miracle of Bolsena,<sup>1</sup> and sung by St. Thomas of Aquinas.<sup>2</sup>

We have no apprehensions of being censured for dwelling too long on this enumeration of the Saints and religious institutions of a period which it is our wish fully to represent; any man who has made a careful study of the middle ages, must know perfectly well that those are the true pivots on which society then turned; that the creation of a

---

<sup>1</sup> The festival was instituted in 1264, by Urban IV, in memory of this miracle.

<sup>2</sup> He is known to have drawn up the Office of the Mass of the Holy Sacrament and is recognized as author of the prose *Lauda Sion* and the incomparable hymn *Adoro te supplex*.

new order was then universally considered as of greater importance than the formation of a new kingdom or the promulgation of a new code; that Saints were then the true heroes, and that they engrossed nearly all the popularity of the time. It is only when one has appreciated the part which prayer and miracles played in public opinion, and studied and comprehended the career of a St. Francis and a St. Dominick, that he can account for the presence and the action of an Innocent III and a St. Louis.

But it was not only the political world that was controlled by Catholic faith and Catholic thought: in its majestic unity, it embraced all the human mind, and associated or employed it in all its developments. Hence its power and its glory are profoundly impressed on all the productions of art and poetry of that period, whilst, far from restraining, it sanctified and consecrated the progress of science. Wherefore we find that this thirteenth century, so prolific for the faith, was not more barren for science. We have already mentioned Roger Bacon and Vincent de Beauvais; their names are synonymous with the study of nature, purified and ennobled by religion, as also the introduction of the spirit of classification and generalization in directing the intellectual wealth of men. We have named St. Thomas and his contemporaries in the Mendicant Orders; his name recalls the most glorious era of theology — the first of sciences. The Angelic Doctor and the Seraphic Doctor criticized at will the famous Peter Lombard, the *Master of Sentences*, who had so long controlled the schools; nor must we forget either Alian de Lille, the *Universal Doctor*, who was still living in the first years of that century, nor Guillaume Durand, who illustrated its close, and gave the most complete Liturgical code in his *Rationale*. Most of these great men embraced at once theology, philosophy and law, and their names belong equally to those three sciences. Raymond Lulle, entitled by his holy life to the distinction of *Blessed*, belongs more especially to philosophy. The translation of the works of Aristotle, undertaken through the influence of Frederick II, and which attained such rapid popularity, opened before the latter science new and untrodden fields, which were only opening on the world at the period of which we

write. Legislation was never in a more prosperous condition. On one side, the Popes, supreme organs both of faith and right, developed the canon law as became that magnificent bulwark of Christian civilization, presided as judges with exemplary assiduity,<sup>1</sup> published immense collections, and founded numerous schools. On the other hand, were seen springing up most of the national codes of Europe, the great mirrors of Swabia and Saxony, the first laws published in German by Frederic II at the diet of Mayence, the code given by him to Sicily; in France, the establishments of St. Louis, together with the *Common Law* of Peter des Fontaines, and that of Beauvoisis by Philip de Beaumanoir; finally, the French version of the *Sessions of Jerusalem*, wherein is formed the most complete summary of Christian and chivalric law. All these precious monuments of the ancient Christian organization of the world, have come down to us even in the vernacular tongues, and are still less distinguished by that mark, than by their generous and pious spirit, from that fatal Roman law, whose progress was soon to change all the principles of Catholic society. Hand in hand with these intellectual sciences, medicine flourished in its capitals; Montpellier and Salerno, still influenced by, and in alliance with, the Church: and Pope John XXI, before he ascended the pontifical throne, found leisure to compose the *Treasure of the Poor* — or *Manual of the Art of Healing*. The introduction of algebra and of Arabic figures,<sup>2</sup> the invention, or at least the general adoption of the Mariner's Compass, also signalize that period as one of the most important in the history of man.

But it is still more in art that the creative genius of that age is manifested: for it was the period which saw the development of that sweet and majestic power of Christian arts whose splendor was only to pale under the Medici, at the time of what is called the *Revival*, being nothing else than the revival of pagan idolatry in arts and

---

<sup>1</sup> Innocent III sat in judgment three times a week; Gregory IX, Innocent IV, and Boniface VIII were famous lawyers. We have already spoken of St. Raymond de Peñafort and Cardinal Henry Suzon, placed by Dante in his *Paradiso*.

<sup>2</sup> It took place in Italy, under Frederick II, by Leonard Tibonacci, and in France, under St. Louis.

letters.<sup>1</sup> It is this thirteenth century that commences with Cimabue and the Cathedral of Cologne, that long series of splendor which ends but with Raphael and the Duomo of Milan. Architecture, the first of arts in duration, popularity, and religious sanction, was also to be the first subjected to the new influence developed among Christian nations, the first to illustrate their great and holy thoughts. It seems that that immense movement of souls represented by St. Dominick, St. Francis, and St. Louis, could have no other expression than those gigantic cathedrals, which appear as though they would bear to Heaven, on the summit of their spires, the universal homage of the love and the victorious faith of Christians. The vast basilica of the preceding ages seemed to them too bare, too heavy, too empty, for the new emotions of their piety, for the renovated fervor of their faith. That vivid flame of faith required the means of transforming itself into stone, and thus bequeathing itself to posterity. Pontiffs and artists sought some new combination which might lead and adapt itself to all the new treasures of the Catholic spirit; they found it in following those columns which arise, opposite each other in the Christian basilica, like prayers which, meeting before God, bend and embrace like sisters: in that embrace they found the ogee. By its appearance, which only became general in the thirteenth century, all is modified, not in the inner and mysterious meaning of religious edifices, but in their exterior form. Instead of extending over the ground like vast roofs destined for the shelter of the faithful, all begins then to dart upwards towards the Most High. The horizontal line gradually disappears, in the prevalent idea of elevation, the heavenward tendency of the age. Dating from this moment, no more crypts, no more subterraneous churches, the genius of Christianity having nothing more to fear, will fully manifest itself before the world. "God wills no longer," says the *Titarel*, the greatest poem of the time, and furnishing the most perfect theory of Christian architecture — "God wills no longer that His chosen people should assemble in a timid and disgraceful manner in holes and caverns." As

---

<sup>1</sup> Most people we acquainted with the exclamation of Pope Alexander VI, on arriving in Rome, after the death of Leo X, at sight of all the ancient statues which had been disinterred: *Proh! idola barbarorum!* It was certainly dictated as much by a just sentiment of Christian art as by the pious emotion of the head of the Catholic Church.

they chose to shed their blood for God in the Crusades, that *chosen people* will now give their toil, their imagination, their poesy, to raise up suitable palaces for the same God. Innumerable beauties everywhere abound in that sprouting of the Earth fructified by Catholicity, and which seems reproduced in every church by the marvelous foliage of the capitals, windows and small steeples. It would lead us much too far were we to enter upon the detail of the grandeur and poetry given to the world by that architectural transformation of the thirteenth century. We shall confine ourselves to the demonstration of the fact that the first and most complete production — at least in Germany — of the *Gothic* or *ogival* style of architecture was the church built over the tomb of *the dear St. Elizabeth*,<sup>1</sup> with the offerings of the numberless pilgrims who crowded thither. We must also give a passing glance at some of the immortal cathedrals which rose at the same time in every part of Christian Europe, and which, if not all finished then, had their plan drawn by the hand of men of genius, who disdained to leave us their name; they loved God and their brethren too much to love glory. There was in Germany, besides Marbourg, Cologne (1246) the model church, where the trust of faithful generations has been betrayed by their posterity, but which, suspended in its glory, is, as it were, a challenge to modern impotence; Cologne, which forms with Strasburg and Friburg, the magnificent Gothic trilogy of the Rhine. In France, Chartres, dedicated in 1260, after a century and a half of patient perseverance; Rheims (1232,) the Cathedral of the monarchy; Auxerre (1215); Amiens (1228); Beauvais (1250), La Sainte Chapelle and St. Denis; the front of Notre Dame (1223); in Belgium, St. Gudule of Brussels (1226), and the church of the Downs (*Dunes*), built by four hundred monks in fifty years (1214-1262); in England, Salisbury, the finest of all (1220); half of York Minster, (1221-1260); the choir of that of Ely (1235); the nave of Durham (1212), and the national abbey of Westminster (1247); in Spain, Burgos and Toledo, founded by St. Ferdinand (1228); and almost all these colossal works undertaken and

---

<sup>1</sup> M. Moller, a famous German architect of our own time, has published a folio volume exclusively on this church. (See Ch. XXI of our history.)

accomplished by one single city or chapter, whilst the most powerful kingdoms of our time would be unable, with all their fiscality, to achieve even one such glorious and consoling victory of humanity and faith over incredulous pride: a victory which even then astonished simple souls, and drew from a monk that cry of noble surprise — “How is it that in hearts so humble there is so proud a genius?”

Christian sculpture could not but share in the progress of architecture, and it then commenced to bear its finest fruits. Those goodly rows of Saints and Angels which adorn the *façades* of the cathedrals, then came forth from stone. Then was introduced the use of those tombs whereon we see — reclining in the calm sleep of the just — the husband and wife together, their hands sometimes joined in death as they had been in life — where the mother still lay in the midst of her children; these statues so grave, so pious, so touching, impressed with all the serenity of Christian death; the head supported by little angels, who seem to have received the latest sigh; the legs crossed, if the warrior had been to the Crusades. The relics of Saints brought in such numbers from conquered Byzantium, or incessantly furnished by the beatification of contemporary virtue, gave perpetual employment for the Catholic sculptor and goldsmith. The gorgeously-decorated shrine of St. Elizabeth is a monument of the fecundity of those arts, then inspired by fervent piety. The shrine of St. Genevieve won for its author, Ralph the goldsmith, the first letters of nobility given in France; and thus it was that, in Christian society, art prevailed, before riches, over the inequality of birth.

With regard to painting, although it was only in its infancy, it already gave tokens of its future glory. The large windows, which just then came into general use, opened a new field for its operations by shedding on all the ceremonies of religion a new and mysterious light. The surprising *Mass-book* miniatures of St. Louis and of the *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin*, by Gauthier de Coinsy, which are seen in the royal Library, show what Christian inspiration could already produce. In Germany began already to dawn that school of the Lower Rhine, so pure, so mystical, which was, in a peculiar manner, to unite the charm and purity of expression with the splendor of coloring. The popularity

of this rising art was already so great, that the ideal of beauty was no longer sought in fallen nature, but in those deep and mysterious types the secret of which had been found by humble artists in their pious meditations.<sup>1</sup>

Italy we have not yet named, because she merits a separate place in this rapid enumeration. In fact, that eternal inheritance of beauty preceded and surpassed all the rest of the world in the culture of Christian art; Pisa and Siena, even now so lovely in their sadness and desertion, served as the cradle of that art, and prepared the way for Florence, which was to become its first capital. Though adorned within the previous century by many admirable buildings, Pisa was preparing the exquisite gem of Santa-Maria della Spina (1230), and also the Campo-Santo,<sup>2</sup> the distinctive monument of the faith, the glory and the genius of a Christian city; Siena would build a new cathedral (1225) which would have surpassed all others if it could have been completed. In these two cities, Nicholas Pisan<sup>3</sup> and his illustrious family founded that sculpture so lively and so pure which gave heart and soul to stone, and was only to end with the pulpit of Santa-Croce in Florence. Giunta of Pisa and Guido of Siena commenced, at the same time, the grave and inspired school of painting which was so soon to wax great under Cimabue and Giotto, till it reached the heavens with the blessed monk of Fiesola. Florence hailed a work of Cimabue as a triumph, and imagined that an angel had come from Heaven to paint that truly angelic head of Mary, in the Annunciation, which is still venerated there.<sup>4</sup> Orvieto beheld a cathedral arise worthy of figuring among those of the North (1206-1214). Naples had, under Frederick II, her first painter and her first sculptor.<sup>5</sup> Finally, Assisium erected, in her triple and pyramidal

---

<sup>1</sup> Wolfram d'Eschenbach, one of the most celebrated poets of Germany at that period (1220), in order to give an idea of the beauty of one of his heroes, says that the painters of Cologne or of Maastricht could not have made him fairer.—Passavani, *Kunstreise*, p. 403.

<sup>2</sup> The plan was conceived in 1200, by the Archbishop Ubaldo, but was not put into execution till 1278.

<sup>3</sup> Flourished from 1207 till 1230; his masterpieces are the pulpit of the baptistery of Pisa, that of the dome of Siena, and the tomb of St. Dominick in Bologna.

<sup>4</sup> In the Church of the *Servites*; it was painted, according to the Inscription, in 1252.

<sup>5</sup> Tommaso de Stefani and Nicolas Massuccio.



Church, over the tomb of St. Francis, the sanctuary of the arts and of fervent faith. More than one Franciscan was already distinguished in painting; but the influence of St. Francis over lay-artists was immense. They seemed to have found the secret of all their inspiration in his prodigious development of the element of love; his life and that of St. Clare were henceforward chosen for subjects as well as the life of Christ and His Mother; and all the celebrated painters of that and the succeeding age hastened to offer a tribute to his memory by adorning with their paintings the basilica of Assisium. In that neighborhood was also to spring up the mystic school of the Umbria, which, in Perugino and Raphael (before his fall), attained the highest perfection of Christian art. One would have said that, in his sweet and marvelous justice, God would confer the crown of art, the fairest ornament of the world, on that place whence he had received the most fervent prayers and the noblest sacrifices.<sup>1</sup>

If art were already so rich at the time of which we speak, and responded so well to the movement of Christian souls, what shall we not say of poetry, its sister? Never, certainly, has she played a part so popular and universal as she then did. Europe seemed then one vast manufactory of poetry, sending out every day some finished work, some new cycle. It is that, setting aside the abundance of inspirations, the nations began to wield an instrument which was to lend an immense force to the development of their imagination. In fact, this first half of the thirteenth century, which we have already seen so productive, was also the period of the growth and expansion of all the living tongues of Europe, when they began all at once to produce those monuments which have come down to us. Translations of the Bible, codes of laws, framed for the first time in modern idioms, prove their growing importance. Each nation found thus at its disposal a sphere of activity all fresh for its thought, wherein the national genius might redeem itself at will. Prose was formed for history, and there were soon seen chronicles made for the people, and often by

---

<sup>1</sup> All that we bring forward on painting and general art, and especially on the influence of St. Francis, is established and eloquently developed in M. Rio's book, entitled, *De la peinture Chrétienne en Italie* (Christian painting in Italy). That work has already effected a salutary revolution in the study and appreciation of art both in France and Italy.

themselves, taking their place beside those Latin chronicles, so long despised, and yet containing so much eloquence, so many beauties quite unknown to classic Latin.<sup>1</sup> Yet still poetry long maintained the supremacy arising from its right of primogeniture. It was then seen to assume, in almost every country of Europe, those forms which Pagan or modern civilization attribute to themselves. The Epic, the Ode, the Elegy, the Satire, — nay, the Drama itself, were all as familiar to the poets of that age as to those of the time of Augustus and of Louis XIV. And when their works are read with the sympathy arising from a religious faith identical with theirs, with an impartial estimate of a society wherein soul prevails so far over matter, with a very natural indifference for the rules of modern versification, we ask ourselves what then has been invented by the writers of succeeding ages? We seek to ascertain what thought and imagination have gained in exchange for the pure treasures they have lost. For, be it known, that every subject worthy of literary attention was sung by those unknown poets, and by them brought under the notice of their cotemporaries; God and Heaven, nature, love, glory, country, great men — nothing escaped them. There is not a recess of the soul which they did not disclose, not a vein of feeling which they did not explore, not a fiber of the human heart which they did not stir, not a chord of that immortal lyre from which they drew not forth delicious harmony.

To begin with France; not only had its language, formed by the bards of the preceding century, and perhaps by the sermons of St. Bernard, become a national treasure, but it gained under St. Louis that European ascendancy which it has never since lost. Whilst Dante's master, Brunetto Latini, wrote his *Tesoro*, a species of encyclopedia, in French, because it was, according to him, the most common language of the West, St. Francis sung hymns in French along the

---

<sup>1</sup> We could cite no better example than the life of St. Elizabeth by Theodoric of Thuringia; the frequent quotations which we shall make from it in the course of our narrative will give the reader some idea of what it is. Amongst the principal Latin histories of that time we must cite Saxo Grammaticus, for the Scandinavian kingdoms, Father Vincent Kadlubek, for Poland, and Cardinal Jacques de Vitry, for the Crusades.

streets.<sup>1</sup> French prose, which was to be the weapon of St. Bernard and of Bossuet, opened with Villehardouin and Joinville the series of those great models whom no nation has ever surpassed; but in France, as in all other countries, poesy was then much more prolific and more highly relished. We shall say nothing of the Provençal literature of the Troubadours, although it has withstood the test of modern criticism, and although it was still in all its splendor in the thirteenth century. We pass it over because we think it contains no Catholic element — because it rarely, if ever, soars higher than the worship of material beauty, and represents, with some exceptions, the materialistic and immoral tendency of the southern heresies of those times. In the north of France, on the contrary, together with some fables and certain metrical works which approached too near the licentious character of the Troubadours, the national and Catholic epic appeared in all its luster. The two great cycles wherein is concentrated the highest poetry of the Catholic ages — that of the Carolingian epics, and that of the Round Table and St. Graal, initiated in the preceding century by Chrestien of Troyes, with those *Romans* (Romances) whose popularity was immense. The *Roman de Ronçevaux*, as we now possess it, those of *Gerard de Nevers*, of *Partenopex de Blois*, of *Bertha with the long foot*, of *Renard de Montauban*, of the *four sons of Aymeri*, those transfigurations of French traditions are all of that period; as also those of *Renart* and *la Rose*, which have longer maintained a certain repute. More than two hundred poets, whose works have come down to us, flourished in that age:<sup>2</sup> one day, perhaps Catholics will take it into their heads to go seek in their works some of the most charming productions of the Christian muse, instead of believing, on the word of the sycophant Boileau, that poetry only came into France with Malherbe. We must also name amongst these poets Thibault, King of Navarre, who sang the Crusade and the Blessed Virgin with such pure enthusiasm, who won the praises of Dante and, when dying, left his heart to the poor Clares whom he had

<sup>1</sup> It is even said that his name of Francis (François) was given him, instead of his father's name, because of his great command of the French language.

<sup>2</sup> See their enumeration in the *Literary History of France*, t. xvi and xvii; Roquefort, *State of French Poetry*; P. Paris, *le Romançero Français*.

founded at Provins; his friend, Auboin de Sezanne, Raoul de Coucy, whose name at least is still popular, killed at Massoura, under the eyes of St. Louis; the prior Gauthier de Coinsy, who raised so fair a monument to Mary in his *Miracles*; then that woman of unknown origin, but whose talents and national success have won for her the honorable title of Mary of France; finally Rutebeuf, who thought he could find no heroine more illustrious to celebrate than our Elizabeth. At the same time Stephen Langton, whom we have already mentioned as Primate of England and author of the Magna Charta, intermingled his sermons with verse, and wrote the first drama known by the moderns, the scene of which is in Heaven, where Truth, Justice, Mercy, and Peace discuss the fate of Adam after his fall, and are reconciled by Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup> We here only glance over a period when poetry was so popular amongst the French that St. Louis disdained not to admit to his royal table minstrels, or itinerant poets, and that those very men could free themselves from all toil by means of a song.

In Germany, the thirteenth century is the most lustrous period of this admirable medieval poetry. Such is the unanimous opinion of the numerous *literati* who have succeeded for a time in rendering it once more popular in that country. For ourselves, we are deeply convinced that no poetry is finer, none impressed with so much freshness of heart and thought — with enthusiasm so ardent, with purity so sincere; nowhere, in fine, did the new elements planted by Christianity in the human imagination obtain a more noble triumph. Would that we could depict in their true colors the exquisite emotions we enjoyed when, in studying the age of Elizabeth under every aspect, we opened the volumes where this marvelous beauty sleeps unnoticed! With what surprise and admiration did we behold all that grace, refinement, melancholy, which would seem reserved for the world's maturity, united to the artless simplicity, the ardent and grave piety, of the primitive ages! Whilst the epic of purely Germanic and Scandinavian origin develops itself there in the train of the Niebelungen,<sup>2</sup> that

---

<sup>1</sup> Delarne, *Archaeologia*, t. xiii. Jean Bodel of Arres is regarded as the most distinguished dramatic poet of that period; his fine drama entitled *Jeu de Saint Nicolas*, has been made known to us by M. Onesime Leroy, in his work on the Mysteries.

<sup>2</sup> This celebrated poem, as we now possess it, dates from the first years of the thirteenth century.

magnificent *Iliad* of the Germanic tribes, the double French and Breton cycle, of which we have spoken above, finds sublime interpreters there in poets who well knew how, while preserving the subject matter of foreign traditions, to stamp their works with incontestable nationality. Their names are still almost unknown in France, as were those of Schiller and Goëthe thirty years ago; but, perchance, they may not always remain so. The greatest of these, Wolfram d'Eschenbach, gave to his country an admirable version of the *Parceval*, and the only one that is now extant of the *Titirel*, that masterpiece of Catholic genius which we may not fear to place, in the enumeration of its glories, immediately after the *Divine Comedy*. Contemporaneously with it, Godefroi of Strasburg published the *Tristan*, wherein are summed up the ideas of the chivalric ages on love, together with the fairest legends of the Round Table; and Hartmann de l'Aue the *Iwain*, at the same time as the exquisite legend of *pauvre Henri*, wherein that knightly poet takes for his heroine a poor peasant girl, and delights to center in her all the noblest inspirations of devotion and sacrifice that the faith and the habits of his time could give — the contempt of life and its fleeting goods, the love of Heaven and heavenly things. How many other religious and national epics were then composed which it would now be superfluous even to name!<sup>1</sup> Nor was the lyric genius less prolific than the epic on that rich German soil. The ignorant and pedantic criticism of the unbelieving ages has not been able to efface the national remembrance of that brilliant and numerous phalanx of love singers (*Minne-soènger*)<sup>2</sup> which came forth between 1180 and 1250 from the ranks of German chivalry, having at its head, in rank, the Emperor Henry VI, but in genius, Walter de Vogelweide, whose writings are, as it were, the transcript of all the emotions of his time, and the most

---

<sup>1</sup> Such are the *Wigalois*, by Wirnt de Gravenberg, a vassal of Elizabeth's grandfather, and who accompanied her husband to the Crusades; *Guillaume d'Orange*, which was asked of Wolfram d'Eschenbach by Elizabeth's father-in-law; *Floires et Blanchefleur* by Conrad de Flecke; the *Chant de Roland*, by the priest Conrad; *Barlaam et Josephat*, by Rodolph de Hohenems, etc.

<sup>2</sup> The principal collection of their works is in the Royal Library in Paris, in the manuscript called *de Manesse*. It contains the poems of *one hundred and thirty-six* poets. Professor Hagen, of Berlin, has just published an excellent edition of it with some most valuable additions.

complete summary of that delightful poetry. None of his rivals and contemporaries united in a higher degree earthly affections, zealous and watchful patriotism, enthusiastic love for holy things; for the Crusade, in which he had himself fought; and, above all, for the Virgin-Mother, whose mercy and whose mortal dolours he sang with unequalled tenderness. We clearly see that, in him, it was not only human love, but also celestial love with all its treasures which won for him and his *confrères* their title of *love-singers*. Mary, everywhere the Queen of Christian poetry, was especially so in Germany; and we cannot help naming amongst those who have offered her the purest incense of song, Conrad de Wurtzburg, who, in his *Golden Forge*, seems to have concentrated all the rays of tenderness and beauty wherewith she had been invested by the veneration of the Christian world. And, as though to remind us that everything in that age was to be more or less connected with St. Elizabeth, we see the seven chiefs of those epic poets and love-singers assemble by solemn appointment at the court of Thuringia, under their special protector, the Landgrave Hermann, father-in-law of our Saint, at the very time of her birth; the songs which were the produce of the meeting of this brilliant constellation, form, under the name of the *War of Wartburg*, one of the most splendid manifestations of the German genius, and one of the most abundant treasures of the legendary mysticism of the middle ages, as well as a poetic wreath for the cradle of Elizabeth.

Crowned heads are everywhere seen amongst the poets of that age; but in the Iberian peninsula it is kings who guide the first steps of poetry. Peter of Aragon is the most ancient Troubadour of Spain. Alphonsus the Learned, son of St. Ferdinand, who merited, long before Francis I, the title of *father of letters* — a historian and a philosopher, was also a poet; there are but few Spanish verses more ancient than his hymns to the Virgin, and his touching account of his father's miraculous cure, written in the Galician language. Denis I, King of Portugal, is the first known poet of his kingdom. In Spain began, with the most lively energy, that admirable effusion of Christian splendor, which was there kept up much longer than in any other country, nor began to wane till after Calderon. Whilst legendary

poetry shed its mild radiance in the works of the Benedictine Gonzalo de Berceo, a poet who was truly inspired by Mary and the Saints of his nation, we see the Spanish epic making its appearance in those famous *Romances*<sup>1</sup> which are the peculiar glory of Spain, and one which no nation could ever dispute with her; wherein are chronicled all the struggles and all the beauties of her history; which have endowed the people with immortal remembrances, and have reflected all the proud *prestige* of Moorish pomp and elegance, without ever losing that severe Catholic character which consecrated in Spain, more than anywhere else, the dignity of man, the loyalty of the subject, and the faith of the Christian.

In Italy, it was only at the close of the period under review that Dante appeared (born 1265), but his advent was nobly ushered in. Poetry, less precocious than in France or Germany, was but beginning to bear fruit, but she did so with prodigious abundance. In every quarter of that noble and fertile land, schools of poets arose, as schools of artists were soon after to do. In Sicily, the Italian muse had her cradle;<sup>2</sup> there she appeared, pure, animated, a lover of nature, delicate, nearly akin to the French genius, — which was twice to make Sicily its appanage, — but still and ever profoundly Catholic.<sup>3</sup> In Pisa and Siena, it is more grave, more solemn, as we see by the fine monuments which those cities have preserved. In Florence and the neighboring cities it is tender, abundant, pious — worthy in all respects of its birthplace.<sup>4</sup> They were indeed a legion of poets, whose chiefs were the Emperor Frederick II, the kings Enzo and Mainfroy, his sons, and his Chancellor, Peter de Vignes; then Guittone d'Arezzo, a poet so profound, and sometimes so eloquent, and so touching, warmly praised by Petrarch and imitated by him; finally, Guido

---

<sup>1</sup> Those of the *Cid*, regarded as the most ancient, could not have been composed before the thirteenth century, according to the best judges.

<sup>2</sup> Any one who supposes that Italian poetry began with Dante, would do well to see the collection entitled *Poeti del primo secolo*, that is to say, of the thirteenth century, which contains some masterpieces of the poetic art.

<sup>3</sup> Such, at least, is the philosophy of Dante, *De Vulg. Elog.*, I, 12; and of Petrarch, *Triunfo d'Amore*, v. 35.

<sup>4</sup> We must especially mention the charming strains of Rotajo d'Oltrarno (1540); they are found in Crescimbeni and the *Rime Antiche*.

Guinicelli, whom Dante unhesitatingly proclaimed as his master. But all these were preceded and surpassed by St. Francis of Assisium;<sup>1</sup> his influence was to enliven art, his example to inflame poets. While reforming the world, God permitted him to use the first of that poetry which was to bring forth Dante and Petrarch. As it was his soul alone that inspired his verses, and that he followed no rule in their composition, he had them corrected by the Brother Pacific, who became his disciple, after having been poet-laureate to the Emperor Frederick II; and then both together went along the highways, singing to the people those new hymns, saying that they were God's minstrels, and required no other reward than the repentance of sinners. We still have those joyous canticles wherein the poor mendicant celebrated the wonders of God's love, in the vernacular tongue, and so passionately that he himself apprehended lest he might be accused of folly.

No, never did that love, which was, as we have seen, his whole life, send forth a cry so enthusiastic, so truly celestial, so wholly detached from the Earth; hence it is that succeeding ages have not only failed to equal it, but even to understand it. His famous canticle to his *brother the sun* is better known; it was composed after an ecstasy wherein he had received the certainty of his salvation. Scarcely had it escaped from his heart when he goes out to sing it in the streets of Assisium, where the Bishop and the magistrate were in open warfare. But at the accents of that divine lyre, hatred was extinguished in all hearts, enemies shed tears as they embraced each other, and concord reappeared at the call of poetry and sanctity.

Finally, the highest and fairest branch of poetry, the liturgy, produced in that age some of its most popular masterpieces, and if St. Thomas of Aquinas gives it the *Lauda Sion*, and all the admirable office of the Blessed Sacrament, it is a disciple of St. Francis — Thomas de Celano — who leaves us the *Dies Irae*, that cry of sublime terror; and another, the Brother Jacopone, who disputes with Innocent

---

<sup>1</sup> We must here refer to the fine work of M. Görres, entitled *St. François d'Assise Troubadour*, translated into the *European Review* of 1885. There are no Italian verses whose date can be fixed with certainty before those of St. Francis. We have already spoken of the beautiful poems of St. Bonaventure.



III the glory of having composed, in the *Stabat Mater*, the most beautiful tribute to the purest and most touching of sorrows.

This brings us back to St. Francis, and it may be observed that this period, whose most prominent features we have endeavored to sketch, may be wholly summed up in the two great figures of St. Francis of Assisium, and St. Louis of France.

The one, a man of the people, and who did more for the people than anyone had yet done, raising poverty to the supreme dignity, making it his choice and his protection, and giving it a new influence over the things of Heaven and Earth; invested with that supernatural life of Christianity which has so often conferred spiritual sovereignty on the lowest of its children; regarded by his contemporaries as the closest imitator of Christ; enervated during his whole life with divine love; and by the all-powerful virtue of that love a poet, an actor, a lawgiver, a conqueror.

The other a layman, a knight, a pilgrim, a crusader, a king crowned with the first Christian diadem, brave even to rashness, as willing to risk his life as to bend his head before God; a lover of danger, of humiliation, of penance; the indefatigable champion of justice, of the weak and the oppressed; the sublime personification of Christian chivalry in all its purity, and of true royalty in all its august grandeur. Both greedy for martyrdom, and for sacrifice; both continually intent on the salvation of their neighbor; both marked with the cross of Christ. Francis in the glorious wounds which he had in common with the crucified; and Louis in *that inmost heart where love lies*.

These two men, so similar in their nature and in their tendency, so well fitted to appreciate each other, never met on Earth. There is a pious and a touching tradition that St. Louis went on a pilgrimage to the tomb of his glorious contemporary, and that he there found a worthy successor of St. Francis in one of his chosen disciples, brother Ægidius. The account of their meeting is too characteristic of the age whereof we treat, for us to omit giving it a place. St. Louis being come, then, from Assisium to the Convent of Perousa, where Ægidius dwelt, sent him word that a poor pilgrim wished to speak with him. But an interior vision instantly revealed to the friar that the pilgrim

was no other than the holy king of France. He ran out to meet him, and as soon as they beheld each other, although it was for the first time, they both fell on their knees at the same moment, and tenderly embracing, they remained long thus without exchanging a single word. At length they separated, arose and went their way — the king to his kingdom, the monk to his cell. But the other brothers of the convent, having discovered that it was the king, began to reproach Ægidius. “How,” said they, “could thou have been so rude, as not to speak a single word to such a holy prince, he coming all the way from France on purpose to see thee?” “Ah! my beloved brethren,” replied the holy man, “be not surprised that neither he nor I could speak; for, whilst we embraced each other, the light of divine wisdom revealed his heart to me and mine to him; and thus, looking into each other’s heart, we knew each other far better than if we had spoken, and with much greater consolation than if we had given vent to our feelings in words, so incapable is the human tongue of expressing the secret mysteries of God!” A touching and an admirable symbol of that secret intelligence, of that victorious harmony which then united lofty and holy souls, as a sublime and eternal compact.

It may also be said that those two great souls meet and are completely united in that of one woman — St. Elizabeth — whose name has already occurred so often in this work. That burning love of poverty which inflamed the seraph of Assisium, that luxury of suffering and humiliation, that supreme worship of obedience is suddenly enkindled in the heart of a young princess, who, from the heart of Germany, recognizes him as her model and her father. That boundless sympathy for the Passion of a God made man, which sent St. Louis, barefoot, at twenty-four, to visit the holy Crown of thorns, — which impelled him to go twice under the standard of the Cross to seek death and captivity in Africa; that longing for a better life which made him struggle against his friends and family to abdicate the crown and hide his royalty under the monastic habit; that respect for poverty which made him kiss the hand of everyone to whom he gave alms; his abundant tears, his sweet familiarity with Joinville, and even his conjugal tenderness: all that is found again in the life of St.

Elizabeth, who was no less his sister by feeling and by sympathy, than by their common engagement under the rule of St. Francis.

It has been established, in our own days, that the thirteenth century was remarkable for the increasing influence of women in the social and political world; that they guided the helm of government in several large states,<sup>1</sup> and that fresh homage was daily offered to them both in public and private life. This was the inevitable consequence of that devotion to the Blessed Virgin, the progress of which we have already noticed. "It must be accredited to all women," says a poet of that age, "that the Mother of God was a woman."<sup>2</sup> How, in fact, could kings and nations constantly take her for mediatrix between her Son and them, place all their works under her sanction, choose her for the special object of their most ardent devotion, without giving a share of that veneration to the sex whose representative she was with God, as also its most perfect type? Since woman was so powerful in Heaven, she must needs be so on Earth. But, whilst other princesses learned to share with kings the right of supreme command, the daughter of the King of Hungary, — the issue of a race of saints, and whose example was to produce so many others, — showed that there was still, for women, a royalty of soul far above all earthly pomp; and it was by exercising it, unwittingly and unknown, that she gained her place in history.

Her life, short though it be, presents, perhaps, the only assemblage of the most varied phases, the most attractive, and yet the most austere features which can mark the life of a Christian, a princess and a Saint. Still, during the twenty years which elapse from the day when she was brought to her betrothed in a silver cradle, till that when she expired on the hospital pallet, which she chose for her death-bed, there are two very distinct parts, if not in her character, at least in her exterior life. The first is all chivalric, all poetic, calculated as much to enchain the imagination as to inspire piety. From the interior of Hungary, that land half unknown, half eastern — the frontier of Christendom, which

---

<sup>1</sup> Blanche of Castile; Isabella de la Marche, who controlled the entire policy of King John Lackland, her husband; Jane, Countess of Flanders, who claimed the right of assisting as a peer of France, at the consecration of St. Louis.

<sup>2</sup> *Frauenlob*, a poem of the thirteenth century.

presented to the medieval ages a grand and mysterious aspect,<sup>1</sup> she arrives at the Court of Thuringia, the most brilliant and the most poetical in all Germany. During her childhood, her precocious virtue is overlooked, her piety despised; some were for sending her back disgracefully to her father; but her betrothed remains ever faithful to her, consoles her for the persecution of the wicked, and as soon as he is master of his States, hastens to marry her. The holy love of a sister mingles in her heart with the ardent love of a wife for him who was first the companion of her childhood and then her husband, and who vies with herself in piety and fervor; a charming freedom, a sweet and artless confidence presides over their union. During all the time of their wedded life, they certainly offer the most touching and edifying example of a Christian marriage; and we dare affirm that, amongst all the Saints, none has presented in the same degree as Elizabeth, the type of the Christian wife. But, amidst all the happiness of this life, — the joys of maternity, — the homage and the splendor of a chivalrous court, her soul tends already towards the eternal source of love, by mortification, humility and the most fervent devotion; and the germs of that more perfect life, implanted within her, grow and expand in boundless charity, and indefatigable solicitude for the miseries of the poor. Meanwhile, the irresistible call of the Crusade, the supreme duty of freeing the Holy Sepulcher, draws away her young husband after seven years of the most tender union; he dares not reveal to her his still secret project, but she discovers it in a moment of tender familiarity. She knows not how to resign herself to this hard destiny; she follows and accompanies him far beyond the confines of their country; she cannot tear herself from his arms. In the anguish which rends her heart at this parting, and again when she hears of the untimely death of her beloved husband, we behold all the energy and tenderness of that young heart; precious and invincible energy, worthy of being consecrated to the conquest of Heaven; profound and insatiable tenderness which God alone could reward and satisfy.

---

<sup>1</sup> The famous Bertha the Good, wife of Pepin, and mother of Charlemagne, the principal heroine of the cycle of the Carolingian epics, was also daughter of a king of Hungary.

Thus, this separation once consummated, her whole life is changed, and God alone engrosses the affection of her soul. Misfortune comes on fast and heavy; she is brutally expelled from her royal dwelling; she wanders through the streets with her infant children, a prey to cold and hunger, she who had fed and comforted so many! no asylum can she find, she who had so often sheltered others! But, even when her wrongs are repaired, she is no longer inclined to a worldly life. Left a widow at the age of twenty, she rejects the hand of the most powerful princes; she is sick of the world; the ties of mortal love once broken, she feels herself moved with divine love; her heart, like the sacred censor, is closed to all earthly things, and is open only to Heaven. She contracts with Christ a second and indissoluble union; she seeks Him and serves Him in the person of the wretched; after distributing all her treasures, all her possessions, when she has nothing more to give, she then gives herself; she becomes poor, the better to understand and to relieve the misery of the poor; she consecrates her life to render them even the most repulsive services. In vain does her father, the King of Hungary, send ambassadors to bring her back to him; they find her at her wheel; resolved on preferring the kingdom of Heaven to the royal splendor of her father's court. In exchange for her austerities, her voluntary poverty, the yoke of obedience under which she daily bends, her Divine Spouse endows her with supernatural joy and supernatural power. In the midst of calumnies, privations, and the most cruel mortifications, she knows not a shade of sadness; a look, a prayer of hers suffices to heal the diseases of her fellow creatures. In the bloom of youth, she is ripe for eternity; and she dies in the act of singing a hymn of joy which the angels above are heard to repeat in welcome to her victorious soul.

Thus, in the twenty-four years of her life, we see her in succession, a lonely and persecuted orphan, — a sweet and modest betrothed bride, a wife unequalled for tenderness and trust, a loving and devoted mother, a sovereign more powerful by her benefits than by her rank; then a widow cruelly oppressed, a penitent without sin, an austere nun, a Sister of Charity, a fervent and favored spouse of the God who glorifies her by miracles before he calls her to Himself; and, in all the

vicissitudes of life, ever faithful to her original character, to that perfect simplicity which is the sweetest fruit of faith and the most fragrant perfume of charity, and which transformed her entire life into that heavenly childishness to which Jesus has promised the kingdom of Heaven.

So many charms — so much interest in the brief mortal existence of this young woman, are neither the creation of the poet's fancy, nor the fruit of piety exaggerated by distance; they are, on the contrary, verified by all the authority of history. The profound impression which the destiny and the heroic virtues of Elizabeth made on her age, is manifested by the tender and scrupulous care wherewith men have gathered and transmitted from generation to generation the most trifling actions of her life, the least words that she uttered, with a thousand incidents which throw light on the innermost recesses of that pure and artless soul. We are thus enabled, at the distance of six centuries, to give an account of that blessed life, with all the familiar and minute details which we little expect to find save in memoirs recently written — and with circumstances so poetic, we would almost say so romantic — that we can scarcely help regarding them at first as the results of an excited imagination taking pleasure in embellishing with all its charms a heroine of romance. And yet the historical authenticity of most of these details cannot be suspected, being collected at the same time as her miracles, and verified by solemn investigations immediately after her death, and registered by grave historians in the national and contemporaneous annals which record the other events of the time. In the eyes of those pious annalists, who wrote, as the people of those days acted, under the exclusive empire of faith, so fair a victory for Christ — so much charity and solicitude for the poor, with such shining manifestations of the power of God, wrought by a creature so fragile and so young, appeared as a sweet place of rest amid the storm of battles, wars, and political revolutions.

And not only is this life — so poetical and, at the same time, so edifying — certified by history, but it has received an otherwise high sanction; it has been invested with a splendor before which the mere

products of imagination, worldly renown, and the popularity given by historians and orators must all wax dim. It has been adorned with the fairest crown that is known to man, that of the *saint*. It has been glorified by the homage of the Christian world. It has received that popularity of prayer, the only one that is eternal, universal — the only one that is decreed at once by the learned and the rich — by the poor, the wretched, the ignorant — by that immense mass of mankind who have neither time nor inclination to busy themselves with human glories. And for those who are influenced by imagination, what happiness to feel that so much poetry, so many charming incidents, illustrative of all that is freshest and purest in the human heart, may be remembered, extolled — not, indeed, in the pages of a romance, or on the boards of a theater, but under the vaulted roofs of our churches, at the foot of the holy altars, in the effusion of the Christian soul before its God!

It may be that, blinded by that involuntary partiality which we feel for that which has been the object of a study and an attachment of several years, we exaggerate the beauty and the importance of our subject. We doubt not that, even apart from all the imperfection of our work, many may find out that an age so remote has nothing in common with this of ours; that this biography so minute, that this description of customs so long exploded can present no profitable and positive result to the religious ideas of our time. The simple and pious souls, for whom alone we write, shall be our judge. The author of this book has made a graver objection to himself. Seduced, at first, by the poetical, legendary, and even romantic character which the life of St. Elizabeth presents to a cursory view, he found himself, as it were, according as he advanced, engaged in the study of an admirable development of the ascetic strength engendered by faith — with the revelation of the most profound mysteries of Christian initiation. He then asked himself whether he had a right to undertake such a work; whether the sublime triumphs of religion were not to be reserved for writers who could do honor to religion, or who, at least, might be exclusively devoted to it. He could not but feel that he had no mission for such a work, and it was with tremulous apprehension that he

accomplished a task which seems so unsuited to his weakness, his age, and his lay character.

Nevertheless, after long hesitation, he yielded to the impulsive idea of giving some connection to studies so protracted and so conscientious, together with the desire of presenting to the friends of religion and of historical truth the faithful end complete picture of the life of a saint of former days — of one of those beings who summed up within themselves all the faith and all the pure affections of the Christian ages; to paint them, as much as possible, in the hues of their time, and to show them in all the splendor of that perfect beauty wherewith they presented themselves to the minds of men in the Middle Ages.

We are well aware that, to reproduce such a life in all its integrity, it is necessary to place ourselves face to face with a whole order of facts and of ideas long since struck with reprobation by the vague religiosity of latter times, and which a timorous though sincere piety has too often excluded from religious history. We allude to the supernatural phenomena so abundant in the lives of the Saints, consecrated by faith under the name of miracles, and eschewed by worldly wisdom under the name of “legends,” “popular superstitions,” “fabulous traditions.” Many such are found in the life of St Elizabeth. These we have endeavored to reproduce with the same scrupulous exactness which we have used in all the rest of the narrative. The very thought of omitting, or even of extenuating them, — interpreting them with prudent moderation, would have been revolting to us. It would have appeared to us a sacrilege to gloss over or conceal what we believe to be true, to pander to the proud *reason* of our age; it would have been a culpable error, too, for these miracles are related by the same authors, established by the same authority, as are all the other events of our biography. Nor could we well have fixed any rule whereby to admit their veracity in some cases and reject it in others; in short, it would have been nothing better than hypocrisy, for we candidly acknowledge that we firmly believe all that has ever been recorded as most miraculous of the Saints of God in general, and of St. Elizabeth in particular. Nor does this imply any sort of victory over



our own weak reason; for nothing appeared to us more reasonable, more simple for a Christian, than to bend in gratitude before the Lord's mercy, when he sees it suspend or modify the natural laws which it alone has created, to secure and enhance the triumph of the still higher laws of the moral and religious order. Is it not both sweet and easy to conceive how souls like those of St. Elizabeth and her contemporaries, exalted by faith and humility far above the cold reasoning of this world, purified by every sacrifice and every virtue, accustomed to live beforehand in Heaven, presented to the goodness of God a theater ever prepared; how much, too, the fervent and simple faith of the people called forth, and, if we may venture to say so, justified the frequent and familiar intervention of that Almighty power rejected and denied by the insensate pride of our days!

Hence it is with a mixture of love and respect that we have long studied those innumerable traditions of faithful generations, wherein faith and Christian poesy, — the highest lessons of religion and the most delightful creations of the imagination, are blended in a union so intimate that it can by no means be dissolved. But even if we had not the happiness of believing with entire simplicity in the wonders of divine power, which they relate, never could we venture to despise the innocent belief which has moved and delighted millions of our brethren for so many ages; all that is puerile in them is elevated and sanctified to us, by having been the object of our fathers' faith — of our fathers who were nearer Christ than we are. We have not the heart to despise what they believed with so much fervor, loved with so much constancy. Far from that: we will freely confess that we have often found in them both help and consolation, and in this we are not alone; for if they are everywhere despised by people who call themselves learned and enlightened, there are still places where these sweet traditions have remained dear to the poor and the simple. We have found them cherished in Ireland, in the Tyrol, and especially in Italy, and in more than one of the French provinces; we have gathered them from the words of the people, and the tears which flowed from their eyes; they have still an altar in the fairest of all temples — the hearts of the people. We will even venture to say that something is

wanting to the human glory of those Saints who have not been invested with this touching popularity — who have not received, with the homage of the Church, that tribute of humble love and familiar confidence which is paid under the cottage-roof, by the evening hearth, from the mouth and heart of the unlettered poor. Elizabeth, endowed by Heaven with such absolute simplicity, and who, in the midst of royal splendor, preferred to all other society that of the poor and the miserable; Elizabeth, the friend, the mother, the servant of the poor, could not be forgotten by them; and in that sweet remembrance do we find the secret of the charming incidents which we shall have to relate.

But this is not the place to discuss that grave question of the credence due to the miracles in the lives of the Saints; it suffices for us to have declared our own point of view; even had it been different, it would not have prevented us from writing the life of St. Elizabeth, from showing all that Catholics believed of her, and giving an account of the glory and the influence which her miracles have obtained for her amongst the faithful. In all medieval study, the implicit faith of the people, the unanimity of public opinion, give, to the popular traditions inspired by religion, a force which the historian cannot but appreciate. So that, even independent of their theological value, one cannot, without blindness, overlook the part which they have at all times played in poetry and in history.

With regard to poetry, it would be difficult to deny that they contain an inexhaustible mine; a fact which will be every day recognized more and more, according as the human mind returns to the source of true beauty. Even were we forced to regard these legends but as the *Christian mythology*, according to the contemptuous expression of the great philosophers of our days, still we should find in them a source of poetry infinitely more pure, abundant, and original, than the worn-out mythology of Olympus. But how can we be surprised that they have been so long refused all right to poetic influence? The idolatrous generations who had concentrated all their enthusiasm on the monuments and institutions of paganism, and the impious generations who have dignified with the name of poetry the filthy effusions of the

last century, could neither of them give even a name to that exquisite fruit of Catholic faith; they could offer it only one kind of homage, viz., that of scoffing and insult, — this they have done.

In a purely historical point of view, popular traditions, and especially those which belong to religion, if they have not a mathematical certainty — if they are not what are called positive facts, they are, at least, quite as powerful, and have exercised a far greater power over the passions and morals of the people than facts the most incontestable for human reason. On this account they assuredly merit the respect and attention of every serious historian and profound critic.

So it ought to be with every man who is interested in the supremacy of spiritualism in the progress of the human race, who places the worship of moral beauty above the exclusive domination of material interests and inclinations. For it must not be forgotten that, at the basis of all beliefs, even the most puerile, and superstitious, the most absurd that have prevailed at any time amongst Christian people, there was always a formal recognition of supernatural power, a generous declaration in favor of the dignity of man — fallen, indeed — but not irretrievably. Everywhere and always there was stamped on these popular convictions the victory of mind over matter, of the invisible over the visible, of the innocent glory of man over his misfortune, of the primitive purity of nature over its corruption. The most trifling Catholic legend has gained more hearts to those immortal truths than all the dissertations of philosophers. It is always the sentiment of that glorious sympathy between the Creator and the creature, between Heaven and Earth, which beams upon us through the mists of ages; but whilst pagan antiquity stammered out this idea, giving its gods all the vices of humanity, Christian ages here proclaimed it, elevating humanity and the world regenerated by faith, to the very height of Heaven.

In the ages of which we speak, such apologies as these would have been superfluous. No one in Christian society doubted the truth and the ineffable sweetness of these pious traditions. Men lived in a sort of tender and intimate familiarity with those amongst their fathers whom

God had manifestly called to himself, and whose sanctity the Church had proclaimed That Church, who had placed them on her altars, certainly could not blame her children if they thronged, with indefatigable tenderness, to lay the flowers of their mind and their imagination before those witnesses of eternal truth. They had already received the palm of victory; those who were still doing battle delighted to congratulate them, and to learn from them how to conquer. Ineffable affections, salutary connections, were thus formed between the Saints of the Church triumphant and the humble combatants of the Church militant. Each one chose from that glorious company a father — a mother — a friend — under whose protection he walked with greater confidence and security towards the eternal light. From the king and the pontiff down to the poorest artisan, each had a special thought in Heaven; in the midst of warfare, in the dangers and sorrows of life, these holy friendships exercised their strengthening and consoling influence. Saint Louis, dying beyond the seas for the Cross, fervently invoked the humble shepherdess who was the protectress of his capital. The brave Spaniards, overpowered by the Moors, beheld St. James, their patron, in the midst of their ranks, and, returning to the charge, speedily turned the scale of victory. The knights and nobles had for their patrons St. Michael and St. George; for their patronesses, St. Catharine and St. Margaret; and if they happened to die as prisoners and martyrs for the faith, they invoked St. Agnes, who had bent her young and virginal head beneath the axe. The laborer saw in his Churches the image of St. Isidore with his plough, and of St. Nothburga, the poor Tyrolese servant, with her sickle. The poor, in general, — the lowly and the hard-working, met at every step that gigantic St. Christopher bending under the weight of the child Jesus, and found in him the model of that hard life of toil whose harvest is Heaven. Germany was peculiarly fertile in such pious practices, as we now clearly perceive while studying its pure and artless spirit, so totally void of the sarcasm, the scoffing sneer which blights all poetry — while studying its language, so rich and so expressive. It would be an endless task to specify all the innumerable bonds which thus connected Heaven and Earth; to penetrate into that

vast region, where all the affections and all the duties of mortal life were mingled and intertwined with immortal protection; where souls, even the most neglected and the most solitary, found a world of interest and consolation exempt from all mundane disappointments. Men thus exercised themselves in loving in this world those whom they were to love in the other; they calculated on finding beyond the grave the holy protectors of their infancy, the sweet friends of their childhood, the faithful guardians of their whole existence; there was but one vast love which united the two lives of man, and which, commenced amid the storms of time, was prolonged throughout the glories of eternity.

But all that faith, and all that tender affection, which bound to Heaven the hearts of the men of those times, met and settled down on one supreme image. All these pious traditions, some local, others personal, were eclipsed and engrossed by those which the entire world told of Mary. Queen of the Earth as well as of Heaven, whilst every brow and every heart bowed down before her, every mind was inspired by her glory; whilst the Earth was covered with sanctuaries and cathedrals in her honor, the imagination of those poetic generations never ceased to discover some new perfection, some new charm, in the midst of that supreme beauty. Each day brought forth some more marvelous legend, some new ornament which the gratitude of the world offered to her who had re-opened the gates of Heaven, who had replenished the ranks of the Angels, who had indemnified man for the sin of Eve — the humble “handmaid,” crowned by God with the diadem which Michael wrested from Lucifer when casting him into the depths of Hell. “Thou must indeed hear us,” said one with exquisite simplicity, “for we have so much happiness in honoring thee.” “Ah!” cries Walter von de Vogelweide, “let us ever praise that sweet Virgin, to whom her Son can refuse nothing. This is our supreme consolation: in Heaven she does whatever she wishes!” And full of unwavering confidence in the object of so much love, convinced of her maternal vigilance, Christendom referred to her all its troubles and all its dangers, and reposed in that confidence, according to the beautiful idea of a poet of Elizabeth’s time.

In the spirit of those ages, wherein there was so great an abundance of faith and love, two rivers had inundated the world; it had not only been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, it had been also purified by the milk of Mary — by that milk which had been the nourishment of God on Earth, and which reminded Him of Heaven; it had incessant need of both; and, in the words of a pious monk who wrote the life of Elizabeth before us, “All are entitled to enter the family of Christ, when they make a proper use of the blood of their Redeemer and their Father, and of the milk of the sacred Virgin, their mother; yes, of that adorable blood which encourages the martyrs and soothes their torments . . . and of that virginal milk which sweetens the bitterness of our cup by appeasing the wrath of God.” And again, we must say, the enthusiasm of this filial tenderness was not enough for those souls so devout towards the Virgin Mother. They required a sentiment more tender, if possible, more familiar, more encouraging, the sweetest and the purest that man can conceive. After all, had not Mary been a mere mortal, a weak woman, acquainted with all the miseries of life; who had endured calumny, and exile, and cold, and hunger? Ah! it was more than a mother; it was a sister that Christian people loved and cherished in her! Hence she was constantly implored to remember that fraternity so glorious for the exiled race; hence, too, a great Saint, the most ardent of her votaries, hesitated not to invoke her thus: “O Mary,” said he, “we beseech thee, as Abraham besought Sara in the land of Egypt . . . O Mary! — O our Sara! say that thou art our sister, so that for thy sake God may look favorably on us, and that, through thee, our souls may live in God! Say it, then, O our beloved Sara! say that thou art our sister, and because of our having such a sister, the Egyptians — that is to say, the devils — will be afraid of us; because, of such a sister, the angels will stand in battle by our side; and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost will have mercy on us on account of our sister.”

It was thus that they loved Mary — those Christians of former days. But when their love had embraced Heaven and its queen, and all its blessed inhabitants, it descended again to the Earth, to people and love it in its turn. The Earth, which had been assigned for their dwelling —

the Earth, that beautiful creation of God — became also the object of their fertile solicitude, of their ingenuous affection. Men who were then called learned, and perhaps justly, studied nature with the scrupulous care wherewith Christians ought to study the works of God; but they could not think of regarding it as a body without superior life; they ever sought in it mysterious relations with the duties and religious belief of man ransomed by his God; they saw in the habits of animals, in the phenomena of plants, in the singing of birds, in the virtues of precious stones, so many symbols of truth consecrated by faith.<sup>1</sup> Pedantic nomenclatures had not yet invaded and profaned the world which Christianity had regained for the true God. When, at night, the poor man raised his eyes to the blue dome above, he saw there, instead of the Milky Way of Juno, the road which conducted his brethren to the pilgrimage of Compostela, or that by which the Blessed went to Heaven. Flowers, especially, presented a world peopled with the most charming images, and a mute language which expressed the liveliest and most tender sentiments. The people joined the learned in giving to those sweet objects of their daily attention the names of those whom they loved the most, the names of Apostles, of favorite Saints, or of Saints whose innocence and purity seemed reflected in the spotless beauty of the flowers. Our Elizabeth, too, had her flower, humble and hidden, as she always wished to be. But Mary especially — that flower of flowers — that rose without a thorn — that lily without a spot,<sup>2</sup> had an innumerable quantity of flowers, which her name rendered fairer and dearer to the people. Every minute detail of the garments which she wore on Earth was represented by some flower more graceful than the others; these were as relics scattered everywhere, and incessantly renewed. The great lights of our days have thought it better to replace her sweet memory

---

<sup>1</sup> The study of nature, under this point of view, was very common in the thirteenth century, as we see by the *Speculum naturale* of Vincent de Beauvais, and a vast number of other works.

<sup>2</sup> *Lilium sine macula, rose sine spinis, flos florum*, phrases from the ancient liturgy of the Church, a thousand times repeated by poets of all countries in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. *O Vaga mia rosa*, says, also, St. Alphonse di Liguori in his *Canzoncine in onore di Maria santissima*.

by that of Venus.<sup>1</sup> Sympathy was accounted mutual; the Earth owed gratitude for that association in the religion of man. People went, on Christmas night, to announce to the forest-trees that Christ was come: *Aperiatu terra et germinat Salvatorem*. But the Earth, in return, was to give roses and anemones in the place where man shed his blood, and lilies where he shed tears. When a saintly woman died, all the flowers around were to wither at the moment, or bow down as her coffin passed. We can conceive that ardent fraternity which united St. Francis with all nature, animate and inanimate, and which drew from him exclamations so plaintive and so admirable. All Christians had then, more or less, the same sentiment; for the Earth, now so lonely, so barren for the soul, was then impregnated with immortal beauty. The birds, the plants, all that man met on his way, all that had life, had been marked by him with his faith and his life. This Earth was one vast kingdom of love, and also of science; for all had its reason, and its reason in faith. Like those burning rays which shot from the wounds of Christ, and impressed the sacred stigma on the limbs of Francis of Assisium, even so did the beams from the heart of the Christian race, of simple and faithful man, stamp on every particle of nature the remembrance of Heaven, the imprint of Christ, the seal of love.

Yes, the world was, as it were, an immense volume wherein fifty generations inscribed during twelve centuries their faith, their emotions, their dreams, with infinite tenderness and patience. Not only had every mystery of faith, every triumph of the cross its page therein, but also every flower, every fruit, every animal figured there in its turn. As in the ancient missals and great anthem-books of the old cathedrals, beside the brilliant paintings which portray with inspiration at once so warm and so profound the great scenes of the life of Christ and of the saints, the text of the laws of God and of His divine Word was seen surrounded by all the beauties of nature; all animated beings were there brought together to sing the praises of the

---

<sup>1</sup> For instance, the flower which in European tongues was called *the Virgin's shoe*, has been named *Cypripedium Calceolus*. A thousand other instances could be given of the gross materialism which distinguishes these heathenish nomenclatures. But this is called the progress of science!



Lord, and angels came forth for that purpose from the cup of every flower. This was the *Legend*, the reading of the poor and the simple, the Gospel adapted for their use, *Biblia pauperum!* Their innocent eyes discovered therein a thousand beauties the sense of which is now forever lost. Heaven and Earth appeared therein peopled with the most exquisite skill. Well might they sing with sincerity of heart, *Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua* — Heaven and Earth are full of Thy glory!

Who can calculate how impoverished life is since then? Who thinks now-a-days of the imagination of the poor, the heart of the ignorant?

Oh! the world was then wrapt up by faith, as it were, in a beneficent veil which concealed all earthly wounds, and became transparent for the splendor of Heaven. Now, it is otherwise; the Earth is all naked, Heaven is all veiled.

To clothe the world in this consoling vesture, it required the complete and unreserved union of the two principles which were so wonderfully united in Elizabeth and her age — simplicity and faith. Now, as every one knows and says, they have disappeared from the mass of society; the former, especially, has been completely extirpated, not only from public life, but also from poetry, from private and domestic life, from the few asylums where the other has remained. It was not without consummate skill that the atheistic science and impious philosophy of modern times pronounced their divorce before condemning them to die. When once their holy and sweet alliance had been broken up, those two celestial sisters could only meet in some few obscure souls, amongst some scattered and neglected people, and then they walked separately to death.

It is unnecessary to say, however, that this death was only apparent — only exile. They kept in the bosom of the imperishable Church, the cradle whence they went forth to people and decorate the world. All men may find them there; all men may likewise trace their course by the immortal relics which they scattered as they went, and which none have yet succeeded in annihilating. Their number is so great, their beauty so striking, that one might be tempted to believe that God had designedly permitted all the exterior charms of Catholicity to fall a moment into oblivion, so as that those who remained faithful to it

through all the probations of modern times might have the ineffable happiness of finding them out and revealing them anew.

There, then, lies a whole world to regain for history and poetry. Even piety will find new treasures in it. Let none reproach us with stirring up ashes forever extinguished, or searching amid irreparable ruins; that which would be true of human institutions has no application to the subject before us — at least, as Catholics believe — for, if it be true that the Church is undying, it follows that nothing that her hand has once touched, her breath inspired, can die forever. It suffices that she has deposited there a germ of her own principle, a ray of the fadeless and immutable beauty which she received with her life. If it has once been so, it is in vain that the clouds darken around, that the snows of winter are heaped above it; it is always time to dig out the root, to shake off some modern dust, to break asunder some factitious bonds, to replant it in some genial soil, and restore to the flower the bloom and the perfume of former days.

We should not like to have it inferred, from the ideas which we have put forward, that we are blind admirers of the Middle Ages, that we see in them every thing admirable, enviable and irreproachable, and that, in our own age, we consider the nations wholly incurable. Far be it from us to waste our energies in vain regrets and our sight in useless tears over the grave of generations passed away. We know that the Son of God died on the cross to save humanity, not for five or six centuries, but for the whole period of the world's existence. We think not that the Word of God has failed or that His arm is shortened. The mission of pure man remains the same; the Christian has still his salvation to work out, and his neighbor to serve. We regret not, then — though we admire them — any of the human institutions which have perished according to the lot of human things, but we do bitterly regret the soul, the divine breath whereby they were animated, and which has departed from those that have replaced them. We preach not, then, either the barren contemplation of the past, or a contempt for and base desertion of the present. Once more, we repeat, far be such a thought from our minds. But as the exile, banished from his native land for having remained faithful to the eternal laws, sends

many a loving thought back to those who have loved him, and who await his return to his native land; as the soldier fighting on distant shores is inflamed at the recital of the victories gained there by his fathers; so it is permitted us, whom our faith renders as exiles amid modern society, to raise our hearts and eyes towards the blessed inhabitants of our heavenly home, and, humble soldiers as we are of the cause which has glorified them, to gather courage also from the remembrance of their struggles and their victories.

We know but too well what crimes and sufferings and complaints there were in the ages which we have studied; as there always were, and always shall be, so long as the Earth is peopled with fallen and sinful men. But we think that between the evils of those ages and those of our own times there are two incalculable differences. In the first place, the energy of evil was everywhere met by an energy of good which seemed to increase by being provoked to the combat, and by which it was incessantly and manifestly overcome. This glorious resistance had its origin in the force of convictions which were recognized in their influence over the entire life; to say that this force has not diminished according as faith and religious practice have departed from souls, would assuredly be in contradiction to the experience of history and the world's memory. We are far from disputing the splendid progress that is made under certain relations, but we will say with an eloquent writer of the present time, whose own words will acquit him of any partiality for by-gone ages: "Morality is, undoubtedly, more enlightened in these days; but is it stronger? Where is the heart that does not thrill with delight, seeing the triumph of equality? . . . I only fear that in taking so just a view of his rights, man may have lost somewhat of the sense of his duties. It is truly painful to see that, in this progress of all things, moral force has not increased."

Those evils from which the world then suffered and of which it justly complained, were all physical, all material. Person, property, bodily freedom, were exposed, outraged, trampled on more than they now are, in certain countries; this we are free to admit. But then the soul, the conscience, the heart, were sound, pure, untainted, free from

that frightful inward disease by which they are now gnawed. Each one knew what he had to believe, what he might learn, what he was to think of all those problems of human life and human destiny, which are now so many sources of torment for the souls whom they have again succeeded in paganizing. Misfortune, poverty, oppression, which are now no more extirpated than they formerly were, stood not up before the man of those times as a dread fatality of which he was the innocent victim. He suffered from them, but he understood them: he might be overwhelmed by them, but he never despaired; for Heaven still remained to him, and man could interrupt none of the means of communication between the prison of his body and the home of his soul. There was a sound and robust moral health which neutralized all the diseases of the social body, opposing to them an all-powerful antidote, — a positive, a universal, a perpetual consolation — faith. That faith which had penetrated the world, which claimed all men without exception, which had infused itself into all the pores of society like a beneficent sap, offering to all infirmities a simple and an effectual remedy, the same for all, within reach of all, understood by all, accepted by all.

Now, the evil is still there; it is not only present, but known, studied, analyzed with extreme care; its dissection would be perfect, its autopsy exact; but where are the remedies to prevent that vast body from becoming a corpse? Its new leeches have spent four hundred years in drying it up, in sucking out that divine and salutary sap which constituted its life. What substitute are they going to give?

It is now time to judge of the course which they have led humanity to pursue. Christian nations have allowed their mother to be dethroned; those tender and powerful hands which had a sword ever ready to avenge their wrongs, a balm to heal all their wounds, they have seen loaded with chains; the wreath of flowers has been torn from her brow, and soaked in the acid of *reason* till every leaf fell off, withered and lost. Philosophy, despotism and anarchy led her captive before men loading her with insult and contumely; then they shut her up in a dungeon which they called her tomb, and at its door all three kept watch.

And yet she has left in the world a void which nothing ever can fill; not only is it that all faithful hearts deplore her misfortunes; that every soul that is not yet contaminated sighs after a purer air than that of the world which her absence has made pestiferous; that all those who have not yet lost the sentiment of their dignity and of their immortal origin demand to be brought back to her fold; but, above all, those afflicted souls, who seek everywhere, but in vain, a remedy for their sorrows, an explanation of their dreary lot, who find nowhere aught save the empty and mournful place of ancient faith, these who will not and cannot be consoled, *qui non sunt*.

Well! we firmly believe that a day will come when humanity will seek to emerge from the desert which has been made around her; she will ask for the songs that soothed her childhood, she will sigh to breathe again the perfumes of her youth, to moisten her parched lips at her mother's breast, and to taste once more before she dies that pure, fresh milk which nourished her infancy. And the gates of that mother's prison shall be broken by the shock of so many suffering souls; and she will go forth fairer, stronger, more benign than ever. She will no longer wear the fresh and simple beauty of her early years, when she had just escaped from the first bloody persecutions; hers will then be the grave and majestic loveliness of the strong woman, who has read over the histories of martyrs and confessors, and added thereto her own page. In her eyes shall be seen the traces of tears, and on her brow the deep furrows made by suffering; she will only appear more worthy of the homage and adoration of those who have suffered like herself.

She will resume her new and glorious course, the end whereof is only known to God; but while awaiting the time when the world will again solicit her to preside over its affairs, her faithful children know that they can every day receive from her infinite help and consolation. Hence it is that they — the children of light — need not fear what a faithless world calls her decay; amidst the darkness which that world gathers around them, they will neither be dazzled nor led astray by any of the false meteors of the gloomy night. Calm and confident, they remain with their eyes fixed in steadfast hope on that eternal East

which never ceases to shine for them, and where generations, seated in the shadow of death, shall also one day behold the only true and sacred Sun ready to overpower with his triumphant splendor the ingratitude of men.

In conclusion, far be it from us to attempt solving what is called "the problem of the age," or giving a key to all the conflicting intelligence of our days. Our ideas are not so ambitious. We are rather of the opinion that all such presumptuous projects are struck with radical sterility. All the vast and most progressive systems which human wisdom has brought forth, as substitutes for religion, have never succeeded in interesting any but the learned, the ambitious, or, at most, the prosperous and happy. But the great majority of mankind can never come under these categories. The great majority of men are suffering, and suffering from moral as well as physical evils. Man's first bread is grief, and his first want is consolation. Now, which of these systems has ever consoled an afflicted heart or re-peopled a lonely one? Which of their teachers has ever shown men how to wipe away a tear? Christianity alone has, from the beginning, promised to console man in the sorrows incidental to life, by purifying the inclinations of his heart; and she alone has kept her promise. Thus, let us bear in mind that, before we think of replacing her, we should commence by clearing the Earth of pain and sorrow.

Such are the thoughts which animated us while writing the life of Elizabeth of Hungary, who loved much and suffered much, but whose affections were all purified by religion, and her sufferings all consoled. We offer to our brethren in the faith a book differing in its subject and in its form from the spirit of the age in which we live. But simplicity, humility and charity, whose wonders we are about to relate, are, like the God who inspires them, above all times and places. We only ask that this work may bear to some simple or sorrowful souls a reflection of the sweet emotions which we have enjoyed while writing it! May it ascend to the Eternal Throne as an humble and timid spark from that old Catholic flame which is not yet extinct in all hearts!

May 1st, 1836,

*Anniversary of the Translation of St. Elizabeth*

# ST. ELIZABETH, OF HUNGARY,

## DUCHESS OF THURINGIA

---

### CHAPTER I.

HOW DUKE HERMANN REIGNED IN THURINGIA, AND KING ANDREW IN HUNGARY,  
AND HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH WAS BORN AT PRESSBURG, AND WAS  
BROUGHT TO EISENACH.

Quasi stella matutina in medio nebulae. — *Eccles.* l. 6.

Elizabeth fut fille d'ung noble roy, et fut noble dev lignage;  
mais elle fut plus noble par foy et religion; et sa tres noble lignée  
elle l'ennoblit par exemple; elle l'esclairchit par miracle; elle  
l'embellit par grace de saintité.

— Jean Levefre, *Ann. de Hainaut*, i. xlvi.

**A**MONGST the princes who reigned in Germany at the commencement of the thirteenth century, there was not one more powerful or more renowned than Hermann, Landgrave, or Duke, of Thuringia, and Count Palatine of Saxony. The courage and talents which he had inherited with the possessions of his illustrious father, Louis Le Ferré, one of the most remarkable princes of the Middle Ages — the special protection of Pope Innocent III — his near relationship to the emperor Frederic Barbarossa, whose nephew he was — his friendship with king Ottokar of Bohemia, and the houses of Saxony, Bavaria and Austria — the

position of his vast estates in the center of Germany, extending from the Lahn to the Elbe — all combined to confer on him considerable political importance.

Though he was not one of the seven electors of the Holy Roman Empire, it was nevertheless his influence which determined their choice, and his alliance was decisive of the success of any pretender to the imperial crown. He was thus more than once the arbiter of the destiny of the empire. “When a king is found wanting in the proper exercise of his power, or is known to exceed its limits,” says a contemporary poet, “the Lord of Thuringia takes away his crown, and gives it to whom he wills.” It was principally to this influence that the celebrated emperor Frederic II owed his election in the year 1211.

It was not alone the power of Hermann that attracted to him the respect of all Germany; he was still more distinguished for his boundless generosity, learning, and piety. He never retired to rest without having heard or read a lesson from the Holy Scriptures. In his youth he had studied at Paris, which was then the sanctuary of all learning, sacred and profane; he had an ardent love of poetry; during his reign he collected carefully the heroic poems of the ancient Germans, and employed a number of writers to transcribe the songs of the old masters.

Living at the epoch in which Catholic and chivalrous poetry shed its purest ray on Germany, he comprehended all its immortal beauty, though he could not, like the emperor Henry VI and a number of the princes and nobles of his time, take his place amongst the bards of love (*Minnesinger*) and hear, like them, his verses chanted in the baron’s hall and peasant’s hut; yet none of them could surpass him in admiration of the *gai savoir*, or in munificence and affection towards all poets; they composed his society, and were the objects of his most tender solicitude. His court was a home to every child of song, and to the end of his stormy life he preserved this predilection of his early years. His glory and his virtues have been well commemorated, for his name is mentioned in the *Titurel*, the *Parcifal*, and in all the most popular monuments of national poetry. Thus Walther von der Vogelweide, the greatest poet of that period, has said of him, “Other



princes are most clement, but none is so generous as he. He was so, and is still. No one suffers from his caprice. The flower of Thuringia blooms in the midst of the snow; the summer and the winter of its glory are as mild and beautiful as was its spring.”

It happened, in the year 1206, that Duke Hermann, being at his Castle of Wartburg, situated on a height above the town of Eisenach, assembled at his court six of the most renowned poets of Germany, viz.: Heinrich Schriever, Walther von der Vogelweide, Wolfram Eschenbach, Reinhart de Zwetzen, all four knights of ancient lineage; Bitterolf, comptroller of the household, and Heinrich Ofterdingen, a simple burgess of Eisenach. A violent rivalry was soon declared between the five poets of noble birth, and the poor Heinrich, who was at least their equal in talent and popularity. Tradition accuses them of having sought his life, and relates that one day the five rushed upon him, and would have killed him, but that he escaped, and took refuge with the Duchess Sophia, who hid him under the folds of her mantle. When this occurred, the duke was engaged in hunting.

To put an end to their differences, they agreed to meet in a public and final combat before the Duke and his court; they also required the presence of the executioner, rope in hand, and he was to hang, during the sitting of the assembly, him whose verses should be declared inferior to those of his rivals, thus showing that in their eyes glory and life were inseparable. The Duke consented, and presided himself at this solemn strife, the fame whereof was spread throughout Germany, and at which assembled a crowd of knights and nobles.

The combatants sang by turns, and in the most varied forms, the eulogiums of their favorite princes — the great mysteries of religion — the mysterious marriage of the soul with the body at the resurrection — the inexhaustible clemency of God — the efficacy of repentance — the empire of the cross — and, above all, the glories of Mary, the beloved of God, more beautiful than mercy, more brilliant than the sun. These songs, preserved by the audience, are still extant, under the title of “The War of the Wartburg.”

This collection forms at the present day one of the most important monuments of Germanic literature, being at once a treasury of ancient

and popular traditions, and serving to show what an influence poetry exercised on the society, learning, and faith of that age.

It was impossible to decide the merits of the rival minstrels, and it was agreed that Heinrich Ofterdingen should set out for Transylvania, there to seek the renowned master, Klingsohr, so celebrated for his knowledge of the seven liberal arts, and for his proficiency in astronomy and necromancy; tradition says that even spirits were forced to obey him, and, to secure his great services, the king of Hungary granted him a pension of 3,000 marks of silver. A delay of one year was granted to Heinrich to perform this journey, and at the appointed day he returned to Eisenach, accompanied by Klingsohr.

Whilst all the chivalry of Germany were engaged in debating on the merits of this combat, the fame of which was to descend to posterity, the Lord, always careful of the glory of his elect, ordained that it should surround with a halo of poesy and popular glory the cradle of one of His most humble servants.

Klingsohr, being arrived at Eisenach, sojourned at the hostel of Henry Hellgref, at the left side of St. George's Gate, descended on the evening of his arrival into the garden of his host, wherein were several of the nobles of Hesse and Thuringia, come expressly to visit him; there were there also officers of the Ducal court, and a number of the honest townsmen of Eisenach, who, according to an ancient and still existing custom in Germany, came there to drink the evening cup. These good people surrounded the sage, and asked him to tell them something new; upon which he began to contemplate the stars attentively for a long time. At length he said to them, "I will tell you something both new and joyous. I see a beautiful star rising in Hungary, the rays of which extend to Marburg, and from Marburg over all the world. Know even that on this night there is born to my lord, the king of Hungary, a daughter, who shall be named Elizabeth. She shall be given in marriage to the son of your prince, she shall become a saint, and her sanctity shall rejoice and console all Christendom."

The bystanders heard these words with great joy, and next morning the knights returned to Wartburg, to tell the news to the Landgrave,

whom they met as he was going to mass. Not wishing to distract his attention, they waited until after the celebration of the holy sacrifice, and then they related to him all that had occurred on the previous evening. It was a matter of surprise to the prince, and to the whole court, and, calling for his horse, the Landgrave went with a numerous escort to visit Klingsohr, and to entreat him to return with him to Wartburg. There he was treated with the highest honor, and the "priests paid him the same reverence that they would to a bishop," says a contemporary writer.

The Landgrave made him dine at the royal table, and after the repast they conversed for a long time. Hermann, whose paternal anxiety was already awakened, asked him many questions relative to the affairs of Hungary, whether the king was engaged in many undertakings, whether he was at peace with the infidels, or whether the war had re-commenced. Klingsohr satisfied his curiosity by entering into all these details; after which he engaged himself in the great cause which had brought him to Eisenach. He presided at the new contest of the poets, and succeeded in allaying the hatred which the noble rivals entertained against Heinrich, and made them publicly recognize his merit. He then returned to Hungary as he came, and that was, according to popular tradition, in a single night.

Now, Hungary was governed by king Andrew II, whose reign was agreeable to God and to the people. Illustrious by his wars against the pagan nations that surrounded his dominions, he was still more so by his earnest piety and generosity to the Church and to the poor. Some of the vast gold mines which still enrich Hungary were discovered during his reign, and his faithful people saw in that circumstance a reward granted by God on account of his many virtues. The miners came one day to relate to the king that as they dug into the side of a mountain they heard a voice desiring them to proceed courageously, for that it contained a vast amount of gold, destined by the Almighty as a recompense for Andrew's virtues. The king rejoiced at this mark of the Divine favor, and profited of it to build churches, found convents, and to increase his alms to the poor.

Andrew's queen was Gertrude of Merania, or Andechs, one of the most illustrious houses of the empire in the thirteenth century. She was a descendant in a direct line from Charlemagne, and possessed the most beautiful provinces in the south of Germany. Gertrude's father, Berchtold III, was Duke of Merania and Carinthia, margrave of Istria, and sovereign of the Tyrol. Her brother, Berchtold IV, in 1198 refused the imperial crown, which was tendered unanimously by the electing princes. One of her sisters, afterwards canonized, was Hedwige, duchess of Silesia and Poland; another, Agnes, so celebrated for her beauty and misfortunes, was wife to Philip Augustus, king of France. Gertrude equaled her husband in piety; historians speak of her courage, and her masculine soul. The most tender love united this noble couple. In the year 1201, on the day and at the hour announced by Klingsohr at Eisenach, Queen Gertrude being then at Pressburg, gave birth to a daughter, who at the font received the name of Elizabeth. The ceremonies of her baptism were conducted with great magnificence; the royal babe was carried to the church under a canopy of the richest stuffs that could be procured at Buda, which was then one of the principal marts of Oriental luxury.

From the cradle, this child gave proofs of the sublime destiny for which God reserved her. The names consecrated by religion were the first sounds that attracted her attention, and the first words uttered by her infant lips. She paid a wonderful attention to the rudiments of faith; already an interior light aided her to comprehend these holy truths.

At the age of three years, according to the historian, she expressed her compassion for the poor, and sought to alleviate their misery by gifts. The virtues of her future life were thus prefigured in her infancy; her first act was an alms-deed, her first word a prayer. Immediately after her birth, the wars in which Hungary was engaged, ceased — the interior dissensions of the kingdom were calmed down. This tranquility soon penetrated from public into private life. Violations of the law of God, curses, and blasphemies, became less frequent, and Andrew saw fulfilled all the desires that a Christian king could form. Simple and pious souls remarked the coincidence of this sudden peace

and prosperity with the birth of the child, whose piety was so precocious; and when afterwards they saw so brilliantly realized the promised virtues of her early years, the Hungarians loved to say, that never did royal infant bring so many blessings to her country.

Meanwhile, Duke Hermann left no means untried to find out if the predictions of Klingsohr had come to pass, and whether a princess was born in Hungary on the day he foretold. And when he learned, not only her birth, but still more the marks of devotion she already evinced, and the happiness that she seemed to have brought from Heaven to her country, he conceived the most ardent desire to see the prediction entirely accomplished, and his young son espoused to Elizabeth.

The travelers that arrived, from time to time, from Hungary, which was then scarcely more isolated than it is at present from the rest of Europe, often brought him some account of the daughter of king Andrew. One day particularly, a monk who came from Hungary related to the Duke that, having been blind from the age of four years, he was suddenly cured by the touch of the young princess. "All Hungary," said he, "rejoices in this child, for she has brought peace with her."

This was sufficient to decide Hermann to send an embassy, composed of lords and noble ladies, to the king of Hungary, to demand of him, in the name of the young Louis, the hand of Elizabeth, and, if possible, to bring her with them to Thuringia. He selected for this mission Count Reinhard de Mulhberg, Gauthier de Varila, his cup-bearer, and the Lady Bertha, widow of Egilolf de Beindeliban, who was, according to the Chroniclers, famed for her wisdom and modesty, besides being beautiful, pious, and honorable in all things. She had, as companions, two noble and beautiful maidens, and two esquires. The ambassadors had at least thirty horses in their train. Along their route, they were received by the princes and prelates through whose estates they passed, with the distinction due to their rank and that of their Lord. Happily arrived at Pressburg, they were entertained with royal hospitality, and a great number of Masses were offered up on the morning after their entrance to that city.

When they opened to king Andrew the object of their mission, he assembled his council to deliberate on the demand of the Duke of Thuringia.

Klingsohr upheld it warmly, and in a discourse which serves as a picture of Thuringia at that period, he showed forth the riches and power of Hermann; he enumerated the twelve Counts, who were his vassals, not to speak of knights and barons; he praised his fertile and well-cultivated country; he also told of its fine forests and well-stored fish-ponds, and how comfortable the people were, "drinking strong beer, and eating good white bread." He then eulogized the personal character of the Duke, and added that the young Louis appeared to him to possess all the good qualities that could be expected at his age. Queen Gertrude also approved of the request of Hermann, and Andrew, yielding to her influence, agreed to part with his beloved child. But before he would permit her to set out, he wished to celebrate a feast in her honor, and having assembled all the nobles and their ladies, he ordered brilliant rejoicings. The games, dances, music, and the songs of the minstrels, lasted three days, after which the Thuringian ambassador took leave of the king. The attendants brought with them the little Elizabeth, then aged four years, and, covering her with a silken robe embroidered with gold, laid her in a cradle of massive silver, and thus gave her into the care of the Thuringians.

The king said to the Lord de Varila — "I confide to thy knightly honor my sweetest consolation." The Queen, also, came weeping and recommending her child to his care. The knight answered them thus — "I will willingly take charge of her, and shall always be her faithful servant." He kept his word, as we shall hereafter see. Before leaving Pressburg, the ambassadors received from the king and queen presents of immense value, some for themselves, and some to be carried to Duke Hermann, as the dower of the princess. Contemporary narratives enumerate in detail these presents, saying, that never were seen in Thuringia things so precious and beautiful.

Hence, we may conclude that this marriage served to introduce into Germany a new development of the luxury of the East, which, at so distant a period, must have been of importance in the history of

Germanic art and industry. Queen Gertrude added to these gifts a thousand marks of silver, and promised that, if she lived, she would double the sum from her privy purse.

The ambassadors at last set out. They had come with two carriages, and returned with thirteen, so greatly had their baggage increased. King Andrew confided to them thirteen noble Hungarian maidens, as companions to his daughter, all of whom Duke Hermann dowered and married in Thuringia. The journey homeward was performed without delay; as soon as Duke Hermann and the Duchess Sophia received news of their approach, and of the success of their mission, they knelt and blessed God for having listened to their prayers. Then they descended from Wartburg to Eisenach, in order to receive their ambassadors, whom God had so well guided.

If we are to believe one of the official chroniclers of the court, the joy of having received the young princess almost set their senses astray. The whole party entered the Hostel of Hellgref, where Klingsohr had made the prediction, and which was then the best in the town. There the Landgrave took the little Elizabeth in his arms, and, pressing her to his bosom, thanked God for having granted her to him.

He then returned to Wartburg to prepare for her reception, but the Duchess remained all night with the child. The next morning, she conducted her to the castle, where the Duke had assembled all his court, and to which a number of the citizens of Eisenach and their wives were invited, to see the child that God and the king of Hungary had sent them.

The princess, aged four years, was solemnly affianced to the Duke Louis, who was then eleven; and, according to custom, they were laid side by side in one bed. Then there were, as at Pressburg, sumptuous banquets and festivals, at which poetry, the principal magnificence of the court of Thuringia, shone with its accustomed brilliancy.

Dating from this time, Elizabeth never left him who was to be her husband, and whom she then called her *brother*. A touching and salutary custom existed in Catholic ages and families — to bring up together those whose after lives were destined to be united; a blessed inspiration, which mingled in the mind of man the pure name of sister

with the sacred name of wife, so that none of the young heart's freshness was lost, but the fond and varying emotions of brotherhood served to prepare for the grave and arduous duties of marriage. Thus, all that was ardent and impetuous in the soul was calmed down and sanctified; thus the purest and closest relations of life were from childhood joined in an earnest and only love, providing for after years the remembrance of the sweetest and most holy affections.




## CHAPTER II.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH HONORED GOD IN HER CHILDHOOD.

Elegit eum Deus et prælegit. — *Office of Holy Women.*

Cinq ans avait d'aage droit  
 Sainte Ysabiaux la Dieu aimée,  
 La fille le Roi d'Hongrie,  
 Quant a bien faire commensa.

*Rutebeuf MS., Bibl. Roy. 7633.*

N the bosom of the family from which Providence thus separated the little Elizabeth, two causes contributed to develop in her soul those virtues that were recognized in her even from the cradle. She had, in the first place, an illustrious example of the union of all Christian virtues with sovereign majesty, in the person of her maternal aunt, Hedwige, Duchess of Poland, who in after years merited the veneration of the faithful, and whose austere and fervent piety contributed even then to the glory of her family, and was a subject of edification which Elizabeth well knew how to understand and to imitate. But, besides the influence of this example, God permitted that unforeseen misfortune should throw a shade of sadness over her youth, and teach her thus early the frailty of earthly grandeur. Two years after she had been brought from Hungary to Thuringia, her mother, Queen Gertrude, suffered a most cruel death, having been assassinated by the subjects of her husband. The cause of her death is uncertain; according to some, she was immolated by the sovereign of Croatia and Dalmatia, who wished thus to revenge the honor of his wife, outraged by Berchtold, brother to the queen; according to others, she was the victim of a plot formed against the life of her husband, and that, in order to give him time to escape, she

delivered herself up to the blows of the conspirators. This fatal news soon reached Elizabeth, and all historians agree in regarding it as one of the principal sources of the grave thought and profound piety which were manifested in all her childish actions.

On Elizabeth's arrival in Thuringia, the Landgrave selected, to be her companions, seven maidens of the most noble houses of his dominions, amongst whom was his own daughter, Agnes; all were about the age of the young princess, and were brought up with her. One of these, Guta, who was five years old, being a year older than Elizabeth, remained in her service until a short time before her death.

And when God called her to himself, and when the report of her sanctity, noised abroad, attracted the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities, this same Guta, being publicly interrogated, related the recollections of her childhood. It is to her depositions, carefully preserved and transmitted to the Holy See, that we owe the knowledge of the details we are about to give of the occupations of the first years of our Elizabeth.

From this tender age all her thoughts and feelings seemed to be centered in the desire of serving God, and of meriting Heaven. Whenever an opportunity offered, she went to the Castle Chapel, and there, lying at the foot of the Altar, she would open before her a large psalter, though as yet she knew not how to read; then, folding her little hands, and raising her eyes to Heaven, she gave herself up with wonderful recollection to meditation and prayer.

At play with her companions, for instance, in hopping along, she led so that all were obliged to follow her to the Chapel, and when she found it shut, she would fervently kiss the lock, door, and walls, out of love for the Lord who resided within it, concealed under the sacramental veil.

In all her sports, in which there were games of chance, she was governed by the thought of God. She hoped to gain for Him; for all her winnings were distributed amongst poor girls, on whom she imposed the duty of reciting a certain number of *Paters* and *Aves*.

She continually sought occasions of union with God; and when any obstacle prevented her saying as many prayers or making as many

genuflections as she would wish, she would say to her little companions, "Let us lie upon the ground to measure which of us is the tallest." Then, stretching herself successively by the side of each little girl, she would profit of the moment to humble herself before God, and to repeat an *Ave*. When afterwards a wife and mother, she used to take a pleasure in relating these innocent wiles of her childhood. She often conducted her friends to the cemetery, and would say to them, "Remember that one day we shall be nothing but dust." Then, arriving at the charnel house, she would continue thus, "Behold the bones of the dead; these people were once living as we now are, and are dead as we shall be. For this reason we must love God; kneel and say with me, O Lord, by your cruel death, and by your dear Mother Mary, deliver these poor souls from their sufferings! O Lord, by your five sacred wounds, grant that we may be saved." "These," says an old writer, "were her dances and her sports." The children repeated these prayers after her; and, soon dazzled by the ascendancy which she acquired over them, they would relate that the infant Jesus often came to her, and saluting her tenderly, would play with her; but she strictly forbade them to say such things.

After her recreation she tried to learn as many prayers as possible. All who would speak to her of God and His holy law became dear to her. She assigned to herself a certain number of prayers to repeat daily, and when hindered from fulfilling this voluntary obligation, and obliged by her attendants to go to bed, she never failed to acquit herself of her devotions whilst they thought that she slept. Thus, like David, she "remembered the Lord upon her couch." She already appreciated the value of that pure modesty, which is to be observed by Christian virgins, and always arranged her veil so as that the least possible portion of her infantine features could only be seen.

The boundless charity, which was at a later period identified with her life, already inflamed her predestined soul. She distributed all the money that she received, or could, on any pretence, obtain from her adopted parents, amongst the poor. She would go into the offices and kitchens of the castle to try and gather remains of victuals, and these she used carefully to carry to starving creatures.

This soon awakened against her the displeasure of the officers of the ducal house. According as she grew up, she increased in virtue and in piety; she lived more to herself, recollected in the presence of God, who was graciously pleased henceforth to adorn her with His most rare and precious graces.

One of the customs, existing at this period, was that every princess and maiden of the highest rank should choose, by lot, one from amongst the holy Apostles to be her especial patron. Elizabeth, who had previously chosen the Blessed Virgin for her patroness and especial advocate, had also a veneration, an old manuscript says, a particular friendship, for St. John the Evangelist which she entertained on account of the virginal purity of which this holy Apostle was the type. She began to pray earnestly to our Lord, that He would assign to her St. John as her patron; after which she humbly went with her companions to the election. For this purpose twelve tapers, each being inscribed with the name of an Apostle, were laid upon the Altar, and each postulant advanced and took the first that chance presented to her. The taper which bore the name of St. John was taken up by Elizabeth, but not content with this coincidence with her wishes she twice renewed the trial, and had each time the same success.

Believing herself recommended to the beloved Apostle by a special manifestation of Providence, she felt her devotion towards him increase, and during all her life she faithfully venerated him; she never refused anything that was asked of her in St. John's name, whether it was to pardon an injury or to confer a benefit. Placed under this sacred patronage the pious child found therein a new motive to render herself worthy of Heaven. She therefore redoubled her efforts to attain all Christian virtues, and augmented the number of her voluntary privations.

She never neglected to sanctify the name of the Lord by a great reserve in her words. On Sundays and festivals she used to lay aside some portion of her jewels, preferring to honor God rather by humility of the heart and exterior, than by splendor of dress.

Guta tells us that on these occasions she would not put on gloves or laced ruffles until after Mass.

Every day she sought opportunities of conquering her self-will in little things, in order to prepare for making greater sacrifices. In her games, when she won, and that success made her quite joyous, she would suddenly stop, saying, "Now that I have been so fortunate, I will give up for the love of God." She loved dancing, according to the universal custom of the country wherein she was born, and of that in which she was reared; but when she had danced one figure, she would say, "It is enough to give one turn for the world. I will deprive myself of the others, in honor of Jesus Christ."

Meanwhile the young Louis, her betrothed, was continually with her, and she felt great pleasure in being near him. She called him "*My dear brother;*" and he was wont to address her thus: "*My dear friend — my sweet Sister.*"

Thus passed the early days of this young girl; the Lord, who reserved her for so pure and so brilliant a destiny, had counted the number of her years, and willing soon to summon her to take her place in Heaven, He opened to her thus early the treasury of His grace. Her life was destined to be too short for any of those great interior revolutions which have distinguished the lives and conversions of some of the most illustrious saints. No storm of the heart was to darken the celestial ray that lighted her from the cradle to the tomb!

All was to correspond in her blessed career. She was not the only servant of God who, in early life, rendered testimony to His mercy and power; and certainly there is not for Christian eyes a sweeter sight, than the dawning of those great lights that are destined to illumine Heaven and Earth.

## CHAPTER III.

HOW THE DEAR SAINT ELIZABETH HAD TO SUFFER FOR GOD.

Euntes ibant et flebant mittentes semina sua.

Venientes autem venient cum exultatione portantes manipulos anos.

— *Ps. cxxv. 7, 8.*

**E**LIZABETH had scarcely attained her ninth year when the father of her betrothed, the Landgrave Hermann, died, in 1216. One night he dreamed that skeletons of criminals, exposed at the place of execution outside the gates of Eisenach, were suddenly transformed into white-robed virgins; that these virgins came towards his bed, headed by our Lady and St. Catherine, towards whom he felt a particular devotion, and that they addressed him thus: "Thou must upon this spot build us a house, thou art to place therein consecrated virgins, and then, after a little while, we shall take thee to us." The Duke faithfully executed this command. He founded in the place indicated to him a convent of nuns under the invocation of St. Catherine, and installed there as first abbess a young widow, Imagina, Duchess of Brabant, and designed this sanctuary for his own burial place, and that of his descendants. After this he died, and was interred as he had ordered.

The young Louis, then scarcely sixteen years old, was his heir, being his eldest son; the two younger brothers, Henry Raspon and Conrad, each received an appanage, with the title of Count, and shared in the government of part of the dominions of the Landgrave, according to the custom of the house of Thuringia.

The death of Hermann was a misfortune to Elizabeth. That illustrious and pious prince had continued to love her on account of

her precocious piety. He had always treated her as his own daughter, and during his life no one dared to interfere in her religious practices.

But after his death it was no longer so. Though Louis, whom she looked upon as her betrothed and her lord, had become sovereign of the country, his extreme youth made him in some measure dependent on his mother, the Duchess Sophia, daughter of the celebrated Otto de Wittelsbach, Duke of Bavaria. This princess saw with displeasure Elizabeth's great devotion, and showed her discontent at it. The young Agnes, sister of Louis, who was brought up with her future sister-in-law, and whose dazzling beauty had rendered her more liable to be seduced by the vanities of the world, used to reproach her incessantly on her humble and retiring habits. She was wont to tell her plainly that she was only fit to be a waiting-maid or a servant. The other young girls of the court, companions to the two princesses, seeing that every day Elizabeth took less share in their games, dances, and gay and frivolous life, used to repeat what they heard Agnes say, and would openly mock her. Even the most influential officers of the ducal court, forgetful of the respect due to her royal birth, her sex, and extreme youth, blushed not to pursue her with derision and public insults. All agreed in saying that in nothing did she resemble a princess.

Indeed, Elizabeth showed a kind of distaste for the society of the young countesses and noble ladies who had been appointed as her companions. She preferred that of the humble daughters of some of the citizens of Eisenach, and even that of the girls in her service. Above all, she loved to surround herself with the children of the women among whom she distributed her alms.

The insults of which she was the object served to render this society more sweet and dear to her. She never allowed pride, or wounded self-love, or even impatience, to dwell in her heart.

This first experience of the injustice of men, and of the miseries of the world, became, as it were, a new link uniting her to God. She gathered therefrom new strength to love and serve Him.

"As the lily among thorns," says one of her historians, "the innocent Elizabeth budded and bloomed in the midst of bitterness, and

spread all around her the sweet and fragrant perfume of patience and humility.”

She gave at this time an example of that humility, which all the narrators of her life have carefully preserved. It was the feast of the Assumption, a day on which there were great indulgences in the churches consecrated to the Blessed Virgin, and on which it was customary with the people to make an offering of the fruits and crops of the year. The Duchess Sophia said to Agnes and Elizabeth, “Let us go down to Eisenach to the church of our dear Lady, to hear the High Mass of the Teutonic knights, who honor her specially; perhaps we may also hear a sermon in her praise. Put on your richest robes and golden crowns.” The young princesses, being adorned as she had ordered, descended with her to the city, and entering the church, knelt on a faldstool before the great crucifix. At the sight of the image of the dying Savior, Elizabeth took off her crown, and laying it on a bench, prostrated herself, without other ornament on her head than her hair. The duchess, seeing her thus, said rudely to her, “What ails you, Lady Elizabeth, what new whim is this, do you wish that every one should laugh at you? Young ladies should hold themselves erect, and not throw themselves upon the ground like fools or old women. Can you not do as we do, instead of behaving like an ill-reared child? Is your crown too heavy? Why do you remain thus stooped like a peasant?” Elizabeth, rising, humbly answered her mother-in-law, “Dear lady, do not blame me; behold before my eyes my God and my King, the sweet and merciful Jesus, crowned with sharp thorns, and can I, who am but a vile creature, remain before him wearing pearls, gold, and jewels? My coronet would be a mockery of His thorny wreath!” And she began to weep bitterly, for already the love of Christ had wounded her tender heart. She then knelt humbly as before, leaving Sophia and Agnes to speak much as they pleased, and continued to pray with such fervor that, having placed a fold of her mantle before her eyes, it became saturated with her tears. The other two princesses, in order to avoid a contrast so disadvantageous to them in the eyes of the people, were obliged to imitate her, and to



draw their veils over their faces, "which it would have been much more pleasing to them not to do," adds the chronicler.

Such traits served but to increase the hatred with which profane souls were inflamed against her. Accordingly, as she grew up this feeling seemed to be propagated more and more, and when she had attained a marriageable age, there was a general explosion of persecutions and insults against her, throughout the whole court of Thuringia. The relatives of the Landgrave, his councilors and principal vassals, all declared themselves averse to such a union. They clamored loudly and said that she should be sent back to her father, and restore her troth-plight. That such a *Beguine* was not fit for their prince — that he should have a spouse, noble, rich, well-connected, and of truly royal manners — that he would do much better to marry the daughter of a neighboring prince who could give him help in his need; whereas Elizabeth's father lived too far away for that, or even to revenge the insults offered to his daughter if he felt them, and furthermore that he seemed to have forgotten her already, and had not sent the remainder of the dowry promised by her mother. The intimate companions of the young duke seized every opportunity of inducing him to give up Elizabeth, and to send her back to Hungary, because she was too timid and reserved. The Duchess-mother used every effort to oblige Elizabeth to take the veil in some convent. Agnes assailed her with contempt and insult — she incessantly told her that she had mistaken her vocation in not becoming a servant. "My Lady Elizabeth," said she to her one day, "if you imagine that our lord, my brother, will marry you, you mistake very much; or if he does, you must become quite a different person from what you now are." Such was the treatment which she had to endure every day — she deeply felt the unhappiness of her position — there was she, still a child and already without help, without friends, without human consolation, in a manner exiled from her country, deprived of paternal protection, in the midst of a strange court, exposed to the insults and persecutions of those who were God's enemies and hers. Yet this made her the better recognize that her life should be but a pilgrimage in this uncertain world. She had recourse to God, and in silence confided to Him her

griefs and opened to Him her heart. She sought to unite her will to that of her Heavenly Father, and begged of Him to accomplish His divine will in her by any means that He thought fit.

Then, when at the foot of the Cross, peace and resignation had been restored to her soul, she would cheerfully rejoin her maidens, and the poor girls whom she had chosen as her companions; and this conduct redoubled against her the mockeries and invectives of the two princesses and the courtiers.

Here one of her biographers interrupts his recital to address to her this prayer:

“O most dear St. Elizabeth, I honor thy virtuous youth and weep over the contempt and persecution thou didst suffer. Why have I not passed my early years as holily as thou didst? Why did not I, like thee, suffer patiently all contradictions! I beseech thee, by thy blessed childhood, to atone for my infantine malice, and, by thy heroic patience, to obtain for me pardon of my willful anger and of all my faults.”

## CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE YOUNG LOUIS WAS FAITHFUL TO THE DEAR SAINT  
ELIZABETH, AND HOW HE MARRIED HER.

Lætare cum muliere adolescentiæ tuæ . . . In amore ejus delectare iugiter.  
— *Prov. v. 28, 29.*

**T**HE just God who had received the prayers and tears of his child, Elizabeth, did not delay to reward her submission and patience. Alone in the midst of his court, the young Duke Louis was not prejudiced against her, and, deceiving the hopes and wishes of all, he remained faithful to her who from his childhood he had regarded as his bride. His love for her increased every day, and though, probably out of regard for his mother, he did not think proper to manifest it publicly, nevertheless, this pure and holy affection was deeply planted in his heart.

On this point he was as deaf to the exhortations and sarcasms of his mother, as to the counsels of his false friends and the voice of his passions. He regarded with joy and admiration what attracted to Elizabeth the insults of the world, — her extreme modesty, the absence of all pomp in her dress, her piety, charity, — and he thought how happy he would feel in learning from her these virtues. His chaplain, Berchtold, who has written his life, doubted not but that God, by a secret inspiration, turned his heart towards the royal exile. For it was not only as the woman who was to be his wife, with a human or conjugal love, that he regarded her, but as a sister in Jesus Christ, with an affection that seemed to have been instilled into his heart by the hand of the Most High.

The more the wicked surrounded him with perfidious counsels, the more did he feel his soul penetrated with fidelity and tenderness for

this innocent stranger; according as he saw her hated by others on account of her virtues, the greater necessity did he feel for loving and defending her. Louis profited of every opportunity, when, without offending his mother, he could go secretly to console Elizabeth in her moments of sadness. In this solitude, without other witness than God, who had already blessed their holy union, they spoke of their secret and mutual love, and the prince sought by tender and encouraging words to heal the wounds which others inflicted on this young soul. Thus she experienced from these meetings unspeakable consolation. Whenever Louis went on distant hunting parties, or when he passed through trading cities, he used to purchase some article that appeared to him rare and precious, to present to his betrothed. Never did he return empty-handed; he used to bring either a rosary of coral, a little crucifix, a pious picture, or a knife, a purse, gloves, brooches, golden chains, or pins, or something that he knew she had not before. At his return she used joyously to salute him; he would tenderly embrace her, and present her with whatever he had brought, as a love-gift, and a sign that he had thought of her during his absence.

On one occasion, when the Duke was accompanied to the chase by several strange lords, who did not leave him until his return, he omitted to bring the accustomed present to Elizabeth. The princess, rendered distrustful by persecution and injustice, felt this forgetfulness deeply; it was remarked by her enemies with joy, and they boasted of it as a symptom of a change in Louis' feelings. Having met Lord Gaultier de Varila, the great cup-bearer, who had brought her from Hungary, to whose care her father had specially confided her, and who fought for her, to the best of his power, against the intrigues of the other courtiers, Elizabeth confided her grief to this old friend. The good knight sympathized in her affliction, and promised to speak of it to his lord. He soon had an opportunity, for Louis took him on a hunting party in the neighborhood of Wartburg. As they reclined together on the grass in a certain wood, whence can be seen in the foreground Inselberg, the highest mountain of Thuringia, Lord Gaultier said to him, "Will you be pleased, my Lord, to answer a question I am going to put to you?" The good prince replied, "Speak

confidently, and I will tell thee all thou wouldst know.” “Then,” said the knight, “what are you going to do with my lady Elizabeth, whom I brought to you? Will you take her for your wife, or will you break your troth-plight and send her back to her father?” Louis arose immediately, and, stretching forth his hand towards Inselberg, he said, “Dost thou see that mountain before us? Well! if it were of pure gold, from its base to its summit, and that all should be given to me on the condition of sending away my Elizabeth, I would never do it. Let them think or say of her what they please; I say this — that I love her, and love nothing better in this world: I will have my Elizabeth; she is dearer to me for her virtue and piety than all the kingdoms and riches of the Earth.” “I beg of you, my lord,” said Gaultier, “to let me repeat to her these words.” “Tell them to her,” said Louis, “and tell her also that I will never listen to those who counsel me against her; and give her this as a new pledge of my faith” — so saying, he put his hand into his alms-purse, and took from it a little double-cased mirror, set in silver, within which was a picture of our crucified Lord. The knight hastened to Elizabeth, told her what had happened, and gave her the mirror. She smiled with great joy, and thanked Lord Gaultier for having thus acted towards her as a father and friend; then, opening the mirror and seeing the picture of our Lord, she fervently kissed it and pressed it to her heart.

But the time was soon to come, when Louis could keep his word as a Christian and a prince, and when Elizabeth was to be rewarded for her patience, and consoled for her trials. In 1218, on the feast of St. Kilian, the Duke having accomplished his eighteenth year, was, with several young Lords, armed as a knight, in the Church of St. George at Eisenach; the Bishop of Naumburg having come there to bless their swords.

The following year was partly occupied in sustaining a war against Sigefrid, Archbishop of Mayence, who, on account of certain disputes with Hermann, had excommunicated his son; the latter, having boldly entered into Hesse, and there ravaged the possessions of the prelate and his friends, obliged him to sue for peace. A conference was held

at Fulda, on the feast of St. Boniface, in the year 1219; the Landgrave was formally absolved, and a perfect reconciliation took place.

On his return from this first campaign, Louis proclaimed his intention to marry his betrothed, and at the same time imposed silence on all who were inclined to give insulting or perverse counsel against her.

No one dared to combat so decided a will; the cunning of men was henceforth powerless in striving any longer to separate two souls that God in his eternal councils had united.

“Admire,” says their historian, “how this happy young man and chaste husband, when about to marry, remained deaf to impious advice, and a stranger to the thirst for gold, knowing that a prudent wife is the good gift promised by the Lord to the man who lives worthily in this world.”

It was in 1220 that the marriage was celebrated with great pomp at the castle of Wartburg. The Duke invited to it all his counts of Hesse and Thuringia, and a vast number of knights and squires. All the guests were lodged at his expense in the town of Eisenach. By common consent, the knight resigned the honor of conducting the bride to the Church to Count Meinhard de Muhlberg, and Lord Gaultier de Varila, who had sought her nine years before in Hungary, and who now, as it were, placed the seal on the result of their embassy. Elizabeth was also accompanied by all the stately dames and gentle maidens of the country. The chroniclers do not speak of the sentiments with which the nobles saw the triumph of her who had been for so long a time an object of their disdain and persecution. But they boast of the harmonious music of the high mass, the luxury of the banquets, the joyousness of the dances, and the splendor of the tournament, which was held for three days, and at which several young knights distinguished themselves. After these three festival days, the nobles and their wives successively returned to their castles, and the habitual order reigned again throughout the vast manor of Wartburg.

The young spouses belonged henceforth to each other. Louis was twenty years old — Elizabeth but thirteen; both even more youthful in

heart than in age — both united more by spirit and faith than by human affection. We are told that they loved each other in God with an inconceivable love, and for this reason the holy angels dwelt continually with them.

## CHAPTER V.

HOW THE DUKE LOUIS, HUSBAND OF THE DEAR SAINT ELIZABETH,  
WAS AGREEABLE TO GOD AND MAN.

Erat vir ille simplex et rectus, ac timens Deum et recedens a malo. — *Job* i.1.

**H**IS husband whom God in His mercy had destined for His pious servant, and whom she regarded with a tenderness at once so deep and so reserved, was assuredly worthy of her, and of her love. All the historians of Thuringia and of our saint concur in describing him in the most attractive manner. With the exception of his glorious namesake, Saint Louis of France, the annals of his times do not tell us of any prince who, though so young, possessed in so high a degree the virtues of a Christian and of a sovereign.

The nobility and purity of his soul were manifested in his exterior. His manly beauty was celebrated by his contemporaries. All boast of the perfect proportion of his figure, the freshness of his complexion, his long fair hair, and the serene, benevolent expression of his countenance. Many imagined they saw in him a striking resemblance to the portrait which tradition has preserved of the Son of God made man. The charm of his smile was irresistible. His deportment was noble and dignified — the tone of his voice extremely sweet. No one could see him without loving him.

What particularly distinguished him, from his earliest years was, an unstained purity of soul and body. He was as modest and bashful as a young girl; it was easy to make him blush, and he observed in his conversation the greatest reserve.

It was not only in his first innocent years that he prized this treasure of purity; it was not with him the result of a youth preserved from



danger; nor did it arise from passing emotions or resolutions, sincere when formed, but destined to vanish at the first assault of the senses; but it was a firm and deep-rooted will, which he made the rule of his whole life; it was an inflexible resistance to the most frequent and dangerous temptations.

Independent of control at a very early age, master at sixteen of one of the richest and most powerful principalities of Germany, surrounded by all the comforts and luxuries of that eventful period, and, above all, by perfidious counselors and flatterers, eager to see his virtue destroyed, he never yielded; never even did the shadow of sin tarnish the fidelity that he had promised to God, to himself; and to her whom he loved in God. It will be permitted to us to cite here two anecdotes which contemporary writers have related in detail, and which seem to us to be of a nature to edify devout souls.

A short time after the death of his father, Louis went with his mother, the duchess Sophia, to the castle of Ebersberg. A certain lord wished to put his innocence to the proof, and having found in the neighboring village of Anerbach a young girl of remarkable beauty, he had her brought to the castle, and even to the chamber of the prince. For this it was necessary to cross the courtyard, where at the moment the little Elizabeth was playing with her companions. Seeing this stranger being led to her betrothed, she began to weep, and, when asked the cause of her tears, she replied, "Because they wish to take my brother's precious soul and destroy it."

Meanwhile the young duke Louis lay upon his bed, for it was during the heat of the day, when he heard a knock at his door; he leaped up, and went, barefooted as he was, to open it. The young girl entered with the knight, and after they were seated, Louis said to her,

"Maiden, why come you here?"

"I know not, my lord," she replied.

"Then," said the knight, "I brought her to you that you might do with her what you please."

At these words the pious and prudent prince called one of his chamberlains, and desired him to bring him three marks of pure silver. When he had received them, he gave them to the girl, and said,

“Lower your veil, fair maiden, and take this small present as a blessing, that you may return with joy to your family.” Then, taking the unworthy knight aside, he ordered him to restore the girl to her relatives free from all stain. “If the least harm happen to her,” said he, “I promise thee that thou shalt be hanged.” The narrator says that he conceals the name of this false knight to avoid giving scandal, and adds, “Elizabeth, seeing that the stranger departed so soon, rejoiced at it, and thanked God.”

Another time, as he looked from a window at Eisenach on a square where the people were dancing, an attendant pointed out to him the wife of one of the citizens who was remarkable for her beauty and grace; he added, that if she pleased the prince, he would take care that she should be made agreeable to his wishes. The prince, quite irritated, turned towards him, saying, “Be silent. If ever again thou darest to sully my ears by such language, I will drive thee from my court. How darest thou propose to me to become an accomplice in a crime which I may be called upon to judge and punish every day.” So rare and courageous a virtue could have for its foundation only an active and practical faith in all the duties imposed by the Church.

Every day the holy mysteries were celebrated in his presence, and he assisted at them with exemplary devotion. He was a zealous defender of the rights of the Church and the monasteries, but he well knew how to distinguish between these rights and the personal interests of some prelates, as we have seen by his war against the Archbishop of Mayence. But when the brutal injustice and avidity of some of his lay vassals troubled the peaceful and benevolent lives of the ministers of the Lord, he mounted horse, and went with lance in hand to fight for the cause of God and the poor people.

The society in which he took most pleasure was that of religious men, and the usual termination of his rides in the time of peace was the Benedictine Abbey of Reinhartsbrunn, where he had chosen his burial place. His first visit on arriving there was to the guest-house for the poor and pilgrims, which was an essential part of every monastery. He tried to console the sick and infirm by his presence and gentle words, and always left them, as alms, part of his rich costume, or

some other present. When returned to his castle, he endeavored to endure some of the privations of which he saw the example in the religious life. Through a spirit of penance he never ate salted or spiced meats — this contrasted strongly with the existing customs of the German princes — he never drank beer, and used wine only when he was ill. This simple and constant fidelity to the most rigorous duties of a Christian life served to exhibit more brilliantly the qualities of a true knight, and of a wise and amiable prince.

No sovereign of his time surpassed him in courage, nor even in physical strength and agility in the exercises of the body. He displayed this courage on an occasion which the historians have carefully commemorated. The emperor made him a present of a lion, and one morning the duke, lightly clad, and entirely without armor, was walking in the courtyard; he saw the lion, who had escaped from his den, running towards him, roaring. Without being at all frightened, he stood firmly, clenched his hands, and menaced him with his voice, trusting in God. The lion came immediately wagging his tail, and lay at his feet. A sentinel, who was on the ramparts, attracted by the roaring of the lion, perceived the danger of his master, and called for help. The lion allowed himself to be chained without any resistance, and many persons saw in this power exercised over ferocious animals an evident pledge of celestial favor, merited by the piety of the prince, and the sanctity of the young Elizabeth. To this courage, of which, in the continuation of this history, we will find many other proofs, he joined in a high degree that noble courtesy which St. Francis of Assisium, his sublime contemporary, named "*The Sister of Charity.*" He bore towards all women a respect full of modesty. He was to every one, and particularly to his inferiors, unchangeably benevolent and affable. He loved to give pleasure to others, and never repulsed any one by pride or coldness.

A sweet and frank gaiety, an amiable familiarity, marked all his domestic life. His knights and esquires praised his great generosity, the counts and lords who came to his court were treated with the highest respect, and with all the honors due to their rank.

To these chivalrous virtues he added all those of a Christian sovereign. The only vehement passion that all his historians remark in him was that for justice. He loved it with intense devotion; and this love gave him strength sufficient to punish the violators of the laws. He banished from his court, and deprived of their employments, all those who were haughty to the poor, as well as persons who allowed themselves to be carried into committing acts of violence, and those who brought him false and malicious tales. Blasphemers and men who blushed not to speak impure words, were condemned to wear, during a certain time, in public, a mark of ignominy. Inflexible towards those who outraged the law of God, he was indulgent and patient to those who failed in the observance of his own enactments. When some of his servants would forget themselves before him, he would gently say, "Dear children, act not thus, for you afflict my heart."

To all his deliberations he brought a tried prudence — his military expeditions and political actions show a skill and foresight that do not appear easily reconcilable with his extreme youth and the simplicity of his character.

He occupied himself with a zeal and assiduity in all the labors that the government of his dominions imposed upon him. His regard for truth was so great that his least word inspired the same security as would the most solemn oath of another. "One could build upon his word as upon a rock."

Full of mercy and generosity for the poor, he showed a lively solicitude for all classes of his people. All who were injured, no matter by whom, came to him with confidence, and never in vain; more than once he took the field to avenge wrongs inflicted on his meanest subjects.

Under such a prince, the moral and material prosperity of Thuringia could not but increase; the chroniclers of the country have celebrated with enthusiasm the happiness that it enjoyed during his too short reign, and the fruit which was derived from the example of the virtues of the Sovereign. The nobility imitated their head, and no longer were vassals heard complaining of the warlike and oppressive habits of their lords. The people were obedient and tranquil; union, peace, and

safety reigned throughout the country — all with one common voice joined in proclaiming the happiness that Thuringia owed to the wisdom of Duke Louis.

In a word, all his character and life are contained in the noble motto which he had chosen from his earliest years "*Piety, Chastity, Justice towards all.*"

He realized, more than any other, the glorious belief of Catholic ages, which established a fundamental analogy between Chivalry and the Sacerdotal character, for true knights were priests armed with justice and faith, as the priests were the knights of the Word and of prayer.

## CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE DUKE LOUIS AND THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH LIVED  
TOGETHER BEFORE GOD IN THE HOLY STATE OF MARRIAGE.

Pars bona, mulier bona, in parte timentium Deum dabitur viro pro factis bonis.

— *Prov.*, xxvi. 8.

Vulnerasti cor meum soror mes sponsa. — *Cant.* iv. 9.

**A** PRINCE who was so perfect a model of a true Christian could not receive a sweeter recompense in this world than the love of a saint. We have seen how our Elizabeth retained, as her only connecting link with the worldly life, this love which she associated with such religious feelings. On his part, Louis failed not to preserve the tender fidelity of his early years.

Elizabeth was gifted with all that could touch and win a young heart. Adorned before God with piety and humility, in the eyes of men she possessed all personal attractions. The historians who have preserved her portrait represent her beauty as most regular and perfect; her complexion was clear brown, her hair black, her figure of unrivalled grace and elegance — her deportment grave, noble and majestic — above all, her eyes beamed with tenderness, charity and mercy. It is easy to imagine that this exterior beauty reflected thus dazzlingly the interior perfections of her soul.

It was not on the ephemeral feelings of purely human admiration that these young people founded the unalterable union of their hearts — but it was on a common faith, and on the strict practice of the virtues that this faith teaches, and the duties it imposes.

Notwithstanding her youth and the almost child-like vivacity of her love for her husband, Elizabeth never forget that he was her head, as Jesus Christ is head of the Church, and that she should be obedient to

him in all things as the Church is to Jesus Christ. She joined then to her ardent love for him a great respect — she hastily obeyed his least sign or word, and had a scrupulous care that by none of her words or actions he should be annoyed or receive the slightest grounds for impatience. The yoke to which she submitted was in all things as the Church wishes it should be, a bond of love and peace, for Louis gave her full liberty to perform the works that interested her most — those of piety and mercy.

He even encouraged and sustained her in these holy exercises with a pious care, and only put a stop to them when it seemed to him that her zeal would carry her too far; this he did by addressing to her words dictated by affectionate prudence and always listened to with docility. Every night the young wife, profiting of the real or apparent sleep of her husband, would get out of bed, and kneeling by its side would pray earnestly, thinking of the holy crib at Bethlehem, and thanking the Lord that He had deigned to be born at midnight for her salvation and that of the human race.

Her husband often awoke, and fearing that she was too delicate to endure such penances, he would beg of her to give over. “Cease, dear sister,” he would say, “and take thy rest” — then taking her hand he would hold it until she was again by his side, or until he would fall asleep leaving his hand in hers — then she used to bathe in tears of pious fervor that beloved hand that seemed to ally her to Earth. Louis never employed any constraint to oblige her to discontinue her pious works, they rejoiced him and gladdened his heart. Ysentrude, one of Elizabeth’s most confidential attendants, related to the ecclesiastical judges a circumstance that proved Louis’s indulgence. The Duchess, in order not to oversleep herself nor to disturb her husband, ordered one of her maids of honor to awake her at a certain hour by catching her foot — it happened on one occasion that Ysentrude caught the Duke’s foot, he awoke suddenly, but guessing the cause of the disturbance, he lay down again without showing the least sign of impatience. “He saw,” says the historian, “that she loved God with her whole heart, and that thought comforted him; and she, confiding in the piety and wisdom of her husband, did not conceal from him any of her

penitential exercises, well knowing that he would never interfere between her and her Savior.”

To the frequent proofs of their mutual tenderness both added gentle exhortations to advance together in the way of perfection; this holy emulation fortified and preserved them in the service of God — by it they learned to draw, even from the ardent affection which united them, the charm and feeling of the Supreme Love.

The grave and pure character of their mutual devotion was revealed by the touching custom which they preserved even after marriage, of calling each other *brother* and *sister*, as it were to perpetuate the remembrance of their childhood, and make their whole lives one unbroken attachment.

The happiness of being together was indispensable to them; so powerful were the chaste attractions of each, so entire was the union of their souls, that they could ill endure being separated even for the shortest time. Thus when the Duke's hunting excursions were not too distant he always took his dear Elizabeth with him — and she was happy to accompany him, even though she had to travel over rugged roads and dangerous paths, and to brave storms; but neither hail, nor snow, nor floods, nor excessive heats, could hinder her from going, so anxious was she to be near him who never kept her from God. Nevertheless, it sometimes happened that Louis was obliged by his duties as a Sovereign to undertake long journeys, even out of his own dominions, where he could not bring his wife; then, as soon as he set out, she would lay aside her royal robes and, covering her head with a veil, would put on the costume of a widow. Thus she would remain during his absence, awaiting his return in prayers, vigils and severe mortifications.

But as soon as the approach of Louis was announced, she used to hastily adorn herself with all the care and magnificence her rank required. “It is not,” she would say to her maidens, “through carnal pleasure nor vanity that I deck myself thus — God is my witness, but only through Christian charity, that I may remove from my brother all occasions of discontent or sin, if any thing in me should displease



him, that he may love but me in the Lord, and that God who has consecrated our lives upon Earth may unite us in Heaven.”

Then she would go forth to meet him with a simple, child-like joy, and while they remained together she would use every effort to please his eyes and his heart. At table she could not bear to sit at a distance from her husband, but would take her place by his side, which was expressly contrary to the custom then observed by ladies of high rank. In this way she not only gratified herself by being as near as possible to her loved lord, but she felt that her presence served to check the light and frivolous discourse of the young knights.

Nothing indeed could be more imposing even to worldly souls than the sight of so much virtue in these young persons. United by a holy concord, full of purity and humility before God, full of charity and good-will towards men, loving each other with a love that drew them both to God, they offered to Heaven and Earth the most edifying sight, and, in anticipation, realized the charming picture which the greatest of Catholic poets has traced of a celestial marriage:

La lor concordia e i lor lieti sembante.  
Amore e maraviglia e dolce sguardo,  
Faceano esser cagion de' pensier santi.

Dante, *Parad.* c. xi.

## CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH PRACTICED THE VIRTUE OF MORTIFICATION.

Or la dame ainsi vecu,  
 Et de sa vie a fait escu,  
 Por l'arme deffendre et couvrir,  
 Et por saint Paradis ourir.

*Rutebeuf. MS. F. 34*

**B**EHOLD, then, our young princess in possession of all the happiness of early years, of the sweet joys of the morning of life that no after pleasures can replace, that no grief can banish from the memory; those joys whose absence darkens life, whose remembrance suffices to alleviate the deepest woe. Thus God often grants this consolation (like the dew of morn) to his creatures, that they may be better able to endure the “labors of the day and the heats.”

But Elizabeth, whose mind was fixed on Heaven, though accepting this happiness with a joyful submission, understood its danger, and for this predestined soul it was a trial over which she was bound to triumph.

She felt that the grace which God had granted her in uniting her to him she loved so much, obliged her to a more zealous fidelity, and a more ardent gratitude towards her celestial Benefactor. Though assuredly her young heart could not be stained with grievous sin, she constantly remembered that before the strict justice of God, the most faithful souls are but unprofitable servants, and that we can never impose on ourselves sufficient penance to merit salvation.

Thence she began, in the humility of her soul, to amass that superabundance of grace and merit which is, according to the sweet

and consoling doctrine of the Church, for the saints of God a brilliant glory, and for the faithful a rich treasure and a sure refuge.

She sought at first to conquer her flesh by vigils. We have seen with what persevering fidelity she mortified herself in this way, and with what mingled solicitude and indulgence her pious husband saw her rise from his side to approach God in prayer.

But frequently, notwithstanding her good will, Elizabeth during her devotions would not be able to resist sleep, and would slumber, kneeling on the carpet by the bed-side, her hand clasped in that of her husband; her women, finding her thus in the morning, used to reproach her, and ask, would it not be as well for her to sleep in her bed as by its side? "No," she would say, "if I cannot always pray, I can at least mortify myself by remaining away from my beloved husband; I wish that my flesh should be conquered — it can but gain by doing what the soul wishes." When her husband was absent, she prayed all night to Jesus, the spouse of her soul. But this was not the only self-inflicted penance endured by this young and religious princess.

Under her finest clothes she always wore a *cilice* (hair-shirt) next her skin. Every Friday, in commemoration of the painful passion of our Lord, and every day during Lent, she caused the discipline to be administered to her severely and in secret, "In order," says a historian, "to render to her Savior, who was cruelly scourged, some recompense." She would then return to her court with a joyous and serene countenance.

Later in life, she would arise from her couch, and going to the next chamber, wherein were her attendants, she would order them to give her some hard blows; then, strengthened against her own weakness, she would return to her husband with redoubled gaiety and amiability. "Thus," says a contemporary poem, "she sought to approach unto God, and to break the bonds of the prison of flesh, like a valiant warrior for the love of the Lord."

Elizabeth resolved that these secret austerities should by no means influence her daily duties, or render her disposition in the least degree sad or gloomy.

She cheerfully took part in the festivals and merry-makings of worldlings, at which her rank in society assigned to her a prominent place; and as a great saint, worthy in every regard to understand and judge her, has said of her, "She played and danced sometimes, and was present at assemblies of recreation, without prejudice to her devotion, which was so deeply rooted in her soul, that, like the rocks about the lake Rietta, which grew greater by the beating of the waves, her devotion increased amongst the pomps and vanities to which her condition exposed her."

She detested all kinds of exaggeration in works of piety — all affectation of grief — and said of those who, in praying, wore a sad or severe aspect, "They seem as if they wished to frighten our good God; can they not say to Him all they please with cheerful hearts?"

Elizabeth never neglected any means of offering to God her tribute of humility and obedience. She had for confessor Master Conrad of Marburg, of whom we shall hereafter speak, and to whom her husband permitted her to make a vow of obedience in all that was not contrary to his marital authority.

Now, Conrad, who had opposed the imposition of certain taxes, which he looked upon as unjust and contrary to the will of God, and which were levied to defray the expenses of the royal table, positively prohibited his penitent from nourishing herself with any other food than that which she knew was furnished from her husband's private resources, and not wrung from the earnings of the poor vassals. The compassionate heart of the young duchess complied with this, and having adopted the resolution, she put it in practice with the most scrupulous fidelity, though she was sometimes embarrassed by it, as she still continued the custom of sitting by her husband at meals.

This pious prince placed no obstacle in her way, and when her three maids of honor asked his permission to follow the example of their mistress, he immediately granted it, adding, "I would very willingly do the same, if it were not that I fear slander and scandal; but, with God's help, I will soon change this kind of life." Full of a tender respect for the conscience of his wife, he warned her with gentle and affectionate care when there were any dishes forbidden by her rule;

and, when he knew that all were the produce of his estates, he pressed her to eat; but Elizabeth would scarcely taste anything, always fearing lest it should be the fruit of the bitter sweat of the poor. She was most careful to hide from the world what she did for the love of God, and when seated at the Duke's table, surrounded by the nobles and officers of the court, she had recourse to a thousand little stratagems that they might not remark her privations. She would feign to watch the arrangement of the service with great care — would frequently give orders to the attendants — would speak to each guest, and invite him to drink. Sometimes even she used to cut into little pieces the bread and meat placed before her, and scatter them on her plate, to give them the appearance of being left.

Elizabeth often left the most abundantly served table hungry and thirsty. Her noble maidens, companions in her penance, relate that sometimes for her entire subsistence she had but dry bread, or a few little cakes steeped in honey.

One day at a great banquet she could reserve but five very small birds, and almost all these she gave to her maidens, for whose privations she had far greater compassion than for her own. On another occasion, as she went to join her husband at the Diet of the empire, she found nothing that her conscience would permit her to eat but a piece of coarse black bread, so hard that she had to steep it in hot water; but, as it was a fast day, she was contented with it, and traveled the same day, on that scanty meal, sixteen leagues on horseback.

A touching and graceful tradition tells us how it pleased God to render these privations less rude and repulsive to her. One day, during the absence of her husband, she dined alone, and her poor repast consisted of dry bread and water. The Duke having returned suddenly, came in, and, as a mark of affection, wished to drink from her glass; he found in it, to his great surprise, a liquor which seemed to him to be the best wine he had ever tasted. He asked the cup-bearer whence it was brought, and the latter replied that he had only served the duchess with water. Louis said no more, but according to the expression, as pious as it is just, of the narrator, he had *soul enough* to recognize in

this circumstance a mark of divine favor, and a reward of the sacrifices which his wife imposed on herself.

Often, accompanied by her maidens, Elizabeth used to go through the offices of the castle, and inquire with the greatest care whence were brought the various provisions. When she found some permitted food, she would say to her ladies, "You will eat but of that," or when an allowed drink, such as wine from her husband's vineyards, she would add, "Drink but of this." But when she found nothing to trouble her conscience, she would clap her hands with child-like joy, and cry out, "Today everything goes well; we can both eat and drink."

She was then about fifteen years old, and had preserved the simplicity of her mind and heart, whilst rendering herself worthy of Heaven, by the practice of virtues far above her age.

A life so rigorous, and so contrary to the custom of her rank and her time, drew upon the duchess the disapprobation and public reproach of all the court; even the Duke was not spared on account of his tolerance for what were accounted the *extravagancies* of his wife. Both, however, resigned themselves patiently to these profane judgments, loving better to please God than men.

The young princess soon found a new field for the exercise of her zeal and love of mortification. One great festival day, according to the custom of Wartburg, she went down to the church at Eisenach, clothed in sumptuous robes, covered with precious stones, her head encircled with the ducal crown, and accompanied by the Duchess-mother, and a number of attendants. Elizabeth was accustomed every time she entered a church to turn her eyes immediately towards the crucifix. This she now did, and seeing the image of her Savior naked, crowned with thorns, the hands and feet pierced with nails, she felt penetrated with compunction, and entering into herself she said, "Behold thy God hanging naked on the cross, and thou, useless creature, art covered with gorgeous vesture; his head is crowned with thorns, and thou wearest a crown of gold." At the same moment, so full of pious compassion was her tender heart, that she fell fainting on the ground. Her alarmed attendants raised her, carried her to the church porch for air, and sprinkled her with holy water. She was soon

restored to strength, but from that moment she formed a resolution to renounce all pomp of dress, except on those occasions when the duties of her rank, or the will of her husband, obliged her to it. In the depositions of her maids we find a detail of several articles which then formed part of the toilette of a princess. For instance, she renounced all dyed stuffs, bright colored veils for the head, narrow and plaited sleeves which appear to have been great luxuries at that period, silken fillets for the hair, and lastly, long dresses with trains. When necessity obliged her to be clothed in robes of state, she retained under the royal purple her simple woolen garments and the cilice which she never left off. In public assemblies she always appeared with the dignity and modesty befitting a Christian princess. She recommended this plainness of attire to the noble ladies who visited her, and earnestly advised them to renounce in this particular the vanities of the world. She even sent them patterns of the dresses that she thought would suit them. Her efforts were not fruitless. Several of these ladies, touched by the example of this young and newly-married woman, gave up all worldly superfluities, and some amongst them even made vows of perpetual chastity.

Oh! holy simplicity! truth of the early ages, pure and child-like tenderness of the ancient days, will you never be restored? Must we believe that you are dead and gone for ever? But if it be true that ages are in the life of the world as years are in that of man, will you not, after so long and dark a winter, return, O sweet springtime of Faith, to restore youth to this Earth, and its innocence to our hearts?

## CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE GREAT CHARITY OF THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH,  
AND HER LOVE FOR POVERTY.

De pauperum ut des tibi; da pauperi micam ut accipias totum panem; de tectum accipe cœlum; da res perituras ut accipias æternas mensuras.

— *S. Petrus Chrysologus, apud Thesaur. Nov. de Sanctis.*

In te misericordia, in te pietate,  
In te magnificenza, in te s'aduna  
Quantunque in creatura è di bontate.

*Dante, Parad. c. 33.*

**W**HILST Elizabeth imposed on her senses so rigorous a restraint, and treated herself with so much severity, her heart overflowed with charity and mercy for her unhappy fellow-creatures. The tender pity with which from childhood she had been animated, took every day new developments which in a short time merited for her the sweet and glorious title under which all Christendom now venerates her — that of the *Patroness of the Poor*.

Generosity to the poor, particularly that exercised by princes, was one of the most remarkable features of the age in which she lived; but we perceive that in her charity did not proceed from rank, still less from the desire of obtaining praise or purely human gratitude, but from an interior and heavenly inspiration. From her cradle, she could not bear the sight of a poor person without feeling her heart pierced with grief, and now that her husband had granted her full liberty in all that concerned the honor of God and the good of her neighbor, she unreservedly abandoned herself to her natural inclination to solace the suffering members of Christ. This was her ruling thought each hour



and moment; to the use of the poor she dedicated all that she retrenched from the superfluities usually required by her sex and rank. Yet, notwithstanding the resources which the charity of her husband placed at her disposal, she gave away so quickly all that she possessed, that it often happened that she would despoil herself of her clothes in order to have the means of assisting the unfortunate.

So touching a self-denial could not fail to affect the hearts and imaginations of the people; we find in the ancient chroniclers an anecdote relating that, on a certain Thursday, the Duchess, richly robed and crowned, descended to the city; on the way, she met a crowd of poor people, and to them she distributed all the money she had; there was still one, who in a plaintive voice asked an alms. She sighed at no longer having wherewith to relieve him, but, that he might not be grieved, she took off one of her gloves, richly embroidered and ornamented with precious stones, and gave it to him. A young knight who followed in her train, seeing this, rode after the poor man and bought back from him the Duchess's glove, which he then attached to his helmet as a precious relic, and as a pledge of Divine protection. And he was right; for from that moment, in all the combats, at all the tournaments, he overthrew his adversaries, and never was vanquished himself. He afterwards joined in the Crusades, and his exploits acquired for him great renown. At his return to his country, and on his death-bed, he declared that he attributed all his glory and all his success to the happiness he had of wearing during his life a souvenir of the dear Saint Elizabeth.

But it was not alone by presents or with money that the young princess testified her love for the poor of Christ; it was still more by personal devotion, by those tender and patient cares which are, assuredly, in the sight both of God and of the sufferers, the most holy and most precious alma.

She applied herself to those duties with simplicity and unfailing gaiety of manner. When the sick sought her aid, after relieving their wants, she would inquire where they lived, in order that she might visit them.

And then, no distance, no roughness of road, could keep her from them. She knew that nothing strengthens feelings of charity more than to penetrate into all that is positive and material in human misery. She sought out the huts most distant from her castle, which were often repulsive, through filth and bad air, yet she entered these haunts of poverty in a manner at once full of devotion and familiarity. She carried herself what she thought would be necessary for their miserable inhabitants. She consoled them, far less by her generous gifts than by her sweet and affectionate words. When she found them in debt and unable to pay, she engaged to discharge their obligations from her privy purse.

Poor women in childbed were particularly the objects of her compassion. Whenever she could, she used to go sit by their bedsides to assist and encourage them. She used to take their new-born children in her arms with a mother's love, and cover them with clothes made by herself; she often held them at the baptismal font, in order that this spiritual maternity might afford her stronger motives for loving and taking care of them during their whole lives.

When one of her poor died, she used to come to watch by the body, to cover it with her own hands, and often with the sheets from the royal bed; she would also assist at the funeral service, and the people often saw with admiration this royal lady following with humility and recollection the poor coffin of the meanest of her subjects.

Returned to her home, she employed her leisure hours, not in the luxurious enjoyments of the rich, but, like the valiant woman of Scripture, in laborious and useful works. She spun wool with her maids of honor, and afterwards made it into garments for the poor, or for the religious mendicants who at that period were established in her dominions. She often took for her repasts vegetables, and these designedly badly cooked, and without salt or other seasoning, in order that she might know by experience how the poor were fed; and such meals she took most joyfully.

We have seen how she frequently suffered hunger, rather than use food which she thought the fruit of the taxes unjustly required from her poor subjects. But she did not confine to these purely personal

scruples her zeal for justice and her earnest solicitude for the unfortunate. When, in the exercise of the domestic cares of her household, she discovered any traces of violence or wrong committed against poor country people, she would go and denounce it to her husband, and would endeavor to recompense the aggrieved party as far as her means would permit.

As if these touching virtues were the undoubted heritage of the house of Hungary, we find them two centuries later in the person of a young and illustrious sovereign — daughter, as was our Elizabeth, of a king of Hungary — Hedwige, elected at the age of thirteen years to the throne of Poland, who by her marriage with Jagellon effected the union of Poland and Lithuania, and who died at the age of twenty-eight years in the odor of sanctity, renowned as the most beautiful and most courageous princess of her time.

Worthy of being of the race of Elizabeth by the great kindness of her heart, Hedwige has left in the annals of her country one of the most exquisite sentences ever uttered by Christian lips. Some poor peasants came weeping to her to complain that the king's servants had taken their cattle. She went immediately to her husband and obtained their restoration, after which she said, "Their cattle indeed are returned to them, but who can restore to them their tears?"

Elizabeth loved to carry secretly to the poor, not alone money, but provisions and other matters which she destined for them. She went thus laden, by the winding and rugged paths that led from the castle to the city, and to the cabins of the neighboring valleys.

One day, when accompanied by one of her favorite maidens, as she descended by a rude little path — (still pointed out) — and carried under her mantle bread, meat, eggs, and other food to distribute to the poor, she suddenly encountered her husband, who was returning from hunting. Astonished to see her thus toiling on under the weight of her burthen, he said to her, "Let us see what you carry" — and at the same time drew open the mantle which she held closely clasped to her bosom; but beneath it were only red and white roses, the most beautiful he had ever seen — and this astonished him, as it was no longer the season of flowers. Seeing that Elizabeth was troubled, he

sought to console her by his caresses, but he ceased suddenly, on seeing over her head a luminous appearance in the form of a crucifix. He then desired her to continue her route without being disturbed by him, and he returned to Wartburg, meditating with recollection on what God did for her, and carrying with him one of those wonderful roses, which he preserved all his life. At the spot where this meeting took place, he erected a pillar, surmounted by a cross, to consecrate forever the remembrance of that which he had seen hovering over the head of his wife.

Amongst the unfortunate who particularly attracted her compassion, those who occupied the chief place in her heart were the lepers; the mysterious and special character of their malady rendered them, throughout the Middle Ages, objects of a solicitude and affection mingled with fear.

Elizabeth, like many holy and illustrious sovereigns of her time, vanquished the latter sentiment, and despised all the precautions which separated outwardly from Christian society those beings marked by the hand of God. Wherever they were to be found, she went to them, as if no contagion were to be dreaded; she sat by them, spoke to them tender and consoling words; exhorted them to patience and confidence in God, and never left them until she had distributed abundant alms. "You ought," she would say, "cheerfully to suffer this martyrdom; it should cause you neither grief nor anger. As for me, I believe that if you endure patiently this Hell which God sends you in this world, you shall be saved from the pains of the other, and that is a great gain." Having one day met one of those unfortunates, who suffered besides from a malady in the head, and whose appearance was repulsive in the highest degree, she led him to a retired part of the orchard, cut off his matted hair, laid his head on her knees, and washed and cleansed it; her maids of honor having surprised her at this strange occupation, she smiled, but said nothing.

One Holy Thursday she assembled a great number of lepers, washed their hands and feet, and, kneeling humbly before them, kissed their sores and ulcers.

Another time, the Landgrave having gone to spend some days at his castle of Naumburg, which was situated in the center of his southern possessions, and near Saxony, Elizabeth remained at Wartburg and employed herself during her husband's absence in redoubling her zeal and care for the sick and poor, in washing and clothing them with garments, the work of her own hands, notwithstanding the discontent testified by the Duchess-mother, Sophia, who had remained with her son since the death of her husband. But the young Duchess did not heed the complaints of her mother-in-law.

Amongst the sick there was a poor little leper named Helias, whose condition was so deplorable that no one would take charge of him. Elizabeth, seeing him thus abandoned by all, felt herself bound to do more for him than for any other; she took and bathed him herself, anointed him with a healing balm, and then laid him in the bed, even that which she shared with her royal husband. Now, it happened that the Duke returned to the castle whilst Elizabeth was thus occupied. His mother ran out immediately to meet him, and when he alighted she said, "Come with me, dear son, and I will show thee a pretty doing of thy Elizabeth" "What does this mean?" said the Duke. "Only come," said she, "and thou wilt see one she loves much better than thee." Then, taking him by the hand, she led him to his chamber and to his bed, and said to him, "Now look, dear son, thy wife puts lepers in thy bed, without my being able to prevent her. She wishes to give thee the leprosy; thou seest it thyself." On hearing these words, the Duke could not repress a certain degree of irritation, and he quickly raised the coverings of his bed; but at the same moment, according to the beautiful expression of the historian, "The Most High unsealed the eyes of his soul, and in place of the leper he saw the figure of Jesus Christ crucified extended on his bed." At this sight he remained motionless, as did his mother, and began to shed abundant tears without being able at first to utter a word. Then turning round, he saw his wife, who had gently followed in order to calm his wrath against the leper. "Elizabeth," said he, "my dear good sister, I pray thee often to give my bed to such guests. I shall always thank thee for this, and be not hindered by anyone in the exercise of thy virtues." Then he

knelt, and prayed thus to God: — “Lord, have mercy on me, a poor sinner; I am not worthy to see all these wonders. I acknowledge thy almighty power: aid me, I pray thee, to become a man according to thy own heart, and according thy Divine will.” Elizabeth profited of the profound impression which this scene made upon the Duke, to obtain his permission to erect an almshouse midway up the rocky height crowned by the castle of Wartburg, on the site since occupied by a convent of Franciscans. She therein maintained, from that time, twenty-eight sick or infirm poor persons, chosen from amongst those who were too feeble to ascend to the castle. Every day she went to visit them, and carried with her meat and drink for their use. Living thus with the poor and for them, it is not astonishing that God should have inspired her with that holy love of poverty which has rendered the souls richest in His grace illustrious. Whilst from amongst the people, Francis of Assisium opened to the world as a new sanctuary, whereto rushed all those who were eager for self-denial and sacrifice, God raised in the midst of the chivalry of Germany this daughter of a king, who, at the age of fifteen years, already felt her heart burn with the love of evangelical poverty, and who confounded the pride and pomp of her peers by a sovereign contempt of earthly grandeur. Her place seemed already marked out in the veneration of the Church and the love of the people, by the side of the Seraph of Assisium.

In the flower of her youth and beauty, she had weaned her soul from all thoughts of earthly glory. “She,” says an old writer, “who was in sovereign glory, sought the state of poverty, that the world might have no part in her, and that she might be poor as Jesus Christ had been.”

She could not avoid associating her beloved husband in all her secret and holy reveries, and in the aspirations of her child-like heart for a life at once more simple and more conformable to evangelical perfection. One night, as they lay in bed, but sleepless, she said to him — “Sire, if it will not tire you, I will tell you of a thought I have had on the kind of life we should lead in order to serve God better.” “Say it then, sweet friend,” replied her husband; “what is your thought on this subject?” “I wish, then,” said she, “that we had but one farm,

which would afford us enough to live on, and about two hundred sheep; then you could cultivate the ground, lead the horses, and endure these labors for God's sake; and I would take care of the sheep and shear them." The Landgrave smiled at the simplicity of his wife, and replied, "Well, dear sister, if we had so much and so many sheep, I think we would be no longer poor, and many people would find us still too rich."

At other times, when with her maidens, who were all her friends, she would speak of the joys of poverty; and often, in her familiar discourses with them, the young princess, as much a child in heart as in age, sought to realize, at least in imagination, her pious desires. Removing her royal robes, she would clothe herself in a poor mantle of a gray color, such as was worn by the wretched and mean; she would cover her head with a torn veil, and, walking before her companions, would feign to beg her bread; and, as if warned by celestial inspiration of the fate for which God reserved her, she once spoke to them these prophetic words: — "Thus will I walk when I shall be poor and in misery for the love of my God."

"O my God," says St. Francis de Sales, when relating this anecdote to his dear Philothea, "how poor was this princess in her riches, and how rich in her poverty!"

We freely confess, that in the life of this Saint, which we have studied with so much love, nothing appears to us more touching, more worthy of admiration — nay, almost even of envy, than this child-like simplicity, which may possibly bring to some lips the smile of disdain. To our eyes, this free yielding to all impressions, these so frequent smiles and tears, the girlish joys and sorrows, these innocent sports of her whose soul rested in the bosom of her heavenly Father — all these, mingled with such painful sacrifices, such grave thoughts, so fervent a piety, so active, devoted, and ardent a charity, offer the sweetest and most powerful charm.

It is, beyond all, in times like our own, when flowers wither and no fruits ripen — when simplicity is dead in all hearts, in private life as well as in public society, that a Christian cannot study without emotion this development manifested in the soul of Elizabeth, whose

short life was but a lengthened and heavenly infancy — a perpetual obedience to the words spoken by our Savior, when, taking a little child and setting him in the midst of his disciples, he said to them: “Amen, I say unto you, if you become not like unto little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”




## CHAPTER IX.

OF THE GREAT DEVOTION AND HUMILITY OF  
THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH.

Mittit radicem deorsum et faciet fructum sursum. — 4 Reg. xix. 30.

Assez se fit dou siècle l'estrage,  
A Dieu servir veut son cuer mettre,  
Car si comme tesmoigne la lettre  
Vertus plants dedans sons cuer —  
Tous vices de sa vie osta  
De Dieu sest (sait): qui tel hoste a  
Ne peut ameir Dieu par amors.  
Escole fu de bones mors  
Essample fu de pénitence  
Et droit miraouers d'innocence.

*Rutebeuf MS.*

 T was impossible that Elizabeth could so devote herself to the love and service of her neighbor, if the charity of God did not abound in and govern her heart. To love her brethren, as much and even more than herself, it was necessary that she should love God above all things. Thus we see her each day making new progress in this sublime science, each day humility, the earliest companion of her childhood, increased in her soul and filled that holy dwelling in a wonderful manner, according to the expression of one of her poetical biographers. Each day, aided by this divine virtue, she learned better how to conquer all the earthly feelings that remained in her heart, so that notwithstanding her extreme youth, the duties of her state of life, and the distractions incident to her position in society, she attained a degree of repose and confidence in God, which the greatest saints might envy.

To acquire and maintain this peace, she had no more efficacious and constant help than the faithful observance of the commandments of the Church, and the frequent reception of the sacraments which that Mother, inexhaustible in benefits, offers to all her children. She often approached the Table of the Lord and received the blessed Eucharist always with the greatest reverence and love. Elizabeth understood with all the intelligence of faith, the ineffable value of these sacred mysteries. She assisted at the divine Office with a respect mingled with fear and love, and with unequalled fervor. Scarcely did she hear the bell toll for Office, when she, as it were, fled to the Church, and always endeavored to arrive there before her attendants; on her entrance she made several genuflections, unperceived, accompanied with earnest prayers, as it were, secret communions with her heavenly Father.

During Mass she testified by exterior humility the tender gratitude which she felt towards the innocent and Supreme Victim whose sacrifice was thus daily renewed. Obligated from regard for her husband's presence, and not to scandalize the faithful, to clothe herself in the costume suitable to her rank, she manifested the humility of her heart by the dignified modesty of her deportment. Before the Altar she laid aside the ornaments which she could put off and replace without trouble, such as her ducal crown, her collar, bracelets, rings and gloves; this she always did at the reading of the Gospel, and at the Consecration or Communion.

Now it happened one day that during the Canon of the Mass, while she prayed fervently, with her hands folded and modestly hidden under her mantle, and her veil raised in order that she might contemplate the sacred host, a celestial light beamed around her. The celebrating priest, a man renowned for a holy life, saw at the moment of the Consecration the face of the Duchess refulgent with so great a splendor that he was dazzled by it, and until the Communion he found himself surrounded by a light radiating from her as from the sun. Filled with surprise, he returned thanks to God, for having thus manifested, by a visible and wonderful light, the interior brilliancy of that holy soul, and he related afterwards what he had seen.

Elizabeth most carefully observed the precepts of the Church in regard to its festivals. She sanctified the Lent by prayers and abundant alms, and by fasting, though from that she was dispensed on account of her age. But no words could express the fervor, the love, the pious veneration with which she celebrated the holy days, whereon the Church, by her touching and expressive ceremonies, reminds the faithful of the sad but ineffable mysteries of our redemption.

On Holy Thursday, in imitation of the King of kings, who on that day arose from table and laid aside his garments, this daughter of the kings of Hungary took off all that could remind her of worldly pomp, clothed herself in the ordinary dress of poor mendicants, and went to visit the Churches, wearing a kind of shoes which seem to have been then worn but by the poorest class. On this day she also washed the feet of twelve poor persons, sometimes lepers, and gave to each twelve pieces of money, a cloth garment, and a loaf of white bread. She passed all the night from Holy Thursday to Good Friday in prayer and the contemplation of the Passion of our divine Lord.

At the dawning of the morning of the Great Sacrifice she used to say to her attendants, "This should be a day of humiliation to all — I wish that none of you should pay me the least respect."

Clad in the same dress as on the preceding day, and conforming in all things to the customs of the poor women of the country, she used to carry under her mantle some parcels of coarse linen, a little incense, and some small wax tapers, then she went barefooted in the midst of the crowd to all the churches and, kneeling before each Altar, she laid thereon a packet of linen, some incense and a taper, after which she prostrated herself humbly and went on to the next. When she had thus made the tour of the Church she left it, and at its porch she distributed large alms to the poor, but as they did not recognize her, they crushed her pitilessly as they would any common woman.

Some persons at the Court reproved her for making on these solemn occasions such trifling offerings to the Churches; they said that she who was a sovereign Princess should set an example of munificence, but the heavenly instinct of her heart told her that on such a day the practice of humility was one of the best means of its sanctification.

She was obliged to do violence to the excessive generosity of her nature, in order to assimilate herself more to the little ones and the poor, and to present to God the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, which He has declared to be the most acceptable of all offerings.

On the Rogation days, which were at this time celebrated with worldly rejoicings and great luxury in dress, the young Duchess always joined the procession clad in coarse garments and barefooted. During the sermons, she took her place amongst the poorest mendicants, and thus would she follow in all humility across the fields the relics of the Saints and the Cross of our Savior; for, says one of her contemporaries, "All her glory was in the Cross and passion of Christ; the world was crucified to her and she to the world."

God, who has called himself a jealous God, did not suffer that the heart of His servant should be engrossed by any thought or affection purely human, however legitimate it might have been.

A remarkable trait, related by the chaplain Berchtold, and repeated by all the historians, shows how far Elizabeth and her husband carried these holy and tender scruples, which are, as it were, the perfumes exhaled from the souls of the elect. In the Middle Ages it was looked upon as a very important business to have one's self blooded. When the operation was attended with success, solemn thanksgiving was returned to God, and all the friends were invited, to rejoice. Princes and nobles made it a pretext for giving great banquets. For married persons, and those betrothed, there was a peculiar custom then existing. The young man went to her he loved to ask her to pray that all might be well with him; the betrothed maiden kissed and blessed the wound. On one occasion Louis and Elizabeth submitted to this operation at the same time, and, to celebrate it, the Duke invited all the neighboring nobility to share in the festivals, which were continued for several days. On one of those days, as they all assisted at a solemn Mass in the church of St. George at Eisenach, the Duchess, forgetting the sanctity of the sacrifice, fixed her eyes and her thoughts on her beloved husband who was near her, and allowed

herself to consider unreservedly and with admiration the beauty and amiability which rendered him so dear to all.

But, coming to herself at the moment of the consecration, the divine Spouse of her soul manifested to her how these human considerations had offended Him; for when the priest elevated the sacred Host for the people's adoration, she thought she saw in His hands our Savior crucified, with His wounds bleeding. Alarmed by this vision, she recognized her fault, and falling on her face to the earth, bathed in tears before the altar, she asked pardon of God.

Mass concluded, the Landgrave, doubtless accustomed to see her wrapt in meditation, went out with all his court, and she remained alone and thus prostrate until dinner-hour.

Meanwhile the repast prepared for the numerous guests was ready and, none of the attendants daring to disturb the Duchess at prayer, the Duke himself went to call her, and said with great gentleness, "Dear sister, why comest thou not to table, and why dost thou make us await thee for so long a time?" On hearing his voice, she lifted up her head, and looked at him without speaking, and he, perceiving her eyes bloodshot from the abundance and violence of her tears, was troubled, and said, "Dear sister, why hast thou wept so long and so bitterly?" He knelt by her side, and, after having heard her story, he began to weep and pray with her. Having continued thus for some time, he arose, and said to Elizabeth, "Let us put our trust in God; I will aid thee to do penance, and to become better than thou art." But; as he saw that she was too sad to return to the court, he arose and went to his guests, whilst the Duchess continued to lament her fault.

This young and pious princess had then received from Heaven the *Gift of Tears*, — of those sweet and refreshing tears, which reveal to the soul the presence of an inexhaustible treasure of grace and consolation from On High.

The companions of her life relate, that however abundant her tears might be, they never altered the beauty or serenity of her countenance. This gift was not peculiarly hers; it was a common one during her time; all the Catholic people of those happy ages possessed it together with their ardent and simple faith. Those people knew its value; those

fervent generations, who honored with so touching a reverence the divine tears that fell from the eyes of Jesus at the tomb of his friend, appreciated its virtue.

There were tears at the root of all the poetry and all the piety of the men of the Middle Ages.

This "*Blood of the soul*," as St. Augustine says, — this "*Water of the heart*," as the old romance writers term it, flowed in streams from their eyes; it was in some manner, for these simple and pious souls, a form of prayer — an homage at once confiding and expressive — a tender and silent offering which united them to all the sufferings and all the merits of Jesus Christ, and of the saints, and to the worship of the Church.

Like the blessed Dominick of Paradise, with their tears they washed away the stains of their souls — with them, like St. Odile, they atoned for the sins of those they had loved in this world; collected by angels, who carried them to the feet of the Father of Mercies, they were looked upon by Him as precious fruits of penance and holy love. And it was not only weak women and ignorant people who thus experienced the sweetness and power of tears; it is sufficient to open at random any history of those times, and we will find almost on every page how pious kings, princes, knights, entire armies wept spontaneously and sincerely. All these iron-souled men, all these invincible warriors, bore in their breasts hearts tender and simple as those of children. They had not yet learned to destroy the natural innocence of their feelings, or to blush for them. They had not then dried up or frozen within them the source of pure and strong emotions, of that divine dew which renders life fruitful and beautiful.

Who remembers not the sighs and immortal tears of Godfrey and the first Crusaders, at the sight of the tomb of Christ, which they had gained after such wonderful exploits and such hard struggles? Later still, Richard Cœur de Lion wept bitterly at the sight of Jerusalem when he could not save it; and the confessor of St. Louis relates that, "When they said in the Litany these words, 'Lord God, deign to grant unto us a fountain of tears,' the holy king used to say devoutly, 'O Lord God, I dare not beg from thee a fountain of tears, but for me


some little drops to moisten the dryness of my heart will suffice.’ And he related secretly to his confessor that many times the Lord had given him tears at prayer, which, when he felt them flowing gently down his face and entering his mouth, seemed to him most savory and sweet, not only to the heart, but even to the lips.”

## CHAPTER X.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH WAS KNOWN AND CHERISHED BY  
THE GLORIOUS ST. FRANCIS, AND HOW SHE HAD FOR SPIRITUAL  
DIRECTOR MASTER CONRAD OF MARBURG.

De paupertatis horreo,  
Sanctus Franciscus satiat.  
Turbam Christi famelicam:  
In via ne deficiat  
Iter pandit ad gloriam,  
Et vitæ viam ampliat.  
Pro paupertatis copia  
Regnat dives in patria,  
Reges sibi substituens,  
Quos hic ditat inopia.

*Anthem from Franciscan Breviary.*

 T seems to us, that what we have already related of Elizabeth suffices to show the resemblance which existed between her soul and that of the Glorious Poor One of Christ who then illuminated Italy with the rays of his miraculous power. God willed not that this interior alliance should remain sterile or unknown, but, on the contrary, that it should be fruitful in consolation for His faithful servant, and in blessings for all Germany.

A remarkable analogy existed already between their exterior lives. The year 1207, that in which Elizabeth was born in the midst of sovereign greatness, at Presburg, saw St. Francis regenerated in God; at the time that she, daughter of a powerful king and grand-daughter of Charlemagne, came into the world surrounded by all the splendor of royalty, he, the son of the merchant Bernardone, renounced his patrimony, his family, his honor, for the love of God; beaten and imprisoned by his father, delivered from his bonds by his mother's



love, covered with mud, and pursued by the insulting shouts of his fellow-citizens, he took with him no second garment, but went alone and poor to the conquest of the world.

Elizabeth needed not this second birth; from her cradle she was prepared for Heaven, and her innocent heart offered a free and fertile soil for the seeds of strength and life, which the hand of Francis was about to shed on the Christian world, and of which God reserved to her the privilege of being one of the first and most illustrious recipients.

It is not our province to relate here the wonderful history of the triumphs of St. Francis in Italy, dating from the time at which he commenced his preaching. We must confine ourselves to the facts which connect him directly with the destiny of Elizabeth.

After some years the commotion excited by the mission of this new Apostle in dormant and tepid souls became so general, the change which it operated in all the social and private relations of life so violent, that it became necessary to adopt means to regulate and modify the power that God permitted him to exercise.

In every town he encountered a crowd of husbands who wished to abandon their wives and children, and to consecrate themselves with him to poverty and the preaching of the Gospel; women there were also ready to renounce their duties as wives and mothers in order to enter the monasteries wherein Clare, his rival and spiritual sister, presided over the austerities of the new-founded order, "*The poor Clares.*"

Reduced thus to the painful necessity, either of extinguishing the germs of sanctity which thus developed themselves in all hearts, or of encouraging a dangerous revolution against the ties consecrated by God himself, he adopted a middle course, which Heaven blessed, as well as his other works; he promised to this crowd, so eager to obey him, a special rule of life which would associate with his religious, by a community of prayers, good works and penance, Christians engaged in domestic life, without severing any of the ties rendered sacred by God. At first he gave this rule by word of mouth to several of the faithful of both sexes, who hastened to put it in practice, particularly

in Florence and the neighboring cities, Each day these happy souls felicitated themselves on being able, even out of the monasteries, to renounce the dangerous joys and luxuries of the world.

Francis, seeing the fervor and ever-increasing numbers of the members of this association, gave them the name of "*The penitents of the third order,*" as forming the third branch of his family, wherein were before reckoned the monks of whom he was the direct head, and the nuns of St. Clare, and in 1221 he wrote and published the rule which he had composed for them. According to its principal directions it was necessary that if a married woman wished for admission, the consent both of husband and wife should be obtained. It was necessary that every wrong should be atoned for, and that a public reconciliation with all one's enemies should take place. The members, though not quitting either their families or their social position, were to wear garments of a gray or dark color, and were not to carry weapons except in defense of their country or the Church. They were not to assist at feasts, dances, or profane rejoicings. Besides the fasts and abstinences prescribed by the Church, they were not to eat meat on Mondays or Wednesdays, and to fast from St. Martin's day until Christmas, as well as on all the Wednesdays and Fridays of the year. They were to hear Mass every day, to communicate on the three great feasts of Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas, to recite each evening some special prayers, to visit the brothers and sisters of the order in sickness, and to assist at their obsequies. This rule, as we see, established but a kind of pious association or confraternity, but by no means a monastic order. It was later that the third order, in adopting the custom of making solemn vows, took this latter form, which it still preserves in the countries wherein it exists.

The immense and rapid propagation of the order of St. Francis is one of the most remarkable and best authenticated facts of this epoch, and we may believe that the Church owed this progress to the association of the third order.

An infinite number of persons joined each day. Italy, France and Germany were successively invaded by this new army. It should be recorded in the history of that century that the enemies of the Church

soon perceived the powerful obstacles offered to them by an organization which embraced the faithful of all ages, ranks, and professions — the warrior and the merchant, the priest and the lawyer, the prince and the peasant — and in which the obligation of the severe and minute practice of the duties of religion necessarily drew more closely the bonds of affection and obedience which united them to the immortal Spouse of Christ, while its members were meanwhile left in the midst of the social and worldly life, there to develop the devotion and love newly enkindled in their hearts.

Thus we read that the Emperor Frederick II complained publicly that he found in this third order a barrier to all his projects against the Holy See; and his Chancellor, Peter des Vignes, relates in his letters that all Christendom seemed to have entered it, and that, owing to this institution and its progress, the power of Heaven even in this world became more formidable and advantageous than that of the Earth.

It was in 1221, the same year in which St. Francis published the rule of the third order, that his religious were decidedly established in Germany. Certainly they could nowhere find more sympathy and encouragement than that given them by the young and pious Duchess of Thuringia, for we find that she showed them signs of a zealous devotion and gave them all the help in her power. She began by founding a convent of Franciscans near her church, in her capital city, Eisenach, on the entrance of these friars into Germany.

She afterwards appointed as her confessor brother Rodinger, one of the first Germans who embraced the Seraphic rule, a religious distinguished for his zeal, and who preserved towards her during all her life a sincere attachment.

In these new relations, all she heard of St. Francis inflamed her young heart with an ardent admiration for him, and an irresistible attraction to walk in the footsteps of this exalted model of the virtues she loved best. She chose him thenceforth as her patron and spiritual father.

Having heard from her new guests of the existence of the Third Order in Italy, and in the other countries through which the family of St. Francis had already extended, she was struck by the advantages

which affiliation to it would afford to a fervent Christian. She saw therein a special consecration given to the mortification and other pious practices which she had imposed on herself. She humbly begged permission of her husband to cause herself to be enrolled, and having obtained this without difficulty, she hastened to contract this first link with the saint, who was so soon destined to see her reigning by his side in Heaven.

She was the first in Germany who was associated to the Third Order. She observed its rule with scrupulous fidelity, and we may believe that the example of a sovereign placed so high by her rank and so renowned for her piety, had some influence in the rapid extension of this institution.

Francis was soon informed of the precious conquest his missionaries had made in the person of Elizabeth. He learned at the same time her affiliation to the order, her attachment to his person, and the touching virtues by which she edified and blessed Thuringia. He was filled with gratitude and admiration, and often spoke of her to the Cardinal Protector of his Order, Hugolino, nephew of Innocent III, and afterwards Pope, under the name of Gregory IX. This latter, who was destined to watch over the safety of Elizabeth on Earth and to consecrate her glory in Heaven, already felt for her an affectionate interest, and this feeling must have been increased by the sympathy he understood this young princess entertained for the Apostle, of whom he was himself the principal supporter, as well as the intimate and tender friend. He also confirmed Francis in his kindly feelings towards her. The exemplary humility of which this young princess was a model, her austere and fervent piety, her love of poverty, often formed the subject of their familiar discourses. One day, the Cardinal recommended the saint to send to the Duchess some pledge of his affectionate remembrance, and at the same time took from his shoulders the poor old mantle wherewith he was clad, and enjoined him to transmit it at once to his daughter Elizabeth, as a tribute due to the humility and voluntary poverty she professed, as well as a testimony of gratitude for the services she had already rendered to the Order. "I wish," said he, "that since she is full of your spirit, you

should leave her the same inheritance as did Elijah to his disciple, Eliseus." The saint obeyed his friend, and sent to her whom he had so good reason to call his daughter this modest present, accompanied by a letter, in which he felicitated her on the graces she had received from God, and the good use she had made of them.

It is easy to conceive the gratitude with which Elizabeth received this gift, so precious in her eyes; she showed this by the importance she attached to its possession. She clad herself with it whenever she begged from our Lord any special favor, and afterwards, when she renounced all private property, she still found means to preserve this dear mantle of her poor Father till her death, at which time she left it as her most precious treasure to a friend. It was afterwards preserved with the greatest care, as a relic doubly sanctified, by the Teutonic knights at Wesseinfels in the diocese of Spire; and brother Berchtold, a celebrated preacher of that age, related to the judges on the occasion of Elizabeth's canonization that he had often seen and touched it with veneration, as the glorious banner of that poverty which had vanquished the world and its vanities in so many hearts. Under this banner Elizabeth acquired in her secret soul the strength requisite to accomplish at a later period the brilliant victories which God reserved for her over the world and her own heart.

Henceforth, united by a filial and friendly feeling to the Seraph of Assisium, she made new progress on the narrow and thorny path that leads to eternal glory — on that journey which she was to accomplish in so short a time. Nevertheless, when she had scarcely attained her seventeenth year, the good friar, Father Rodinger, her confessor, who had guided her steps in the rule of St. Francis, left her.

It was necessary to think of replacing him, and the Duke, whom Elizabeth consulted in this matter, was grieved, because she seemed to him not to be sufficiently instructed in the Holy Scriptures, and in the knowledge of religion; so he wrote to the Pope and begged from him a learned and enlightened guide for his wife. The Sovereign Pontiff replied to him that he knew no priest more pious or more learned than Master Conrad of Marburg, who had studied at Paris, and who then exercised the functions of Commissary Apostolic in Germany. In a

word, Master Conrad enjoyed the highest esteem of the Clergy and of the faithful.

He joined, to vast learning, morals of exemplary purity and a constant practice of evangelical poverty. He had renounced not only all the temporal wealth to which the nobility of his birth entitled him, but even all ecclesiastical dignity and benefice, this caused him to be set down, by many, as a member of one of the mendicant orders, though it appears more probable that he remained always a secular priest.

His exterior was simple, modest, and even austere, his costume strictly clerical, his eloquence exercised a powerful influence over souls, and an immense crowd of priests and laymen followed wherever he turned his steps, to gather from his lips the bread of the divine Word.

He everywhere inspired either love or fear, according as he addressed fervent Christians or people already infected with heresy. The great Innocent III had confided to him the functions of Commissary of the Holy Office in Germany, with the special mission of combating the threatened progress of the heresies of the Vaudois, of the Waldenses, or poor *men of Lyons*, and others such, which were then being introduced into the countries beyond the Rhine, and which promised to the Church a repetition of the miseries of the South of France.

He was also charged to preach the Crusades, and more than once he roused the Germans from their tepidity, to take part in those sacred expeditions, with an ardor and constancy worthy of Innocent himself. The two successors of this Pontiff, Honorius III and Gregory IX, continued him in these functions, and he rendered himself fully worthy of their confidence, by the persevering zeal and indomitable courage which marked his career. During the twenty years it lasted, he allowed no opposition, however powerful it might be, to obstruct him in the discharge of his duties. Neither princes nor bishops, no more than poor laymen, could escape his severe justice, when they seemed to him to deserve punishment, and we may attribute to this absolute authority the great popularity he acquired in the exercise of the

frequently painful functions of his office. He fell a victim, as we shall see hereafter, to his severity, doubtless carried to excess, since we find the violent death inflicted by those he pursued, did not obtain for him the high honors granted by the Holy See to St. Peter Parentice and to St. Peter of Verona, both of whom died at this time, like him, martyrs to the faith.

Conrad, who was doubtless known to Duke Louis, before he was specially recommended to him by the Pope, soon pressed him with so much confidence and veneration, that by a solemn act, sealed by him and his brothers, he invested this priest with the care of conferring all the ecclesiastical benefices in which he exercised the rights of patronage or collation, on the persons most worthy of them. This was the best reply he could make to the exhortations which Conrad addressed to him on the scrupulous care he should use in the exercise of a right so important to the salvation of souls, "You commit a greater sin," said this zealous preacher to him, "when you confide a church or an Altar (that is to say, a living attached to the care of an Altar) to an ignorant or unworthy priest, than if you killed fifty or sixty men with your own hands." Louis then begged him to take charge of the spiritual direction of his wife, and Conrad consented, as much out of regard for the piety of the prince, as for the recommendation of the Sovereign pontiff.

When the young Duchess, who was not yet, as we have already said, seventeen years old, heard that a man so renowned for sanctity and learning was to have care of her, she was filled with humility and gratitude. She prepared herself for what she looked upon as a heavenly favor by fasts and new mortifications. She often said, "Poor sinful woman that I am, I am not worthy that this holy man should have care of me. My God, I thank you for your graces." When she was informed of the approach of Conrad, she went out to meet him, and, throwing herself on her knees, said, "My spiritual Father, deign to receive me as your child in God. I am unworthy of you, but I recommend myself to your care through the love you bear to my brother."

Conrad, seeing in this profound humility in a young and powerful princess a foreshadowing of the future glory of her soul, could not help crying out, "O, Lord Jesus, what wonders you work in the souls that belong to you!" — and he several times evinced the joy this meeting afforded him. He became her confessor from this period, and devoted himself with his accustomed zeal to the culture of this precious plant, whose growth he was charged to rear for Heaven. Very soon, the instinct of the spiritual life became so strongly developed in Elizabeth, and her aspirations towards the highest perfection became so frequent, that Conrad found her one day (and this he wrote himself to the Pope) in tears, and regretting that her parents had destined her to marry, and that thus she was not free, in passing through this mortal life, to preserve the flower of her virginity to offer it to God. One of her historians remarks, that, notwithstanding these feelings inspired by her fervor, her tender and ardent love for her husband was by no means lessened. And Louis, so far from arresting her progress in the life in which Conrad engaged her, gave it his best assistance. He unhesitatingly permitted her to promise entire obedience to all her confessor prescribed, that would not interfere with the just authority and rights of marriage. She added a vow of perpetual chastity, in case she should ever become a widow. She made these two vows in the year 1225, in the presence of Master Conrad, in the church belonging to the nuns of St. Catherine at Eisenach, whom she loved particularly. She was at this time eighteen years old.

Elizabeth observed the vow of obedience with the utmost fidelity, and with that unreserved humility that never left her; and she cheerfully offered to God the sacrifices that cost her most. We have seen with what scrupulous exactness she submitted to the restrictions imposed upon her by Master Conrad relative to the viands used at the ducal table, which, as we have before mentioned, he thought that the poor people were unjustly taxed to provide. Faithful to the inflexible rigor of his character, and looking upon her as he would upon any other Christian soul, he by no means sought to lighten the yoke she had voluntarily assumed; and he thenceforth treated her with a severity which could but augment her merit in the sight of God. One



day he sent for her to come and hear him preach, but, at the time, she was engaged with her sister-in-law, the Margravine of Misnia, who had come to pay her a visit, and she did not comply with his invitation. Annoyed at her disobedience, and for her having lost the indulgence of twenty days granted by the Pope to all who should assist at his sermons, he sent her word that thenceforth he would renounce all care of her soul. The next morning she went to him, and begged him most earnestly to recall this harsh resolution, and to pardon her fault. He refused her at first, rudely; at length she threw herself at his feet, and, after supplicating for a long time in this posture, she obtained his forgiveness; but he imposed a severe penance on her and her maids of honor, to whom he imputed a share in her disobedience.

There remains to us a precious memorial of the spiritual direction which Conrad exercised over his illustrious penitent, in the twelve maxims which he gave her, as the summary of her rule of life; these the chroniclers have carefully preserved.

We transcribe them exactly, as being at once the faithful expression of the motives that thenceforward governed her life, and as the predictions or foreshadowings of that glorious destiny which she so rapidly and completely fulfilled:

1. Patiently endure contempt in the midst of voluntary poverty.
2. Give humility the first place in your heart.
3. Renounce human consolations and the pleasures of the flesh.
4. Be merciful in all things to your neighbor.
5. Have always the remembrance of God enshrined in your heart.
6. Return thanks to the Lord for having by his Passion redeemed you from Hell and from eternal death.
7. Since God has done so much for you, bear the Cross patiently.
8. Consecrate yourself entirely, body and soul, to God.
9. Recall frequently to your mind that you are the work of the hands of God, and act, consequently, in such a manner as will ensure your being with Him for eternity.

10. Pardon in your neighbor all that you desire that he should forgive in you; do for him all that you would wish he should do for you.
11. Often think of the shortness of life, and that the young die as well as the old; ever, then, aspire to eternal life.
12. Incessantly bewail your sins, and pray God to forgive them.

## CHAPTER XI.

HOW THE LORD WAS PLEASED TO MANIFEST HIS GRACES IN THE  
PERSON OF THE DEAR SAINT ELIZABETH.

Ecce sancti tui, Domine, florent ante te sicut lilium.  
— St. Augustine, *Medit.* c. 37.

**A**FTER having thus traced the general features of the character of Elizabeth, during all the time of her union with Duke Louis, we must return to the early years of her married life, to relate some of the incidents which varied its uniformity, and which were at the same time touching proofs of God's favor to His servant.

In 1221, a short time after her nuptials, King Andrew, her father, who had assumed the Cross some years before, and who had just returned from a glorious expedition in Egypt, learned from a creditable source that his daughter had been married, and was now really Duchess of Thuringia. To be better assured of this fact, he ordered four great men of his court, who were going on a pilgrimage to Aix-la-Chapelle, to return by Thuringia, and to bring him exact accounts of his daughter — of the kind of life she led, of the state of her court, and the country she inhabited — and to invite her to come to Hungary, accompanied by her husband, to rejoice her father's old age, for he was most anxious to see them both.

These nobles, after having accomplished their pilgrimage to Aix-la-Chapelle, took the route to Thuringia, instead of that of Franconia, and soon arrived at Wartburg. The Landgrave received them with kindness, but he just remembered that his wife had no robes fit to appear in before her guests, as she had already cut her wedding garments into forms more suited to her modesty, and that there was

not time to order new ones. Full of uneasiness on this account, he went to her chamber, and said, "Ah, dear sister! here have people just arrived from thy father's court; I am sure they have come to learn what manner of life thou leadest with me, and to see if thou hast really the retinue of a Duchess. But how canst thou appear before them? Thou art so continually occupied with thy poor ones, that thou forgettest thyself; and thou never wishest to wear other clothes than those miserable enough to make us both ashamed. What dishonor to me, when these men will go and tell in Hungary that I let thee want for raiment, and that they found thee in so pitiable a state, and now I have no time left to order others more suitable to thy rank and mine."

But she replied gently, "My dear lord and brother, let not this disquiet thee; for I have earnestly resolved never to place my glory in my apparel. I can well excuse myself to these lords, and I will endeavor to treat them with such gaiety and affability, that I will please them as much as if I wore the richest vesture." Immediately she knelt and begged God to make her agreeable to her friends, and then, having dressed herself as well as she could, she went to join her husband and her father's ambassadors.

Not only did she enchant them by the cordiality of her welcome, the sweetness and gentleness of her manners, by her beauty that shone with a surpassing brilliancy and freshness, but to the great surprise of the Duke and to the admiration of the strangers, she appeared clothed in magnificent silken robes and covered with a mantle of azure velvet embroidered with pearls of great price. The Hungarians said that the Queen of France could not be more gorgeously attired. After a sumptuous festival the Duke endeavored to retain his guests, but they excused themselves saying that their companion-pilgrims could not await them longer. He then went down with them to the city, defrayed all the expenses incurred by their followers, and accompanied them a certain distance on their journey.

When he returned he went quickly to his wife, and asked her anxiously how came she to be thus clad. Elizabeth replied with a sweet and pious smile, "Behold what the Lord can do when He pleases."

Several authors relate a different version of this miracle. They say that when the virtues of Elizabeth were noised abroad, a powerful lord (according to some it was the Emperor himself) was traveling through the dominions of the Landgrave. The latter went to meet him, and wished to receive him at his castle. But the stranger refused to accept the invitation, unless the Duke promised that he should see and speak to the Duchess. Louis cheerfully consented to this, and brought the noble visitor to Wartburg. After a great banquet the guest reminded his host of his promise. Louis sent word to Elizabeth, who was in her chamber praying, and requested her to come and speak to them. But according to her custom she had given all her clothes and jewels to the poor, so she sent secretly to her husband and begged him humbly to excuse her for that time as she had not robes fit to appear in before his guests. The stranger still insisted; Louis arose from table and went himself to ask her to come, and at the same time reproved her gently for not having obeyed him at once. "My dear lord," answered she, "I will go and do as you will, for it would be wrong of me to contradict you in any thing; I am yours, my lord, I have been given to you! I have always loyally obeyed you, and henceforth I will also do your will, for after God, you are my lord."

Then when he went out, she fell on her knees and said, "Lord Jesus Christ, most clement and faithful Father, sweet Consoler of the poor, and of all who are in trouble, friend and sure helper of all who trust in Thee, come to the assistance of thy poor servant who has despoiled herself of all her rich raiment for the love of Thee." Immediately an angel appeared and said to her, "O noble spouse of the king of Paradise, behold what God sends thee from Heaven, saluting thee with tender affection; thou shalt invest thyself with this mantle, and thou shalt place on thy head this crown as a sign of thy eternal glory." She thanked God, put on the crown and mantle, and went to the banquet hall. On seeing her so richly-robed and beautiful, all the guests were wonder-stricken, for her face shone like that of an angel. She sat in the midst of them and saluted them with cordiality and gaiety, then she spoke to them with words sweeter than honey, in such sort that they felt themselves more nourished by her discourse than by all the

dainties of the feast. The stranger, enchanted at having seen this Elizabeth whom he had so long desired to know, took his leave; the Duke accompanied him a part of the way, and then quickly returned to his wife and asked whence had she such royal attire. She could not conceal it from him. "Truly," said he, "our God is indeed wonderful! There is pleasure in serving so bounteous a master who comes so faithfully to the assistance of his own; for my part I wish to be, henceforth and for ever, more and more his servant."

In the following year (1222), according to the invitation brought in his name by the ambassadors of King Andrew, Duke Louis accompanied Elizabeth to Hungary. He confided the care of his territories during his absence to the Counts de Muhlberg, de Gleichen, and others. He was attended on the journey by Counts de Stolberg, de Schwartzburg, de Besenburg, de Beichlingen, and a crowd of nobles, amongst whom we remark Rodolphe de Varila, son of the Lord Gaultier who had brought Elizabeth from Hungary eleven years before, and who succeeded his father, not only in his office of great cup-bearer, but also in his loyal devotion to the Duchess. Elizabeth was attended by the wives of all the lords we have mentioned, and by a great number of noble dames and maidens.

King Andrew received his daughter and his son-in-law with lively joy; they remained a long time at his court, and assisted at many festivals and tournaments, in which the Thuringian knights distinguished themselves particularly. They were also present at King Andrew's marriage with Yolande de Courtenay, daughter of the French emperor of Constantinople, whom he chose as his second wife. On this occasion the king loaded them with presents, and gave them precious stones of the greatest value. All the knights, and their ladies, and all the attendants, even to the lowest domestics, received rich gifts. He had also constructed a wagon of peculiar form, to contain all the gold and jewels his daughter was to bring back with her.

Before the time of departure, the king gave a great hunting party, knowing that Duke Louis loved the chase. After this they separated, and the Duke brought back his wife, together with his suite, and his new riches, happily to Thuringia.

Soon after this time, the Duke gave his sister, the beautiful Agnes, companion of Elizabeth's childhood, in marriage to Henry, Duke of Austria, and whether for this occasion or to celebrate his own return to his dominions, he gave at Wartburg a great feast, to which he invited all the counts, and the leading nobles of his duchy, with their wives. As they were going to table, they remarked the absence of the duchess, who had not come, according to custom, to wash her hands with her guests. They all declared they would not commence until the Duchess came.

Meanwhile Elizabeth, in coming from the church to the banquet hall, saw lying on the stair steps a poor man almost naked, and looking so sick and weak that she was astonished how he had strength enough to ascend from the city to the castle.

When he perceived her, he begged some alms in honor of Christ. She answered that she had not at that time anything to give, but that she would send him some food from her table. But the poor man insisted loudly that she should give him something at once; and the Duchess, conquered by her pity, took off the precious silken mantle with which she was covered, and threw it to the mendicant. The latter took it, rolled it up hastily, and disappeared immediately. Elizabeth, who had now but her robe without the mantle (which was entirely contrary to the custom of the time), dared not enter the banquet-hall, but returned to her chamber, where she recommended herself to God. But the seneschal, who had seen all that had passed, went at once to relate it to the Duke before all his guests. "Decide, my lord," said he, "if what our most dear lady the Duchess has just done is right. Whilst so many nobles are here awaiting her, she is occupied in clothing the poor, and has just given her mantle to a beggar-man." The good Landgrave said smilingly, "I will go and see what this means, and she shall come to us immediately." Then, quitting his guests for a moment, he went to Elizabeth and said, "Beloved sister, wilt thou not come and dine with us? we should have been long since at table if we had not awaited thee." "I am quite ready to do all thou wilt, my beloved brother," answered she. "Then," said the Duke, "where is the mantle thou hadst when going to the Church?" "I have given it away,

my good brother,” said Elizabeth, “but, if it is pleasing to thee, I will go as I am.” At these words, one of her waiting women said to her, “Madam, when coming here I saw your mantle hanging in its place in the wardrobe, I will go and bring it to you,” and she immediately returned with the same mantle the poor man had taken away. Elizabeth knelt a moment, and thanked God hastily, then she went to the feast with her husband. Whilst all the guests, and particularly the Duke of Austria and his young wife, were enjoying themselves, the Landgrave Louis was serious and recollected, for he thought in his heart of the numerous graces that God had conferred on his dear Elizabeth.

“Who can doubt,” says one of her pious and simple historians, “but that it was an angel that brought back the mantle, and that it was Christ himself who took the form of a poor naked man to try His well beloved servant, as He did formerly the glorious St. Martin? Thus did He adorn His dear flower, Elizabeth, this lily of purity and faith, more than Solomon in all his glory.”

But God granted to this noble and pious couple a grace still sweeter and more dear to their hearts. The most precious blessings of the married life could not be refused by the Almighty to these spouses, who afforded to all the model of a Christian union. He gave to his faithful servant the gift of fruitfulness, as it were, to recompense even here below the purity of her soul and body. In 1223, Elizabeth being then sixteen years old, became a mother for the first time. At the approach of her lying-in she was removed to the Castle of Kreutzburg, on the Werra, some leagues from Eisenach, where she was far more tranquil than at Wartburg, which was the center of the political administration and government of the country. She was also nearer to her husband, who had gone to hold the meeting of the States of Hesse, at Marburg. Several noble ladies came to assist and to watch by her night and day. On the 28th March, three days after the Annunciation of our Lady, she brought forth her first-born. The Duke had not been able to leave Marburg, and it was there announced that a son was born to him. Louis, overjoyed, richly rewarded the messenger, and set out at once to rejoin the young mother; he arrived in time enough to see



the child baptized, and gave him the name of Hermann, in memory of his father. To manifest the satisfaction which the birth of this son caused him, Louis had a stone bridge erected to replace the wooden one that led to the city of Kreuzburg. This bridge still exists, with a beautiful Gothic chapel dedicated to St. Liborius. A year after, 1224, the Duchess gave birth to a daughter, who was named Sophia, after the Duchess-dowager. This child was born at Wartburg, from which the Duke did not wish Elizabeth to remove. In after years she was married to the Duke of Brabant; and the members of the present house of Hesse are reckoned amongst her descendants. Elizabeth had two other daughters, one named also Sophia, and the third, born after her father's death, Gertrude — both were consecrated to God from the cradle, and afterwards took the veil as spouses of the Lord.

Faithful in all things to the humility and modesty she had prescribed for herself, Elizabeth as scrupulously preserved these virtues in the midst of the joys of her maternity as she had done in the magnificence of her sovereignty.

After each of her confinements, as soon as the moment of her recovery arrived, instead of making it, as was the custom, the occasion of feasting and worldly rejoicing, she took her newborn infant in her arms, went out secretly from the castle, clad in a plain woollen robe and barefooted, and directed her steps towards a distant church, that of St. Catherine, outside the walls of Eisenach. The descent was long and toilsome, the path covered with sharp thorns, by which her feet were torn and bruised. On the way she herself carried her infant as the spotless Virgin had done.

When arrived at the church she laid it on the altar, with a taper and a lamb, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, to you and to your dear Mother Mary, I offer this cherished fruit of my womb. Behold, my God and my Lord, I give it with all my heart, such as you have given it to me; to you who are the sovereign and most loving Father of the mother and the child. The only prayer I make you today, and the only grace I dare to request, is that it may please you to receive this little child, all bathed in my tears, into the number of your servants, and your friends, and to give it your holy benediction!"

## CHAPTER XII.


HOW THE DUKE LOUIS PROTECTED HIS POOR PEOPLE.

Liberabit pauperum a potente, pauperum cui non erat adjutor.

— *Ps.* lxxi. 4, 12.

Indutus est justitia ut lorica, ut galea salutis in capite ejus: indutus est vestimentis ultionis, et opertus est quasi pallio zeli . . .

Quia ego Dominus, diligens judicium et odio habens rapinam. — *Is.* lix. 17, lxi. 8.

N the lives of these holy spouses, all tends to demonstrate to us the deep sympathy which united them, and how worthy they were of each other. We have seen the Duchess employing all the energy and ingenious tenderness of her soul, in solacing the woes of the unhappy who came within the sphere of her labors; we have now to show how Louis consecrated his courage and military talents to the defense of the interests of the people whom God committed to his care. The innate love of justice that we have already mentioned as one of his leading virtues, endowed him with so deep a sense of the rights of his subjects, and so generous a sympathy for them when their just privileges were invaded, that these sole motives frequently urged him to distant and expensive expeditions, the provocations to which profoundly astonished his neighbors and his vassals. Thus in 1225 the Duke learned that some of his subjects who traded with Poland and the other Sclavonian nations, were attacked and robbed near the castle of Lubantsk, or Lubitz, in Poland. He requested the Duke of Poland to make restitution to these unfortunates, and this was refused.

Then he convoked for the Feast of the Dispersion of the Apostles, (in the ancient calendars this is marked for 15th July), a considerable

army, consisting of Hessians, Thuringians, Franconians, and the Knights of Osterland. He led this army secretly to the banks of the Elbe, without announcing his intentions. Arrived at Leipzig, he was joined by the Saxon lords of his Palatinate, and several armed men of Misnia — for he was guardian to his nephew, the young Margrave of that province. Then did he declare to them that he purposed going into Poland to besiege the castle of Lubantsk, and to revenge the injury done to his poor subjects. This caused great astonishment amongst his followers, who could not understand why he would undertake so much for an affair between common merchants. As he would not change his purpose on account of their remonstrances, many of them wished to withdraw, but shame, and perhaps a fear of his severity, retained them. They were then obliged to follow him to Poland, which he entered at the head of his army, preceded by three thousand five hundred chosen men as pioneers, who arrived at Lubantsk three days before him. They burned the city and besieged the castle whilst awaiting him. The Duke of Poland was extremely surprised to learn that the Landgrave of Thuringia had come such a distance at the head of so powerful an army to invade his country, and sent him offers of pecuniary satisfaction; but Louis repulsed them, saying, that these terms should have been made when he wrote in a friendly manner, before he took the field, as he did not now wish to let so long a journey go for nothing. Then, having arrived before Lubantsk, he eagerly pressed the siege. The Polish prince sent a bishop to address to him new and powerful representations. This bishop told him that he should not forget that the Poles were also famous warriors, and that if he did not return without delay, the Duke of Poland would come on the following Monday with his army, and exterminate all the Germans.

To this the Landgrave replied, that he would be delighted to make acquaintance with the Duke, and that he would remain eight days after the appointed Monday, to see what sort of people were these Poles.

But neither the Duke nor his Poles appeared. After some assaults the Castle surrendered, and Louis, after razing it to the ground, returned home, leaving throughout all eastern Germany the most favorable opinion of his justice, courage, and love of the people.

Some time after the Duke took the field for a cause which seemed still more insignificant ; but this incident gives us so just an idea of the goodness and popularity of his character, as well as of the manners of the age, that we shall relate it in detail.

Two or three years before, at the annual fair at Eisenach, as the Duke descended to the city, and amused himself in looking at the shops and the stalls, he saw a pedlar who had but a very small pack, containing thimbles, needles, spoons, leaden images, and little ornaments for women. The Duke asked him if he were able to make a livelihood out of this traffic. "Well, my lord," replied the pedlar, "I am ashamed to beg, and I am not strong enough for manual labor; but if I could only go in safety from city to city, I could, with God's blessing, earn a living with this little trade, and even manage so that at the end of the year it would be worth as much more as it was at the beginning."

The good Duke, touched with compassion, said to him, "Well, I will grant thee a passport for a year; thou shalt pay neither taxes nor duties throughout the extent of my dominions. How much is thy pack worth?" "Twenty shillings," said the pedlar. "Give him ten shillings," said the Prince to his treasurer, who accompanied him, "and make him out a passport with my seal affixed." Then turning towards the pedlar he said to him, "I wish to engage in half of thy business; promise me that thou wilt be a faithful partner, and I will keep thee from all harm." The poor pedlar was overjoyed, and went his way with full confidence of success. On the return of the new year, he came to meet his noble associate at Wartburg, and showed him his pack, which was much enlarged. The Landgrave took some little matters, which he gave to his servants. On each New Year's day the pedlar returned to Wartburg to inform the Prince of the state of his funds, which soon became so considerable, and his wares so many, that he could no longer carry them on his back; so he purchased an ass, made two bales of his merchandise, and each time performed journeys longer and more profitable.

Now it happened that towards the end of the year 1225 the pedlar went to Venice, and purchased there a quantity of rare and precious

matters, large rings, bracelets and brooches, crowns and diadems of jewels, cups and mirrors of ivory, knives, adders' tongues, rosaries of coral, etc. And as he was preparing to return to Thuringia, in order to be at Wartburg, as was his wont, on New Year's day, he arrived at Wurtzburg in Franconia, where he exposed his wares for sale. Certain Franconians, who came to inspect them, saw many ornaments which they would be glad to have to present to their wives and friends, but without paying for them. So they watched for the pedlar's departure, and went some distance from the city to lie in ambush for him; as he passed they rushed upon him, and carried off his ass and his merchandise.

It was in vain that he showed them the passport granted by the Landgrave of Thuringia; they laughed at it, and were going to bind him, to bring him away with them, and it was with difficulty he escaped from their hands. He went in sadness to Eisenach to seek his sovereign and associate, and related to him his misfortune. "My dear partner," said the good prince smiling, "be not so troubled at the loss of our goods; have a little patience, and leave me the care of seeking them." Immediately he convoked the counts, knights, and squires of the neighborhood, and even the peasants, who fought on foot, put himself at their head, entered without delay into Franconia, devastating the country to the gates of Wurtzburg, inquiring everywhere for his ass. On hearing of this invasion, the Prince Bishop of Wurtzburg sent to ask him what he meant by such conduct. The Duke replied that he was seeking a certain ass of his which the bishop's men had stolen. The prelate had restitution made to him at once for the ass and the baggage, and the good Duke returned home triumphant, to the great admiration of the poor people, whose zealous defender he was.

But whilst he was thus occupied he received from the Emperor Frederic II an invitation to join him in Italy. He set out immediately, and crossed the Alps before the end of winter. He went with the Emperor through all the campaign against the Bolognese, and the other insurgent cities, and was at the great Diet of Cremona in 1228.

The Emperor was so satisfied with his courage and devotion that he granted him the investiture of the Margravate of Misnia, in case the posterity of his sister Judith, widow of the late Margrave, became extinct, and also that of all the country he could conquer in Prussia and Lithuania, whither he entertained the project of going to extend the Christian faith.

## CHAPTER XIII.

HOW A GREAT FAMINE DEVASTATED THURINGIA, AND HOW THE  
DEAR ST. ELIZABETH PRACTICED ALL THE WORKS OF MERCY.

Esurivi, et dedistis mihi manducare; sitivi, et dedistis mihi  
bibere; hospes eram et collegistis me; nudo,, et cooperuistis me;  
infirmus, et visitastis me in carcere eram, et venistis ad me.” — *St.*  
*Matt.* xxv. 34-36.

**S**CARCELY had the Duke set out under the imperial banner, when a frightful famine overspread all Germany, and particularly ravaged Thuringia. The famished people were reduced to the greatest extremities; the poor went out into the fields and forests, and to the waysides, in search of roots and wild fruits, such as were usually the food of animals. They devoured dead horses and asses, and even the most unclean beasts; a great number of these unfortunates died of hunger, and the roads were covered with their bodies. At the sight of so much misery, Elizabeth's heart was filled with pity. Henceforward her only thought, her only occupation, by night and by day, was the relief of her unhappy people. The castle of Wartburg, where her husband had left her, became the source of boundless charity, whence flowed unceasingly inexhaustible benefits to the population of the neighborhood. She began, by distributing to the indigent of the duchy, all the ready money in the ducal treasury, which amounted to the enormous sum, for that time, of sixty-four thousand golden florins; these were the proceeds of the sale of certain properties.

Then she caused all her husband's granaries to be opened, and notwithstanding the opposition of the officers of the household, she gave all the grain they contained, without any reserve, to the poor. There was so much in store, that according to contemporary writers,

to buy the quantity of corn thus disposed of, the two greatest castles, and several cities of the duchy should be put in pledge. Elizabeth knew how to unite prudence with this boundless generosity. Instead of giving out the corn in great quantities, in which it might be wasted, she distributed every day to each person the portion requisite for sustenance.

In order to avoid all unnecessary expense, she had every day, as much bread baked at the castle as all its ovens could contain, and this she served with her own hands to the poor. Nine hundred persons came daily to be fed, and departed laden with her alms. But there were many more whom weakness, illness and infirmity hindered from ascending the mountain on which the ducal residence was situated, and it was for these that Elizabeth redoubled her care and compassion during those awful times. To the weakest she daily carried the remains of her repasts and those of her maidens, and their scanty meals were almost untasted through fear of lessening the share of the poor. In the hospital containing twenty-eight beds, which she had founded midway on the ascent to the castle, she placed the sufferers who required her immediate care; and she had it so organized, that no sooner was one poor person dead, than his bed was immediately occupied by some newly-admitted patient.

She established two almshouses in the city of Eisenach, one for poor women, under the invocation of the Holy Spirit, near the gate of St. George; another under that of St. Ann, for the sick in general. The latter exists to this day.

Twice every day without fail, at morn and at eventide, the young Duchess descended and reascended the toilsome road from Wartburg to these houses, regardless of the fatigue she thereby endured, in order that she might visit her poor ones, and carry to them all that would be useful for their wants. When arrived at these asylums of misery, she used to go from bed to bed, asking all what they wished for, and performing for each services the most repulsive, with a zeal and tenderness which the love of God and His special grace alone could inspire. She fed with her own hands those whose maladies were most severe; she made their beds, raised and carried them on her back, or in



her arms, to lay them on other couches; she washed their faces with her own veil, and did all with a gaiety and amenity that nothing could alter. Though she had a natural repugnance to bad air, and it was generally most trying to her, still she would remain in the midst of the mephitic atmosphere of the sick wards, even during the summer heats, without expressing the slightest dislike, though her attendants could not endure it, but often murmured loudly.

Elizabeth founded in one of these hospitals an asylum for deserted children, or orphans; these were the objects of her special tenderness, and she lavished on them the most affectionate care. Their little hearts soon understood how sweet a mother the Lord had deigned to give them in their misery. Whenever she came amongst them they ran to meet her, and clung to her garments, crying out, *Mamma! Mamma!* She used to have them sitting around her, and used to distribute little presents to them, and examine the state of each one. She testified particular affection and pity for those most deformed or repulsive, by taking them on her knees and fondly caressing them.

Elizabeth was not only the benefactress of these poor people, but also their friend and confidant. One poor sick man related to her privately that his conscience was burthened with the remembrance of a debt he owed. She quieted him by promising to discharge it herself, which she immediately did. The time that she could spare from the superintendence of these hospitals she employed in visiting the suburbs of Wartburg, in distributing provisions and assistance to the poor who could not come to the castle, in entering the poorest cabins, and performing for their inmates offices the lowest and most beneath her rank. One day she went into the hut of a sick woman who was alone, and who begged plaintively for some milk, saying that she had not sufficient strength to go and milk her cow; immediately the humble princess entered the stable and set about milking the cow, but the animal, little accustomed to be touched by such delicate hands, would not permit her to accomplish her benevolent intention.

Elizabeth loved to attend the poor in their agony, in order to assuage their pains, to receive their last sigh with a kiss of sisterly charity, to pray to God fervently during entire hours to sanctify their

deaths, and to receive their souls into His glory. She most faithfully continued her custom of watching the obsequies of these lowly ones; and, notwithstanding the increase of mortality, she was seen continually following their remains to the grave, after seeing them enveloped in cloth woven by her own hands for this purpose, or else chosen from her own garments, as she frequently cut up the large white veil which she was in the habit of wearing. She could not bear that the rich should be buried in new or expensive shrouds, but ordered that their grave-clothes should be old or coarse, and that the difference in value between them and the new should be given to the poor.

Neither did poor prisoners escape her solicitude. She visited them wherever she heard of such being confined; with money she delivered those detained for debt; she cleansed and anointed the wounds produced by the chains on the others; and then, kneeling by their sides, she would with them beg God to watch over and to preserve them from future pain or punishment.

All these occupations, so calculated to fill the soul with fatigue, disgust, and impatience, inspired her with celestial peace and joy; whilst she poured forth on her poor brethren the riches of her charity, her heart and mind were frequently elevated to the Lord, and her benevolent occupations were often interrupted to say to Him aloud: "O Lord, how can I sufficiently thank you for having given me cause to gather together these poor ones, who are your dearest friends, and to permit me to serve them myself?" And one day as she made this ejaculatory prayer in the hospital, the patients thought they saw an angel appearing and saying to her, "Rejoice, Elizabeth, for thou also art the friend of God — thou shinest before his eyes like the moon."

Other wonderful signs seemed to prove to simple and faithful souls how agreeable to God were the charity and humility of this princess. One day when she had bought in the city some earthen vases, and several kinds of rings, and toys of glass for her class of poor children, as she returned to the castle in a carriage, the awkwardness of the driver caused the vehicle to overturn, and it fell from a rock on a heap of stones; yet Elizabeth was not hurt, nor was one of the toys which

she carried broken. She immediately brought these presents to her little charges to gladden them.

Another time, as she carried in her apron some food to a group of mendicants, she saw with uneasiness that she had not a sufficient quantity to give some to each, and that every moment more supplicants arrived. She then began to pray interiorly while distributing the food, and found that, according as she gave pieces away, they were replaced by others, so that after giving each beggar his share there was still some left. She returned to the castle, singing with her companions the praises of God, who had deigned to communicate to her His all-powerful virtue according to His formal promise "*Amen, amen, I say to you, he that believeth in me, the works that I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do.*" — St. John xiv. 12.

It was not only on the people in the neighborhood of her residence that Elizabeth lavished her care and love. The inhabitants of even the most distant parts of her husband's dominions were equally the objects of her sovereign and maternal solicitude. She gave express orders that the revenues derived by Duke Louis from Thuringia, Hesse, the Palatinates of Saxe and Osterland, should be exclusively consecrated to the relief and support of the poor whom the famine had left without resources, and watched the exact execution of this order, notwithstanding the opposition of the officers of the Duke. Yet to satisfy still further for the want of her personal care, which distance prevented her from rendering, she sold all her jewels, precious stones, and valuable articles, and distributed to them their price. These regulations were continued until the harvest of 1226; then the Duchess assembled all the poor who were able to work, men and women; she gave them new clothes and shoes, that their feet might not be wounded or torn by the stubble in the fields, and set them all to labor. To all those who were not strong enough to work, she distributed clothes which she had made or purchased for this purpose. She made this distribution with her own hands, and bade these poor ones an affectionate farewell, giving also to each a small sum of money; and when her money failed, she took her veils and silken robes, and

divided them amongst the women, saying to them, "I do not wish that you should retain these matters for dress, but that you should sell them to satisfy your wants; and also that you should labor according to your strength, for it is written, "*That he who works not, eats not.*" "*Qui non laborat non manducet.*"

A poor old woman, to whom the Duchess had given a chemise, shoes, and a cloak, was so rejoiced, that, after crying out that she was never so happy in her life, she swooned away as one dead. The good Elizabeth hastened to raise her, and reproached herself as having sinned in endangering by her imprudence the life of this woman

We have visited with a tender respect and scrupulous care the place which was the center of a charity so inexhaustible, a devotion so heavenly. We have followed over the rugged pathways trodden by the feet of the indefatigable friend of the poor; for a long while did we contemplate the magnificent scenery visible from the height of Wartburg, thinking, meantime, that the blessed eyes of Elizabeth had also during the greater part of her life looked upon this vast extent of country, and glanced upon it all with a ray of that love which has neither its origin nor its recompense in this world.

Alas! the monuments founded by this royal lady have all perished; the people forgot her when they lost the faith of their fathers; some names alone have been retained, and these preserve for the Catholic pilgrim the traces of the beloved Saint.

Even in the castle of Wartburg, the remembrance of Luther, of *pride* revolted and victorious, has dethroned that of the humility and charity of Elizabeth; in the ancient chapel where *she* so often prayed, the traveler is shown the pulpit of the proud heresiarch. But the site of the hospital which she had erected at her palace-gates, that she might never forget human miseries in the splendor of her rank, has been left to her and preserves her name. An hundred years after her death, in 1331, the hospital was replaced by a convent of Franciscans, founded in her honor by the Landgrave Frederick the *Serious*. At the Reformation it was suppressed, and the seventeen other convents and churches of Eisenach were destroyed and pillaged in one day, whilst the priests and monks walked two and two, chanting the *Te Deum*,

heedless of the clamor of the populace. The foundation of the Benefactress of the country was not more respected, and the stones of it were employed to repair the fortifications of the castle.

But there remains a fountain of pure and sparkling water, flowing into a massive basin hollowed out of the rock, without any ornament saving the wild flowers and greensward surrounding it. This was where Elizabeth washed the linen of the poor, and it is still called "*Elizabeth's Fountain.*" All around is a bushy plantation which hides this place from the greater number of the passers-by; there are also some traces of a surrounding wall, and the enclosure is called by the people "*Elizabeth's Garden.*"


Further still to the east, at the foot of the mountain on which Wartburg is built, between it and the ancient Carthusian monastery, consecrated to our Saint in 1394, may be seen a lovely valley watered by a peaceful stream running in the midst of fields variegated with roses and lilies; the banks are shaded by venerable oaks, remains of the ancient forests of Germany. In one of its windings there is a secret and lonely spot wherein is a poor cabin, and where formerly there was a chapel. It was here Elizabeth received the poor, God's friends and hers; it was here she came, tender, ingenious, indefatigable, by hidden pathways through the woods, laden with provisions and other aid, to save them the pain of ascending the toilsome road to the castle, and also to prevent the remarks of men. This solitary spot is still called the "*Field of Lilies;*" this humble cabin the "*Repose of the Poor,*" and the valley formerly bore the sweet name of "*Elizabeth's Valley.*"

## CHAPTER XIV.

HOW DUKE LOUIS RETURNED TO HIS WIFE, AND HOW HE RENDERED  
TRUE JUSTICE TO HIS DEAR MONKS OF REYNHARTSBRUNN.

Confidit in ea cor viri sui. — *Prov.* xxxi. 2.

In tribus placitum est spiritui meo. Concordia fratrum, et amor  
proximorum, ut vin et mulier bene sibi consentientes. — *Eccles.*  
xxv. 1, 2.

 LOUIS, informed no doubt of the woes that afflicted his people, demanded and obtained permission from the Emperor to return to his dukedom. He set out on the 23rd of June, 1226, and arrived at Cremona on St. John's eve, just as the people were kindling the fires on the surrounding heights. After having happily crossed the Alps, he took up his quarters with a prince, not named by historians, but who was his near relative and friend. He was received with ceremony and magnificence; and after superb feasting, with music and singing, he was conducted to his sleeping-chamber, where the prince, anxious to test the virtue of his guest, had placed a young woman of extraordinary beauty. But the young duke said immediately to his faithful attendant, the lord de Varila, "Take away this young woman quietly, and give her a mark of silver wherewith to buy a new mantle, that want may not again urge her to expose herself to sin. I say unto thee in all sincerity, that even if adultery were not a sin before God, nor a scandal in the eyes of my fellow men, I would never consent to it, solely through love for my dear Elizabeth, and fear of saddening or troubling her soul."

The next morning, as the prince jested with him on this subject, Louis replied, "Know, my cousin, that to obtain the whole Roman empire I would not commit such a sin." Then continuing his journey

he arrived at Augsburg on the 2nd July; here he remained fifteen days to recommend the cause of Henry, son of the Emperor, to the Duke of Bavaria, and to obtain his consent to receive this young prince at his court. Having succeeded in this, he set out for Thuringia and passed the Mein at Schweinfurt, where he was received with great honor by the burgesses; but after supper he was warned that Count Poppin, his deadliest enemy, intended to surprise and attack him during the night. To avoid this danger he set out immediately, traveled all night, and arrived at Wartburg next day, which was on Friday about the hour of Nones.

The news of the approach of the beloved prince had filled all Thuringia with immense joy. The famine-stricken saw, in the return of their father and generous protector, hope for the termination of their woes. His mother, his young brothers were gladdened, but the joy of Elizabeth surpassed that of all the others. It had been the first prolonged absence of the husband so dear to her, who alone understood and sympathized with all the aspirations of her soul to God and towards a still more perfect life. She alone also fathomed the depth of his soul's riches, whilst the rest of mankind attributed to him failings and passions like to the other princes of his time. The principal officers of his household, particularly the Seneschal and the Marshal, fearing the anger of their lord, when he should have learned the use that had been made of his treasures and provisions, went out to meet him, and denounced to him what they denominated the reckless expenditure of the Duchess; how she had emptied the granaries of Wartburg, and used all the money left in their care, notwithstanding their efforts to prevent her. These complaints but irritated the Duke, and he spoke to them thus: "Is my dear wife well? that is all I care to know, the rest matters not!" Then he added, "I wish that you would allow my good little Elizabeth to give as much alms as she pleases, and that you would rather assist than contradict her; let her give as much as she wishes for God's sake, provided only that she leaves me Eisenach, Wartburg, and Naumburg. God will return the rest when he thinks it good. We shall never be impoverished by alms-deeds."

He then hastened to meet his beloved Elizabeth. When she saw him her joy was boundless; she threw herself into his arms, and kissed him a thousand times with her lips and in her heart. "Dear sister," said he, while he held her in his embrace, "what has become of thy poor people during this bad year?" She replied gently, "I have given to God what belonged to Him, and God has taken care of what belonged to thee and to me."

Tradition adds, that as the Duke passed with her through his great hall, he saw corn flowing in under all the doors, so that they walked upon it. Then having sent the Seneschal to see whence it came, the latter replied that the presses were so full of corn that the grain ran over and covered the ground. Then Louis and his wife blessed God. The lord de Varila then came to the Duchess and related what had happened at the prince's, where her husband's fidelity had been put to the proof. She immediately knelt, and said, "Lord, I am not worthy to have so good a husband; but aid us both to observe the sanctity of marriage, so that we may live eternally in Thy presence."

No sooner had he returned to his dominions, than this noble and pious prince occupied himself in considering the interests of his subjects. Whilst he watched with prudence and intelligence over the important negotiations, with which, notwithstanding his extreme youth, the Emperor entrusted him, he had always his sword at hand to protect the monks and the poor.

Even while serving as a mediator between the Emperor and Ottokar, King of Bohemia, and treating of a marriage between the daughter of this sovereign and Henry, the young king of the Romans, he went through his dominions to discover and to repair any wrongs committed towards the poor people during his absence. Several nobles of Osterland, who had oppressed their vassals and disturbed the public peace, took to flight on hearing of his coming; he occupied their castles, and completely destroyed those of Sultz and Kalbenrück.

Louis went as soon as possible to visit his dear monks of Reinhartsbrunn. The Abbot complained to him that a neighboring lord of Saltza had profited of his absence to usurp possession of a piece of ground belonging to the monastery, on the mountain called



Aldenberg, which governs the valley wherein the monastery was situated, and that he had thereon built a fortification from which he continually annoyed the religious and their people. It was on Saturday evening that Louis arrived and heard this complaint. He wrote at once to the Seneschals of Wartburg and Eisenach to come and bring with them their armed men and scaling-ladders, to meet him at the convent next morning before light.

At the dawning of Sunday morning he heard a low mass, and told the Abbot not to carry his cross, nor to permit high mass to be sung until his return; then he mounted his horse, headed his soldiers, and conducted them at once to the battlefield. The surprise was complete, the walls were scaled, and the lord of Saltza himself taken prisoner. The Duke had him brought on foot to the Abbey. As soon as they arrived the cross was carried out, and the usual procession for mass formed, whilst the usurper-knight and his soldiers were led in chains before the cross. The chanter intoned the verse:

*Domine, tu humiliasti sicut vulneratur superbum.*

and all the religious responded —

*In brachio virtutis tuæ dispersisti inimicos tuos.*

After Mass, the Duke made the lord of Saltza swear that he would renounce every ulterior proceeding against the monastery, and then he released him, after giving orders to have the castle he had taken that morning immediately razed to the ground.

The good prince dreaded putting the monastery to any expense on his account; he established a kitchen and a larder for the use of his attendants when he made any delay there; and, when going away, he always took care to have as much provision left behind as supported the convent for three days. But on the Sunday of the expedition against the lord of Saltza, the Abbot prayed him to take his repast with him, and provided a rich and abundant feast. When rising from table, Louis took his treasurer aside, and desired that a large recompense should be given on this occasion, This officer sought the monks to

give them the money, but they refused positively to take it, "as was fitting conduct for well-born religious," says the almoner who has left us the recital of this scene. "Dear lord," said they, "all that we can do, poor monks that we are, is at the disposal of our good prince, not only to-day, but every time he desires anything; but we will not take his money." The treasurer insisted no longer, but set out with the Duke. When they were half-way to Eisenach, Louis turned to him, and asked how he had fulfilled his orders. The treasurer related all that had passed, upon which the Duke, quite irritated, said, "Since thou didst not pay for what I bought with my money, thou must pay it with thine own." And the poor man was obliged to return to Reinhartsbrunn, and to pay from his own purse even to the last farthing.

A little time after, the Abbot of the same monastery made known to Louis that *certain honorable people* of Franconia had carried away from him a hogshead of wine and six horses. The Duke summoned them to make immediate restitution of the stolen goods; and as his command was suffered to remain unheeded, he entered Franconia at the head of an army, ravaged the possessions of the guilty party, and obliged the latter to come in their shirts, with ropes around their necks, and barefooted, to make an apology at the convent. He released them, after making them agree to send to the monks a great quantity of the best wine and several good horses.

About this time there was held a great court, or assembly of princes, at Merseburg, to which the nobles of Misnia, Saxony, and the Brandenburgian provinces repaired. Those of Hesse and Thuringia also went there, guided by the example of their Duke Louis, who brought with him his Elizabeth, accompanied by a numerous court. One circumstance which well depicts the manners of the age renders this meeting remarkable.

A Thuringian knight, renowned for his valor and piety, Walter de Settlestœdt, a friend of Louis, and one of the officers of his household, followed his sovereign; he brought with him a maiden of rare beauty, mounted on a superb palfrey, with a good falcon on her wrist.

On the journey he stopped after every three miles to joust against all comers, on condition that, if he was unhorsed, his victorious

adversary should carry off his armor and equipments, the palfrey and the falcon from the maiden, and the maiden should redeem herself by giving a golden ring; if, on the contrary, Lord Walter was victor, the vanquished should offer the lady a gold ring. At every halt made by the lord of Settlestœdt, there were strifes amongst the knights for the honor of tilting against him. To restore peace, he was obliged each time to point out him whom he selected to be his adversary. He thus traveled to Merseburg and back again without ever being conquered, and on re-entering Thuringia, his fair attendant had on each finger of both hands a ring paid by a vanquished knight. Lord Walter offered these ten rings to the ladies of honor of the Duchess Elizabeth, at which they were much rejoiced, and with their royal mistress they returned him hearty thanks for his generosity.

## CHAPTER XV.

HOW THE GOOD DUKE LOUIS TOOK UP THE CROSS, AND OF THE GREAT GRIEF WHEREWITH HE BADE FAREWELL TO HIS FRIENDS, HIS FAMILY, AND THE DEAR SAINT ELIZABETH.

Osculantes se alterutrum fleverunt pariter. — 1 *Reg.* xx. 41.

Quo abiit dilectus tuus, o pulcherrima mulierum?  
Quo declinavit dilectus? — *Cant.* v. 17.

So do thou also learn to part with a necessary and beloved friend for the love of God. — *Imitation of Christ*, B. 2, C. 9.

**S**HURINGIA did not long enjoy the presence of its beloved sovereign after his return from Italy, and Elizabeth, who had welcomed her husband again to her side with a joy so lively and so tender, was soon to be condemned to another separation far more painful and uncertain. In a word, all Germany prepared for a crusade. The Emperor Frederic II, yielding at length to the frequent exhortations of the Sovereign Pontiffs, Honorius III and Gregory IX, invited all the nobility and the faithful of Christendom to range themselves under the banner of the Cross, and to follow him to the Holy Land in the autumn of 1227. The idea and name of CRUSADE were alone sufficient to make the hearts of all nations beat with ardor. These great and holy expeditions exercised over souls an influence so powerful that no valiant knight nor pious and fervent Christian could resist it. The remembrance of the almost fabulous exploits of Richard Cœur de Lion, forty years before, still lived in the minds of the Chivalry and the people. The brilliant and unhoped-for success of the Fourth Crusade dazzled all Europe. People saw the destruction of that ancient empire of Byzantium, which never did else than betray the Christians who were fighting for the faith, but which still occupied an

immense place in the veneration of Christendom, and from the ruins of which was destined to rise a new empire founded by a few French knights and some Venetian merchants. In this there was sufficient to awaken all imaginations, even without the inspiration of faith, and these had not yet lost any portion of their strength. The whole of the thirteenth century was penetrated with an earnest desire to rescue the tomb of Christ, and to bow down the power of the East before the cross. The feeling was extinguished only at the death of St. Louis. Germany, which was never before the first to engage in these noble perils, was now inflamed with an enthusiasm that burst forth particularly in the numerous songs of the age. Walther von der Vogelweide, whose poems mirror most faithfully the manners and feelings of his time, and who entered this crusade, has best expressed the attraction felt by Christian souls towards the land where Christ's sacred blood was shed for our salvation. "We all know," said he before he set out on this expedition, "how unhappy is this holy and noble land, how abandoned she is and desolate! Weep, Jerusalem! weep! how art thou forgotten! Life passes, death will find us still sinners. It is in dangers and trials that we acquire grace; let us go to heal the wounds of Christ; let us go to free His country from her chains. O Queen of all women, come to our aid! It was there thy Son so pure was baptized to purify us! It was there He was sold to redeem us, He so rich, we so poor! It was there He suffered a most cruel death! Hail to you! Lance, Cross, Thorns! Defeat to you pagans! By the arms of His heroes does God wish to revenge the injuries done Him." These were also the emotions expressed by the royal bard of Navarre, Thibault of Champagne, in some of the fine poems addressed by him to his nobles. "Know well, my lords," says he, "that he Who goes not to this land, who takes not up the Cross beyond the seas, will find it hard to enter Paradise. Every man who feels some pity for the sufferings, and preserves the remembrance of the most High Lord, should strive to revenge Him, and to deliver His country. All the valiant knights, all who love God and the honor of this world, all who wish to go wisely to God, will go there ; none will remain at home but the slothful and indifferent. How blind are they who during their lives

do nought for God, and who for so little lose even the glory of this world. God, who deigned to suffer death for us on the Cross, will say on the day of the great judgment, 'You who have aided me to carry my Cross, shall go to join the blessed company of the angels; there you will see me, and my mother Mary: but you, who never did me any service, shall descend into Hell.' Sweet Lady, crowned Queen, pray for us, most blessed Virgin, and nought then can harm us."

In no heart could these sentiments find a deeper echo than in that of Duke Louis of Thuringia, whose vassal the poet Walther had been. No one could more earnestly desire to follow the emperor and his brothers in arms to the rescue of the Holy Land. His brilliant courage, the fervor of his faith and piety, all that was in his young soul of generous, ardent, disinterested, in a word, all that was Christian, combined to induce him to take up the Cross, or as it was then called in Germany to adorn himself with the *flower of Christ*.

To these personal motives were added the noble examples presented by the records of his family. Louis *the pious*, brother and predecessor of his father, had accompanied Richard Cœur de Lion and Philip Augustus to Palestine, and acquired a glorious renown. His father-in-law, King Andrew of Hungary, had spent several years of his life under an eastern sky, fighting against the infidels.

It would be unworthy of Louis to remain by his fire-side; so he did not waver long, but soon came to a noble determination. Having met during one of his journeys with the venerable Bishop Conrad of Hildesheim, he confided to him his intention, and having received his approbation he made a vow to join the expedition then in preparation, and received the cross from the hands of this prelate.

Meanwhile, when returning to Wartburg, he thought upon the grief and deep anxiety that his beloved Elizabeth would feel on learning his resolution; and besides, as she was then pregnant of her fourth child, he had not courage to speak of it to her. He decided upon concealing his project until the moment of his departure, in order that she whom he loved so much should not be over afflicted lest of injury to her health; so in place of attaching the Cross exteriorly to his person, he wore it secretly.

But one evening as they sat alone, side by side, Elizabeth, in a moment of the tender familiarity that existed between them, unloosed her husband's belt and began to search the alms purse attached to it. Immediately she drew from it the Cross, the usual badge of a crusader. At this sight she felt the misfortune that threatened her, and seized by grief and affright she fell senseless to the ground. The Duke raised her, and strove to calm her sorrow by the sweetest and most affectionate words; he spoke to her for a long time, using the voice of religion, and even the language of the holy Scriptures, to which she was never insensible. "It is for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ," said he, "that I go. Thou wilt not prevent me from doing for God what I should do for a temporal prince — for the emperor or the empire, if they required my services." After a long silence and much weeping she said to him, "Dear brother, if it be not against God's will, remain with me." But he replied, "Dear sister, permit me to set out, for I have made a vow to God." Then entering into herself she immolated her will to God, and said to her husband, "Against God's will, I wish not to detain thee. I have offered thee and myself as a sacrifice to Him. May He in His goodness watch over thee. May all happiness attend thee for ever! This shall be my prayer each moment. Go then in the name of God."

They again remained in silence, but afterwards spoke of the child she then bore in her womb, and they resolved to consecrate it to God from its birth. In case it was a boy, they agreed that he should enter the abbey of Ramersdorf; but if a girl, that she should be sent to the monastery of the Premonstratensians near Wetzlar.

The Duke having no longer any motive to keep his decision secret, made it known to all his subjects. He announced at the same time that this expedition should be formed entirely at his own expense, and that for its maintenance he would not levy any extraordinary tax upon his subjects; happy to be able thus to return to the Lord some of the blessings he had received from Him.

After having made all the military preparations that his project required, he convoked the estates of his dominions to a solemn assembly at Kreutzburg. He detailed to them his design, and took with

them the necessary measures for the good government of his country during his absence. He exhorted his nobles to rule the people with mildness and equity, and to let justice and peace reign over them and their vassals. Before quitting the assembly, he addressed the following words in a gentle tone of voice to his audience

“Dear and loyal brothers-in-arms, barons, lords, and noble knights, and you, my faithful people, you know that during the lifetime of my lord and father of pious memory, our country had cruel wars and many troubles to endure. You know how my royal father suffered pains, reverses, and fatigues, to defend himself against his relentless enemies, and to preserve his kingdom from utter ruin. He succeeded by dint of courage and generosity, and his name became formidable to all. As for me, God has granted to me, as He did to Solomon, son of David, peaceful and tranquil days. I know not any neighbor that I have reason to fear, neither can anyone dread from me unlawful violence. If in times past I have had some conflicts, I am now at peace with all, thanks to the Lord, the Giver of peace. You should all be sensible of this blessing, and thank God for it. As for me, through love for that God who has loaded me with favors, to testify to him my gratitude, and for the salvation of my soul, I am now going to the eastern country to the succor of oppressed Christianity, and to defend it against the enemies of the name and of the blood of Christ. I undertake this distant expedition at my own expense, without burthening you, my dear subjects, with any additional impost.

“I recommend to the protection of the Most High my good and well-beloved wife, my little children, my dear brothers, my friends, my people, and my country; in a word, all that I leave, with a willing heart, for the honor of His holy name

“I earnestly recommend you to keep peace between you during my absence; above all, I hope that my nobles will conduct themselves in a Christian-like manner towards my poor people. In fine, I beg of you to pray frequently to God for me that he may preserve me from all misfortune during this journey, and that He may bring me safe and sound again to you, if it be His most merciful will, for I submit myself



and you, and all that I hold dear, to the pleasure of His Divine Majesty.”

In these touching words is revealed to us all the depth of what was then called “*The Mystery of the Crusade*,” a mystery of faith, devotion, and love, ever impenetrable to the cold understandings of faithless ages. In listening to this farewell, so worthy of a Christian prince, all the assembly was deeply moved; the strongest knights were oppressed with grief, and with sighs and tears expressed the anxiety caused them by the approaching departure of their young and well-beloved sovereign.

The Duke then, with the greatest prudence, appointed the various officers whom he wished to place over his estates, and selected magistrates for each city from amongst the wisest of its inhabitants. He also put the private affairs of his household in order, and specially recommended his dear Elizabeth to the care of his mother, his brothers, and his officers. “I know well,” said the steward to him, “that my lady the Duchess will give away all that she can, and reduce us to misery.” To which Louis replied, “that it was equal to him, for that God knew how to replace all that she gave away.” Louis also went to visit all the convents of Eisenach, even those of the nuns; asked the blessings of the religious, distributed to them abundant alms, and recommended himself to their prayers. Then he left Eisenach, accompanied by his wife, his children, his mother, and his brothers. He went first to Reinhartsbrunn, the monastery he loved beyond all others, and to which he was attached by the bonds of a special devotion and a sweet familiarity.

After having assisted at the office, he left the choir before the monks came out to receive the holy water, according to custom; the good prince placed himself beside the asperging priest, and as each religious passed he embraced him affectionately; even the little children of the choir he raised in his arms and imprinted on the forehead of each a paternal kiss. Affected by so much goodness, the religious burst into tears, and nought was heard for some time save the smothered sound of sobbing occasioned by the sad thoughts of the absence of their protector. The Duke yielded to his emotions and shed

tears — a dismal foreboding seemed to seize upon him, and he said, “It is not without reason that you weep, my dearest friends, for when I shall have gone away, rapacious wolves shall attack you, and with their murderous teeth torment you cruelly. When you shall be unhappy, impoverished, you shall see that in me you have lost a defender and a sovereign whose like is not frequently found. But I am also sure that the Most High will open to you the bowels of His mercy, and this I beg of Him now, and for ever, with all my heart.”

Then he left them, but they followed him with hearts full of pious affection, and eyes bathed in tears.

The Duke, still accompanied by all his family, went from Reinhartsbrunn to Schmalkalde, where he had appointed a meeting with all who were going to follow him to the Holy Land. It was there he was to take leave of his relations, his mother, his wife, and all who dwelt in his heart. As soon as he arrived, he took his brother Henry aside and said to him, “I have done all that I could, with God’s help, to walk in the way of salvation for my soul, and I know of nothing that could compromise it, if it be not, that I have not yet destroyed, as my father ordered me, the castle of Eyterburg, which was built to the prejudice of the neighboring convent. I beg of thee then, my gentle brother, not to forget razing it entirely, as soon as I shall have set out: that will tend to the salvation of thy soul.”

At length the feast of St. John the Baptist, the day fixed for the departure, arrived, and they were forced to say farewell. It was in the midst of nobles come from the very extremities of his dominions, and in the presence of the people who pressed around to look for the last time on their beloved prince, that Louis parted from all he loved.

He commenced by affectionately blessing his two brothers who were both weeping; he fervently recommended to them his mother, his children, and his Elizabeth. His little ones clung to his garments, embraced him weeping, and in their infantine language bade him farewell. He could not restrain his tears when kissing them, and when he turned towards his beloved Elizabeth, his grief and sobbing prevented him from speaking to her. Then embracing her with one arm, and his mother with the other, he held them both pressed to his

bosom without uttering a word, and kissed them repeatedly while shedding abundant tears, for more than half an hour.

At length he said, "My loved mother, I must leave thee, but thou hast in my place thy other two sons, Conrad and Henry. I recommend to thee my wife whose anguish thou seest." But neither his mother nor his wife would leave the object of their love, each clung to his side. His brothers and the other knights pressed round this sorrowing group. All hearts were moved — all eyes were tearful, on seeing this pious son, this faithful and tender husband striving to escape from the embraces of those he loved most in this world, in order to serve God at the peril of his life. The people mingled their sincere, though noisy grieving with that of the princes and warriors.

And it was not alone one family that experienced the grief of parting; there were, in the crowd of Crusaders who were to accompany the Duke, many fathers, and husbands, and brothers, who wept and struggled like their sovereign in separating from their families and friends. Each one seemed to have deferred to this moment the painful trial. The Thuringians, the Hessians and the Saxons were there united by a common affection, as well as by the object of their expedition. So many ties could be broken only by a supernatural effort. On all sides were heard groaning and sobs, confused and whispering sounds, all commingled in the general agony.

Meanwhile several men, who were either more masters of their hearts, or who were already far away from their friends, or who perhaps were alone in this world, having neither family nor social bonds to break, were at this solemn moment governed only by the thought of the sacred character of the enterprise which they were about to commence. These Crusaders and pilgrims, whilst the others wept and lamented, intoned hymns of thanksgiving to God for having deigned to permit them to go and combat for the honor of His holy name. The sound of these canticles mingled with the cries of grief that were uttered on all sides, and thus were re-united by a sublime contrast, the height of joy inspired by the love of the Lord, and the

expressions of that deep grief which this love taught these good men to brave and conquer.

When at length the Duke could detach himself from the arms of his mother, he was, as it were, imprisoned by his knights who remained, and by the poor people to whom he was justly so dear; each wished to detain him, to embrace him again, to take his hand or to touch his garments; Louis with tearful eyes looked on but could not speak. It was by a great effort that he made way through them to the place where his courser waited; having mounted him he rode into the midst of the Crusaders, and mingled his voice with theirs in chanting their holy hymns.

His beloved Elizabeth was still with him, for she would not be contented to bid him farewell at the same time with his other friends, but obtained permission to accompany him to the frontiers of Thuringia. They rode on, side by side, with hearts overwhelmed with sadness. No longer able to speak, the young Duchess could but sigh. They arrived at the frontier, but she had not courage sufficient to leave him, so she made another day's journey, and then a second, led on by grief and love. At the close of the second day she declared that she would never leave him, but would go with him to the end. Yet it was necessary that she should leave him, and the divine Love, *strong as death*, conquered in these two noble and tender hearts the love of the creature. The lord de Varila came nigh to the Duke and said to him, "My lord, the time has now arrived that our noble Duchess must leave us." At these words both burst into tears, they embraced each other trembling with emotion, and sobbing with such anguish that the hearts of all present were moved.

Meanwhile, the wise lord de Varila insisted on their separation, but these two souls so long and tenderly united clung to each other with unspeakable love at this sad moment. Louis; however, conquered his heart, mounted his horse, and gave the signal for departure. He showed the Duchess a ring which he always used for sealing his private letters. "Elizabeth," said he, "O thou dearest of sisters, look well upon this ring that I take with me. On the sapphire is engraven the Lamb of God with His banner; let it be to thy eyes a sure and

certain token for all that concerns me. He who brings thee this ring, dear and faithful sister, and tells thee that I am still alive, or that I have died, believe all that he shall say to thee." Then he added: "May the Lord bless thee, my dear little Elizabeth, beloved sister, my sweetest treasure. May the Lord preserve thy soul and thy courage; may he also bless the child thou now bearest, we will do with it what we have already agreed upon. Adieu, remember our happy life, our fond and holy love, and forget me not in any of thy prayers. Adieu, I can no longer stay." And he rode away, leaving his beloved wife in the arms of her ladies; she followed him a long time with her eyes, then, almost heartbroken, bathed in tears, in the midst of the lamentations of her companions, she returned to Wartburg, feeling in her heart a sad foreboding that never again should she look upon him. Returned to her lonely home, she laid aside her royal robes, and with a sad presentiment, assumed the costume that she was never again to leave off — that of a widow's mourning.

"In this age," says a pious Franciscan (le Père Archange) who wrote the life of St. Elizabeth in the reign of Louis XIV, "in this age we see so little affection between married people, even amongst those who appear to be pious, that we may be astonished to see in so detached a princess, so much love for her royal spouse." We will not follow the good friar through the defense he thought himself obliged to make for this feature in the character of St. Elizabeth. We can say of her what St. Bernard said of Mary, "Be not astonished, my dear brethren, that Mary has been styled a martyr in her soul; to be surprised at it we should forget what St. Paul looked upon as one of the greatest faults of the Gentiles, that they were without affection." But it is sufficient for us to say, after the many details we have related, that of all the souls whom the Church has crowned with glory, not one has offered to our contemplation, in the same high degree, the model of a wife, as did St. Elizabeth. None other realized, in such perfection, our idea of a truly Christian marriage. No one realized and sanctified human love by giving it so high a place in a heart so inflamed with the love of God, as did this young and noble lady.

And this union of the lawful earthly affections with the most profound piety was not of rare occurrence in those times of strong and pure emotions. It would be a pleasurable and fruitful labor, and we may undertake it one day, to demonstrate how, during Catholic ages, the most tender and passionate feelings of the human heart were sanctified and revived by faith, and how, while bending before the cross, purely human love derived exaltation and energy in the permanent victory of Christian humility over pride and selfishness. Feelings less varied, less extended, less refined, perhaps, than at present, were then far deeper; and when once Religion placed upon them her immortal seal, they manifested a wonderful strength, and experienced an unspeakable transfiguration, in which were at once combined the calm of long attachment, the freshness of innocence, all the energy of passion with all the purity and simplicity of religion. All those who are acquainted with the historical and literary works of the Middle Ages will appreciate the truth of this assertion.

Another characteristic feature of the moral and interior life of these times is the inseparable union of the most ardent affections with their legitimate consecration; thus duty and religious obligation became essential elements of the passionate emotions of the heart. In this, as in many other respects, Elizabeth was an admirable and complete personification of the period at which she lived.

That was also the age in which St. Louis cherished throughout his whole life, for his wife Margaret, the truthful and fervent tenderness of his early years. This great saint and great king, showing the ring he always wore, whereon he had engraved these words, GOD, FRANCE, AND MARGUERITE, said with such exquisite simplicity, "*Hors cet anel n'ai point d'amour,*" "*Beyond this ring, no love have I.*" In this century, too, Edward I of England erected the thirteen admirable crosses, whose remains are to this day reckoned amongst the wonders of Christian art; each one of these was reared upon the spot where the bier of his beloved wife, Queen Eleanor, was rested during the procession of her remains from Grantham, where she died, to Westminster.

This was without doubt the most magnificent funeral pomp ever celebrated; but was it too great for the woman who, twenty years before, went to share with her husband the dangers of the Crusades, who, with her own lips, imbibed the poison from the wound that a Saracen arrow inflicted upon Edward, and who had thus saved his life at the peril of her own? But a very remarkable circumstance, and one which we believe has not been properly appreciated up to this time, is, that this union is consecrated by fiction as well as by truth, and the creations of imagination render to it as brilliant an homage as do the monuments of history.

All the poetry of this period, as well as previous to Elizabeth's age, breathes the same spirit. It was not until after this time that any interest would be felt in the recital of the story of an unlawful love, or even one not consecrated by the Church. Marriage, or at least betrothal, should have taken place before Catholic souls would listen to the history of two hearts as related by the poets; love and interest, far from concluding with marriage, as in modern novels, seemed but to find in it their beginning. Conjugal fidelity was in a manner the inspiring principle of this beautiful poesy.

The most animated and romantic scenes are those in which some married couples figure — and this was not alone the case in the legends and the poems specially dedicated to religious purposes, but even the works apparently chivalrous and profane, bear the same stamp of the consecration of sentiment by duty. It is of woman as a faithful and pious wife that these poets trace the portrait in verses where she is pictured as almost divine, and seems to share in the tender veneration they paid to MARY. In our national literature the touching and pure loves of Roland and his betrothed Aude, in the romance of Roncevaux; the admirable history of the misfortunes endured by Gerard de Roussillon, and his wife, suffice to give us an idea of what our own poets have been able to deduce from these most Christian writings.

In Germany, the adopted country of our Elizabeth, this style was even more general and more loved than elsewhere. We find the brightest and most popular examples in the *Nibelungen*, in Sigefroid

and Kriemhilde, those souls so full of simplicity, truth, and devotion. This star of pure love which irradiates the most beautiful historical traditions, such as those of Henry the Lion, of Florentia, Genevieve of Brabant, Count Ulric, etc., is always the brilliant source of inspiration of the grandest poems of the days of chivalry.

Parseval is so enraptured at the sight of three drops of blood upon the snow, which reminds him of his wife's beautiful complexion, that he despises glory and the combat in order to contemplate them.

The wife of Lohengrin, whenever her husband left her, swooned away, and remained insensible until his return. In the *Titirel* we read that when a faithful husband and wife are re-united in death, from their common tomb spring forth two vines which intertwine with and sustain each other. Sweet and noble symbols of those holy affections implanted from Above, that give to the earth such lovely flowers, but the fruits and rewards of which are to be found only in Heaven.




## CHAPTER XVI.

HOW DUKE LOUIS DIED ON HIS WAY TO THE HOLY LAND.

Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa: placita erim erat Deo anima  
 filius: propter hoc properavit educere illum de medio iniquitatum.

— Sap. iv. 14, 18.

 LOUIS, after losing sight of his dear and sorrowing Elizabeth, soon regained the joyous and trustful energy which always distinguished the true knights engaged in those distant expeditions, and the holy cheerfulness that faith confers in the idea of the sacrifices made by, and the victories gained over, mere human feelings.

He brought with him the choicest chivalry of his dominions; five counts, Louis de Wartburg, Gunther de Kefernburg, Meinhard de Muhlberg, Henry de Stolberg, and Burkhard de Brandenburg; his cup-bearer, Rodolphe, Lord de Varila; his marshal, Henry, Lord of Ebersberg; his chamberlain, Henry, Lord of Fahnern; his seneschal, Hermann de Hosheim, and a crowd of other barons and knights. The number of infantry that followed was small, owing to the great distance they had to travel. Five priests, amongst whom was the Almoner Berthold, who wrote the life of Louis, had the care of saying masses, hearing confessions, and affording all spiritual consolations to these warriors during the expedition.

Besides the counts and lords who were his own vassals, Louis was accompanied by all the knights of Swabia, of Franconia, and from the banks of the Rhine, in his quality as commander-in-chief of the Crusaders of central Germany. We remark amongst them the name of Count Louis de Gleichen, so renowned throughout Germany for his romantic adventures during this Crusade. A tradition supported by

learned authorities relates, that having been taken prisoner in Palestine, and carried into Egypt, he was liberated by Melechsala, daughter of the sultan, on condition that he should marry her, though he had left his wife (born Countess d'Orlamunde) in Thuringia; agreeable to his promise he brought his fair deliverer to his castle of Gleichen, where the two wives lived in the most perfect union, and on his tomb, in Erfurth Cathedral, he is sculptured in a recumbent posture between them.

Provided with so good an army, the Duke traversed Franconia, Swabia, and Bavaria, crossed the Tyrolean Alps, and, passing through Lombardy, and Tuscany, went to join the Emperor at Apulia. This meeting took place at the city of Troja, about the end of August, 1227. The Emperor had assembled an immense force. Sixty thousand men were there encamped under the banner of the cross; but an epidemic had already broken out amongst them, and delayed their embarkation. However, all was prepared; the Landgrave held a secret conference with the Emperor to arrange in detail the plan of the expedition: for, notwithstanding his youth, no prince inspired with more confidence, both sovereign and people, than did Duke Louis. Immediately after this conference the two princes embarked at Brindisi, after having previously recommended to God their voyage, by solemn prayers, but no sooner did Louis set foot in the vessel than he felt himself seized with trembling and fever.

After three days, the Emperor, being no longer able to endure the sea, landed at Otranto, where the Empress was. The Duke went with him, in order to pay a visit to the Empress with the usual ceremony, though a great number of his followers had continued their journey to Palestine. Meanwhile, Louis felt that his fever increased in violence, and it was with difficulty he regained his ship, where he was immediately obliged to confine himself to bed. The sickness made rapid progress, and all hope of recovery was soon abandoned. The Duke was the first who was aware of his danger; he made his will, and sent for the Patriarch of Jerusalem to bring him the last sacrament. This prelate came, accompanied by the Bishop of Santa Croce, and administered to him Extreme Unction.

After having confessed his sins with humility and great contrition, his knights assembled around his bed, and he received in their presence the "Bread of the Strong," with the most fervent devotion and an expression of the liveliest faith.

We do not find, either in the narrative of his almoner, who was present at his last moments, nor in any of the histories afterwards written, a single word that would lead us to believe that this holy and worthy knight felt the least regret on quitting this life. Neither his youth, in the flower of which he was carried to the tomb — nor his country, far from which he died — nor the power he nobly and so justly used — nor his kinsfolk, nor his little children, whom he had yet scarcely time to know, nor even Elizabeth, whom he had so faithfully and tenderly loved, and loved only — none of these blessings seem to have chained to the Earth, even for a moment, this soul so eager for Heaven.

On the contrary, we learn that he was anxious to die, and the happiness of expiring under the banner of Christ, as it were, even in His service, after having sacrificed all for this, governed him exclusively, and left no place in his heart for any earthly remembrance or regret. As he had lived but for God, and in God, it seemed to him quite easy to die at the moment God willed it, and at the post assigned to him. Like a faithful soldier, he received unmurmuringly the signal which recalled him before the close of the fight.

He who had shed so many tears when leaving for a little time his beloved family — he who had torn himself with such bitter anguish from the wife whom he hoped soon to see again, had not for them, at this moment of complete and irreparable separation, a sigh or a tear. Truly he was right to mourn and weep when going far from her on Earth, but at Heaven's gate this dear image could only be present to his mind as re-united and rejoicing with him in the future bliss of a glorious eternity.

He charged some of the knights to go and announce his death to his family, and to his dear Elizabeth, by bringing to her the ring he had shown her when parting, and which, as then agreed upon between them, was to be to her the token of all that concerned him. Then he

requested all his men, in the names of God and our Lady, to remember him if they survived the dangers of their holy undertaking — to bring back his remains to Thuringia, to inter them at Reinhartsbrunn, where he had chosen his burial place, and also never to forget him in their prayers. Some time before he expired, Louis saw a number of doves flying into the room, and fluttering around his bed. “Look, look,” said he, “upon these snow-white doves !“ The bystanders thought he was delirious, but in a moment after he said, “I must fly away with those beautiful doves.” In saying these words he slumbered in the Lord, quitted this mortal pilgrimage to enter the eternal country, there to take his place amongst the heavenly host, on the third day after the feast of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin (11th Sept. 1227), having just attained his twenty-seventh year.

As soon as he had breathed his last sigh, his almoner Berthold saw the doves of which he had spoken flying toward the east; he looked after them for a long time, and felt not surprised that the Holy Spirit who had descended on the Son of God in the form of a dove, should have sent angels in this fair shape to conduct before the Sun of eternal justice this young soul, which through its earthly pilgrimage had preserved its pure and dove-like innocence. To his face already so fair, death added new beauty, and the attendants could not too much admire the expression imprinted on his pale features of firm faith, sweet peace, ineffable joy, with the deep and pure placidity of death.

It was a bitter grief for those who had followed Louis so far, to see him die in all the prime of youth and valor, and to find themselves without a chief in this hazardous expedition. It was still more sad for those who had preceded him, who had not the mournful happiness of watching through his last moments, or of receiving his death sigh; to these faithful men was announced, on the high sea, the loss they had suffered.

The air resounded with their lamentations. “Alas! dear lord,” cried they, “alas! good knight, why have you left us exiles in the country of the stranger? how have we lost you! — you the light of our eyes, the leader of our pilgrimage, the hope of our after years! Woe, woe has fallen on us.”

The messengers returned, and in union with those who had remained on shore, they made a solemn oath to execute the last wishes of their beloved prince, in case they themselves escaped from the perils of the crusade. Meanwhile they solemnly celebrated his obsequies, and carefully buried his body at Otranto. Then they resumed their journey in order to accomplish their vow.

## CHAPTER XVII.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH HEARD OF THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND, AND OF HER GREAT AGONY AND TRIBULATION.

Quo mihi avulsus es? quo mihi raptus è manibus, homo unanimes, homo secundum cor meum? amavimus nos in vita: quomodo in morte sumus separati? . . . Omnino opus mortis, horrendum divortium. Quis enim tam suavi vinculo mutui nostri non pepercisset amoris, nisi totius suavitatis inimica mors?  
— *St. Bernard in Cant. Serm. 26.*

Flebat igitur irremediabilibus lacrymis. — Tob. x. 4.

**H**HE nobles, whom Duke Louis had commanded at his last moments to go and announce his death in Thuringia, had a long and difficult journey to accomplish; and the nature of the fatal news they had to carry did not tend to accelerate their speed. The young Duchess, during the interval that had elapsed since the sad event, had given birth to her fourth child, Gertrude, and could not see the messengers when they arrived. It was then to the Duchess-mother, and to the young princes Conrad and Henry, that they spoke of the bitter affliction by which they had been stricken. In the midst of the consternation which this news spread through the family and people of the illustrious dead, pious and prudent men were occupied in preventing the effect it would have, if known, on the young mother, a widow, without being aware of her bereavement. Even Sophia's heart became maternal in its feelings towards her whom her son had so dearly loved. She gave the most strict orders that no one should give her daughter-in-law reason to suspect her misfortune, and took all necessary precautions to have these directions faithfully attended to.

But the appointed time had elapsed since Elizabeth's recovery, and it was deemed fit to inform this fond and faithful wife of the grief God had willed her to endure, and it was the Duchess Sophia who was charged with this painful duty. Accompanied by several noble and discreet ladies she went to her daughter-in-law's apartment. Elizabeth received them with respect and affection, and made them all sit around the couch whereon she was reposing, without being at all aware of the object of their visit. When they had taken their places, the Duchess Sophia said to her: "Take courage, my beloved child, and be not troubled by what has happened to your husband, my son, by God's will, for to that, you know, he was entirely devoted." Elizabeth, seeing how calm the duchess was, for she had spoken without weeping, had no idea of the extent of her misfortune, and imagining that her husband had been taken prisoner, she replied, "If my brother is in captivity, with the help of God and my friends he will soon be ransomed. My father will come to our assistance, and in a little time we shall be consoled." But the Duchess Sophia resumed, "O my beloved child, be patient, and take this ring, for to our grief he is dead." "Ah, mother! what do you say?" cried out the young Duchess. "He is dead," replied Sophia. At these words Elizabeth became pale and red by turns, and passionately clasping her hands, she said in a voice almost suppressed by strong emotion, "O Lord, my God, my God, now indeed is the whole world dead to me, the world and all it contains of happiness!" Then, rising, she began to run distractedly through all the corridors and passages of the castle, crying out, "He is dead! He is dead!" In the refectory she was found holding by the wall, weeping bitterly. The Duchess Sophia, and the other ladies who followed, detached her from this position, made her sit down and used every effort to console her. She still wept, and her words were interrupted by continued sobbing. "Now," said she, "I have lost all! Oh, my beloved brother! Oh, friend of my heart, my good and pious husband, how shall I live without thee? Thou art dead, and I am left in misery. Poor desolate widow, unhappy woman that I am! May He who forgets not the widow and the orphan console me! Oh! my God, comfort me! Oh, good Jesus, strengthen me in my weakness!" Her

ladies endeavored to reconduct her to her chamber; she yielded with tottering steps, and when she entered it she fell on her face on the floor. They raised her and she renewed her lamentations.

The Duchess Sophia also gave vent to her maternal grief, and mingled her sorrow with Elizabeth's, as did also the noble matrons and maidens in attendance. Following their example, all the members of the Ducal household, all the inhabitants of that Wartburg where Louis had spent almost the entire of his short life, indulged their grief, which they until then had suppressed, on account of the critical state of the young widow. The sight too of her unutterable anguish added still more to the impression produced by the irreparable loss of their beloved sovereign. Throughout the neighborhood, for eight days, nought was heard save sighs, and groans, and loud lamentations.

But neither this general sympathy, nor any other solace, could calm the affliction of Elizabeth; in vain she sought a remedy in her despair. "Nevertheless," says her pious historian, "there was always near her an Omnipotent Consoler, the Holy Spirit, the Father of widows and orphans, the hope of the broken-hearted, who apportioned His trials to her strength, and who replenished her with His graces in filling up the measure of her affliction."

And let us now look upon this dear saint, whom we beheld, in her truly Christian union, endowed with the greatest happiness of this life, a widow at the age of twenty years; the loving and beloved wife condemned henceforth to endure the painful trial of the solitude of the heart. It was not sufficient for the Divine Savior of her soul to have her initiated into the troubles of life, and exposed to the calamities and persecutions of the wicked — she had preserved inviolate her tender confidence in Him. It was not enough to have tempted her by the display of royal grandeur, by the flattering homage of a brilliant chivalry, by the joyful and pure felicity of her wedded life. In the midst of all this happiness she had ever given the first place, in the secret of her heart, to the thought of Heaven — in her outward life, to the relief of her poor and suffering brethren. Yet all this was not sufficient to accomplish the designs of Divine Love; it was necessary that, before entering into the possession of celestial joys, she who had



relieved so much misery should become in her turn the most wretched and most neglected of creatures; before beholding the eternal treasures she was condemned to die a thousand times daily to the world, and all the goods of this life. Henceforth, until the last hour of her mortal existence, ceaseless storms assail this frail plant but by a favor, wonderful to worldlings, but easily intelligible to the friends of God, far from weakening or bending feebly to the Earth, we behold her rising, and, as it were, budding forth on every side to receive the dews of Heaven, and towering with matchless splendor.

If the loss of so loving a husband, and the severing of their holy union, did for a space plunge this predestined heart into an abyss of despair, new and bitter trials were sent to restore to it all its strength, its calm, and its invincible ardor.

If Elizabeth yielded for a moment, wounded by the loss of her earthly love, soon did she rise again to attach her heart to the throne of the Most High, by a chain of love divine, which nothing could destroy.

According as she approached the end of her career, the exaltation of victory restored to her in some measure the tranquil courage that sustained her under her former sorrows, She was fortified by the presentiment and the hope of triumph.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH WAS DRIVEN OUT OF HER CASTLE  
WITH HER LITTLE CHILDREN, AND REDUCED TO EXTREME MISERY,  
AND OF THE GREAT INGRATITUDE OF MEN TOWARDS HER.

Paupercula, tempestate convulsa, absque ulla consolatione.  
— *Isaias*, Book II.

Egentes, augustiati, afflicti, quibus dignus non erat mundas.  
— *Hebrews*, xi. 37, 38.



IN commencing the second part of Elizabeth's life with her twentieth year, we cannot refrain from warning the small number of readers who have followed us so far, that henceforth they will no longer find the purely human attractions and romantic interests of the preceding pages. It is no longer the young and loving wife, striving to mingle in her soul the worship of her heavenly Father with the most beautiful affections of the heart, that we present to them, but the penitent devoted to all the rigors of the ascetic life, walking out of the beaten track open to the piety of the faithful in general — uprooting from her soul, and extinguishing in her heart, all that prevented God from having full possession of her entire being.

Elizabeth shall now be the model of a Christian widow in the highest perfection of that character, daily more and more denuded of self, and arrived at length at a degree of self-abnegation and spiritual mortification, equally repugnant to human reason and the human heart, and requiring unmingled strength of faith to understand and appreciate virtues almost superhuman.

The sympathy by which we saw the young widow lately surrounded, was neither long continued nor efficacious. In a very

short time persecution and ingratitude added their bitterness to the sorrow that already filled her heart. While abandoned to her grief, she remembered not that the government of the country had devolved upon her since the death of her husband, owing to the minority of her son; and many of her former enemies profited of the occasion to overwhelm her who had been stricken by the Most High, and to envenom the wound that God had inflicted.

Duke Louis had, as we have before mentioned, two brothers, Henry and Conrad; these young princes were surrounded by men, strangers to every feeling of justice and honor. These iniquitous counselors strove to bias the Landgrave Henry, surnamed Raspon, and to engage him, under pretence of seeking his own interest, in a base conspiracy against his pious sister-in-law. They represented to him that according to an ancient law of the country of Thuringia, the principality should remain undivided in the care of the eldest prince of the royal family, who alone might marry; if the younger members wished to take wives, the most they could obtain, as appanages, would be some estates; they would be obliged to descend from their rank as counts, and always to remain vassals to their elder brother; that consequently it was of the highest importance for him (Henry) to establish himself as the head of the family, to seize upon the sovereign authority, to put away the young Hermann, son of Duke Louis, and to get married, in order that the dominions might remain with his descendants. They dared not, it seems, advise him to put the rightful heir to death, but they insisted that he should expel his brother's widow, with her children, including the little Hermann, not only from the royal residence of Wartburg, but also from Eisenach, and from all the Ducal possessions. "If, by chance," added they, "the child lives, he will, on arriving at manhood, be even too happy to receive one or two castles for his portion." In the mean time they thought it well to put him out of sight, and for this it became necessary to dispossess his mother, whom they called "the prodigal and bigoted Elizabeth."

Henry had the misfortune to allow himself to be seduced by these wicked counsels. "Justice and honor," says an old poet, "fled from his heart, and he declared war against the widow and the orphans he had

sworn to protect.” His young brother Conrad also allowed himself to be won over to join him; and strong with their double consent, the wicked courtiers hastened to the Duchess Elizabeth, to signify to her the will of their new master. They found her with her mother-in-law, the Duchess Sophia, with whom a common grief had more closely united her. These brutal men heaped upon her innumerable insults — they reproached her with having ruined the country, wasted and exhausted the state treasury, deceived and dishonored her husband, and announced to her that for punishment of her crimes she was deprived of all her possessions, and that Duke Henry, who was henceforth to be the sovereign, had commanded her to quit the castle immediately.

Elizabeth, astonished at these insults, and at this message, humbly asked these relentless enemies to grant her at least some longer time for preparation. The Duchess Sophia, irritated by the conduct of these men, took her daughter-in-law in her arms, and cried out, “She shall remain with me, and no one shall dare to take her from me. Where are my sons? I wish to speak to them.” But the messengers replied. “No, she must leave this place at once,” and they began to separate forcibly the two princesses.

Seeing that all resistance was vain, the Duchess Sophia wished at least to accompany the sorrowful Elizabeth to the outer gate of the castle. The wicked ones in power refused the deposed sovereign permission to take any property away with her; but she found in the courtyard her little children, and two of her maids of honor, who were expelled at the same time, and to whom we owe the recital of this sad scene. When they arrived at the castle gate, Sophia again embraced Elizabeth, and wept bitterly at the idea of parting with her.

The sight of the children of the beloved son she had lost, of these orphans condemned to share the fate of their guiltless mother, redoubled the affliction and indignation of the Duchess Sophia. She again requested most earnestly to see her sons Henry and Conrad, feeling persuaded that they could not resist her supplications. But the base courtiers told her they were not there; and indeed they had concealed themselves whilst their cruel orders were being executed,

for they were both afraid and ashamed to witness the prayers and tears of their mother, and the sad spectacle of the anguish of Elizabeth, whom they had so foully wronged.

After having for a long time mingled her tears with those of her daughter-in-law, whom she still held clasped to her bosom, "Sophia, in whose soul," says the narrator, "the grief for the death of her son was renewed and augmented by the thought of the wickedness of the children who were spared to her, was, though suffering intense sorrow, obliged to part with Elizabeth."

The gates of the castle where the young Duchess had reigned so many years were closed behind her. In that courtyard, where the flower of noble knighthood had assembled before setting out for the tomb of Christ, there was not found one to fulfill the first duty of chivalry, and to offer an asylum or succor to the widow and the orphans. This daughter of a royal race descended on foot and weeping by the rugged and narrow pathway that led to the city. She herself carried her new-born infant, the other three children followed with her two faithful companions. It was mid-winter and the cold was very severe.

Arrived at the foot of the mountain, and having entered the city of Eisenach, which she had, as it were, inundated with the everflowing stream of her charity, a new and painful trial awaited her. Duke Henry had caused a proclamation to be made in the city, that whoever would receive the Duchess Elizabeth or her children should thereby incur his displeasure; and with an ingratitude far more revolting than the cowardly baseness of the order, all the inhabitants of Eisenach obeyed it: perhaps also, the remembrance of benefits received, which weighs so heavily on vulgar souls, had extinguished in them all feelings of humanity, pity, and justice. In vain did the unhappy princess go, always surrounded by her little ones, weeping and knocking at every door, even to the houses of those who had formerly testified the greatest attachment to her, but nowhere was she admitted.

At length she came to a miserable tavern, whence the owner neither could nor would send her away, for she declared that his house was open to every one, and that she would remain there. "They have taken

from me all that I had," said she weeping, "now I can but pray to God!" The innkeeper assigned as a resting-place during the night, for herself, her children, and her maidens, a miserable out-house, wherein he kept his kitchen utensils, and where also he lodged his swine. These he drove out to give their place to the Duchess of Thuringia, the royal princess of Hungary. But, as if this lowest depth of humiliation had suddenly restored peace to her soul, no sooner did she enter this unclean spot, than her tears were dried up, and supernatural joy descended upon and penetrated her whole soul. She remained in this state until midnight, when at that hour she heard the bell ringing for matins at the Franciscan convent that she had founded during her husband's lifetime. She immediately arose, and went to their church, and after having assisted at the office, she begged of them to chant the *Te Deum*, in thanksgiving to God for the tribulations He had sent her.

Her ardent piety, her absolute submission to the Divine will, the holy joy of her soul which her heavenly Father had deigned to try by suffering, her old love for evangelical poverty, resumed again their sway, never more to lose it. Prostrate at the foot of the Altar, during the darkness of that sad night, while the song of triumph, so incomprehensible to the world, ascended to Heaven, she edified her faithful followers by the fervor and humility of the aspirations of her soul to God.

Aloud she thanked Him that she was poor and despoiled of all as He was at the crib of Bethlehem. "O Lord," said she, "may your will be done! Yesterday I was a Duchess with strong castles and rich domains; to-day I am a mendicant, and no one would give me an asylum. Lord! if I had better served you when I was a Sovereign, if I had given more abundant alms, I would now rejoice at it — unhappily it has not been so."

But soon again the sight of her poor children, weeping from cold and hunger, renewed the anguish of her heart. "I have merited this," said she, with great humility, "I have deserved to see them suffer thus, and I repent sincerely. My children are born of royal race, and behold them hungry, and without even a bed to lie on. My heart is pierced with sorrow on their account; as for me, my God, you know that I am

unworthy to be raised by you to the state of holy poverty.” Elizabeth remained sitting in this Church during the remainder of that night and part of the next day, until the intensity of cold and the pangs of hunger endured by her children obliged her to go out again and to beg for some food and a lodging. She wandered a long time in vain through this town where so many persons had been supported, cared for, cured and enriched by her; at length a priest, very poor himself, had pity on the holy and royal sufferer, and braving the wrath of the Landgrave Henry, he offered his humble dwelling to the widow and children of his deceased sovereign.

Elizabeth accepted his charitable kindness with gratitude, and he prepared for his guests beds of straw, and entertained them as well as his great poverty permitted; but to obtain sufficient nourishment for her children, Elizabeth was obliged to pledge whatever articles of value were on her person at the moment of her expulsion from Wartburg.

However, as soon as her persecutors learned that she had found a roof to shelter her, they sent her an order to go and lodge with a lord of the court, one of her bitterest enemies, who possessed in the town of Eisenach a very large mansion. Yet this unworthy man reluctantly assigned to her a narrow chamber, where he shut her up with her family, treated her with the utmost rudeness, and refused all food and fuel; his wife and servants imitated his base example. Elizabeth passed the night in this prison, still in anguish at the sight of her poor children, almost perishing with cold and in danger of starvation.

The next morning she resolved to remain no longer under this inhospitable roof, and on going away she said, “O walls! I thank you for having during the past night protected me against the wind and rain. I would also from my heart thank your master, but in truth I know not for what.”

She sought again the miserable dwelling wherein she had remained during the first night of her sorrows; it was the only one her enemies did not envy her. She spent the greater part of the days, and even of the nights, in the Churches. “From these at least no one can drive me,” she would say, “for these are God’s holy dwellings, and He alone is

my host." But the misery to which she was reduced brought still another trial, and one far more grievous to her heart than any she had yet endured; she who had gathered together and lavished on so many poor foundlings and orphans the treasures of her mercy with more than a mother's tenderness, now found herself obliged to separate from her own loved children; and in order that they should not have to suffer with her in their early age the woes of poverty, she was obliged to deprive herself of her only remaining consolation. Some friendly persons, whose names have not been preserved by history, having heard of the state to which she was reduced, offered to take charge of her little ones, and she was obliged to consent to their removal, as it was impossible for her to provide them with sufficient sustenance.

But above all, says a contemporary historian, what made her decide on this separation, was the fear of being induced to sin against the love of God when considering the sufferings of these beings so ardently loved by her, for, said he, she loved her children to excess. They were then taken away and concealed separately in distant places. Assured of their safety, she became most resigned to her own fate. Having pledged any valuable article she possessed, she strove to earn a livelihood by spinning. Though fallen into such utter destitution, she could not forget her custom of helping the unhappy, so she retrenched some portion from her meager repasts in order to have some little alms to give to the poor people whom she met.

So heroic a patience, such unalterable sweetness, seem to have calmed the fury of her powerful persecutors, but did not suffice to restore pity or gratitude to the inhabitants of Eisenach. We have not been able to discover a single trait of compassion or sympathy on their part, amongst the many narratives that remain of these interesting circumstances. They appear on the contrary but to demonstrate how true it is that ingratitude, like all the vile passions of the human soul, can silence remorse and stifle the remembrance of benefits received, only by adding to the first ill returns new excesses of baseness. There was, amongst others at this time, in Eisenach, an old beggar woman who suffered from many grievous maladies, and who had been for a long time the object of the tenderest and most minute care, and a



recipient of the bounteous liberality of the Duchess, who was at this time almost reduced to mendicancy. One day as Elizabeth was crossing a muddy stream that still runs through one of the streets of Eisenach, and in which some stones were placed to enable persons to get over, she met this same old woman, who would not only not make way for her, but advanced at the same time upon the stepping-stones, and rudely pushed the young and feeble woman, and threw her at full length into the muddy water. Then adding derision to this base ingratitude, the old wretch cried out, "There thou liest; whilst thou wert Duchess thou wouldst not live as one; now thou art poor and lying in the mud, from which I will not strive to lift thee."

Elizabeth, always patient and gentle, arose as well as she could, and began to laugh at her own fall. "This is for the gold and precious stones I wore long ago," said she; and then, says her historian, she went full of holy resignation and pure joy to wash her soiled robes in a well hard by, and to bathe her patient soul in the blood of the Lamb. Arrived at this part of his narrative, a pious and kind religious whom we have before quoted, cries out, "Oh my poor dear St. Elizabeth, I suffer even more from thy misery than thou didst; I am far more indignant and inflamed with a just wrath against these ungrateful and pitiless persons than thou wert. Oh, if I had been present, how I would have welcomed thee, thee and thine, from my heart! With what love would I have cared for thee and provided for all thy wants! Let at least my good will be agreeable to thee, and when the dreadful day comes when I shall appear alone and abandoned by the world before God, deign to come and meet me, and to welcome me to the eternal tabernacles."

## CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THE ALL-MERCIFUL JESUS CONSOLED THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH IN HER LONELINESS AND MISERY, AND HOW THE SWEET AND MOST CLEMENT VIRGIN MARY CAME TO INSTRUCT AND FORTIFY HER.

Ego, ego ipse consolabor vos. — *Is.* li. 12.

Et absterget Deua omnem lacrymam ab oculis eorum. — *Apocal.* vii. 17.

**I**N the midst of so many tribulations, Elizabeth never for a moment forgot that they proceeded from the hand of God. Never did a murmur or complaint arise in her heart. On the contrary, she devoted herself to prayer and to all the pious practices which the Church in her maternal generosity offers to afflicted souls; she incessantly sought the Lord, and He did not disappoint her. He visited her soul with a father's tenderness, and rendered the trials she had so willingly accepted the sources of ineffable consolations. He who has promised to His elect that He would wipe away the tears from their eyes, could not forget His humble servant prostrate before Him enduring all the sadness that could overwhelm a human being. Not only did He dry up her tears, but He unsealed her eyes and permitted her to enjoy a foresight of the eternal glory in which her place was already marked out.

Whilst she prayed night and day at the foot of the Altar, blessed visions and frequent revelations of celestial beauty and mercy came to strengthen and refresh her spirit. Ysentrude, the best beloved of her maids of honor, who never left her, and who willingly endured poverty for her sake, after having shared in her grandeur, related to the ecclesiastical judges all the remembrances she had preserved of these wonderful consolations. She often remarked that her mistress fell into

a sort of ecstasy for which she could not at first account. On a day in particular, during the Lent, the Duchess went to Mass, and was kneeling in the Church; suddenly she leant against the wall, and remained for a long time absorbed in deep contemplation, and apparently elevated above the actual life, her eyes immovably fixed on the Altar until after the Communion. When she came to herself, her face wore an expression of extreme happiness. Ysentrude, who had carefully watched all her movements, profited of the first opportunity to request her to reveal the vision she undoubtedly had. Elizabeth, quite joyful, replied to her, "I have no right to relate to men what God has deigned to reveal to me, but I will not conceal from thee that my spirit has been replenished with wonderful consolation, and that the Lord has permitted me to see with the eyes of my soul His admirable secrets."

After the last blessing she returned to her miserable dwelling, where she took a very slight refectation, and feeling herself quite overcome with weakness and weariness, she lay down upon a bench near a window, and rested her head upon the bosom of her dear and faithful Ysentrude, who thought that the Duchess was ill, and that she wished to sleep; but though lying thus, she kept her eyes open, and fixedly regarded the heavens. Very soon Ysentrude saw her face becoming animated; a celestial serenity, an unspeakable joy beamed upon it, and she smiled most sweetly and tenderly. But in a little time after her eyes closed, and she wept bitterly; again they opened, and the joyous smile re-appeared, but only to give way again to floods of tears, and thus she remained until the hour of Compline, alternately in gladness and grief but the former feeling predominating, her head still reposing on the bosom of her friend. Towards the close of this silent ecstasy, she cried out with extreme tenderness, "O, yes, Lord, if Thou wilt be with me, I will be with Thee, and will never leave Thee." A moment after she recovered consciousness, and Ysentrude begged of her to tell why she had thus by turns smiled and wept, and to explain to her the meaning of the words she had uttered, Elizabeth, always profoundly humble, would fain keep silence as to the graces she had received from God, but, yielding to the prayer of her who had loved

her so long, and served her so devotedly she said, "I have seen the heavens opened, and our Lord, the all-merciful Jesus, has deigned to humble Himself so far as to appear to me, and to console me for the many tribulations I have suffered. He spoke to me with extreme gentleness; He called me His sister and His friend; He showed unto me His dearest mother Mary, and His beloved apostle St. John, who was with Him. At the sight of my Divine Savior I was overjoyed; sometimes He turned as if to go away, and then I wept because I was not worthy to see Him for a longer time. But He, having had pity on me, showed me again His radiant countenance, and said, "*Elizabeth, if thou wilt be with Me, I will remain willingly with thee, and will never be separated from thee,*" and I immediately replied, "Yes, yes, O Lord, I am willing to remain with Thee, and never to be separated from Thee neither in happiness nor in misery."

And thenceforward these divine words became engraven in her heart, and illumined it with celestial light. In this sacred compact and affectionate union with Jesus the God of Peace, the Father of the poor and the unhappy, she saw, as it were, the end of her widowhood, and a new and indissoluble alliance with an immortal Spouse. And this was not the only time that this Divine Spouse manifested to her in a sensible manner His tender and watchful care.

One day she had been the victim of her persecutors by suffering some insult, the nature of which is unknown to us, but it was one so flagrant that her soul, usually so patient, was quite disturbed by it, and she sought for comfort in prayer. Bathed in tears, she begged of the Lord to confer on her enemies a blessing for every injury they had inflicted on her.

As she was beginning to lose her strength from praying so long in this manner, she heard a voice saying to her, "Never didst thou offer Me any prayers more agreeable than these; they have penetrated to My heart, and for them I forgive thee all the sins thou didst ever commit in thy life." And then she heard the enumeration of all her sins, the voice saying, "I forgive thee such and such a sin." Elizabeth, astonished, cried out, "Who are You who speak to me in this

manner?" to which the voice replied, "I am He at whose feet Mary Magdalene knelt in the house of Simon the Leper."

On another occasion, as she was regretting that she could not confess to her usual spiritual director, the Lord appointed to her as confessor the saint whom she had especially preferred from her childhood, and whom she had always tenderly loved, St. John the Evangelist. The apostle of charity appeared to her; she confessed to him with a more faithful remembrance of and a greater contrition for her sins than ever she had felt in her life before. He imposed upon her a penance, and addressed to her exhortations so efficacious and tender, that her physical ills seemed to be alleviated, as well as the sufferings of her soul.

In frequent contemplations, Elizabeth was permitted to penetrate into even the most minute details of the bitter passion of Christ. Once, as she prayed with fervor, she saw, interiorly, a hand extended before her of resplendent whiteness, but very thin, and with long and tapering fingers, and in the middle of the palm a deep scar; by this last sign she knew it was the hand of Christ, and was astonished at seeing it so emaciated. The voice, with which she was now familiar, replied to her thought, "It is because I was exhausted during the night by vigils and prayers, and during the day by my journeys through cities and country places, preaching everywhere the kingdom of God!"

Again, she saw the clotted blood about the wound in the side of Jesus crucified, and wondering that it was not more liquid and pure, the same voice answered her that this appearance was the effect of the fearful sufferings that the Son of God endured whilst hanging on the cross.

All these wonderful visions tended to excite in Elizabeth's gentle soul an excessive contrition for her sins, the expiation of which had caused such bitter pangs to the sovereign Victim; as she one day shed abundant tears whilst meditating on this subject, her Divine Consoler appeared to her and said, "Grieve no longer, beloved daughter, for all thy sins are forgiven thee; I have suffered in every member, and every part of soul and body by which thou couldst offend thy Creator; know that thou art free from all stain." "If I am thus sanctified," said

Elizabeth, “why can I not cease offending Thee?” “I have not sanctified thee so far,” said the voice, “that thou couldst sin no more, but I have given thee grace to love me so ardently that thou wouldst rather die than commit sin.”

Nevertheless, the humble soul of Elizabeth, far from becoming self-confident by these signal favors of her God, seemed only to have found in them a new motive to despise herself, to mistrust her strength, to exaggerate her unworthiness in her own eyes. Whilst she nobly trampled under foot the exterior trials and cruel persecutions of which she was the object, she found within herself, in the scruples and terrors excited by her humility, an abundant source of affliction. But God, to whom alone she had offered her life and her heart, watched over this precious treasure; and, as if He willed that she should experience successively all the consolations which are the inheritance of the children of predilection, as if He intended that she should be more and more closely united by ties at once the most sweet and powerful, He charged Her whom we daily call upon as the Health of the Weak, the Refuge of Sinners, the Comfortress of the Afflicted, to heal all the wounds of this young soul, languishing and desolate, even with an excess of love, and that this excess almost led into faults against the blessed virtues of Faith and Hope. The Queen of Heaven became henceforward the dispensatrix of all the graces that her divine Son wished to pour forth on this creature predestined from her cradle. Mary had for our Elizabeth the condescending affection that she showed to St. Bridget, and to many illustrious saints in the memory of Christians. She appeared several times to instruct, enlighten, and fortify her in the path wherein God willed she should walk. She whom the Church names always *Mother, Sovereign, Guide* and *Mistress* of all men, disdained not to watch over every step of this young and humble follower of her Son. The detailed traditions of these sacred confidences, gathered from the recital of Elizabeth herself, have been preserved to the Catholic people in the annals of the order of St. Francis, and still further in the documents gathered by the priceless labors of the learned Jesuits of Belgium, for the continuation of their lives of the saints. Owing to these precious manuscripts, we are

enabled, even at this distance of time, to admire the sweet familiarity and maternal solicitude wherewith Mary sympathized with all the emotions that excited the tender, delicate, and scrupulous mind of Elizabeth, and how this Help of Christians came to her assistance in those severe struggles so frequently endured by the souls of the elect. Thus, we fear not to introduce here an abridgment of these touching narratives, with confidence of the pious admiration which they should excite in every truly Catholic heart.

Nothing could surpass the clemency which marked the origin of these celestial communications. One day, as the afflicted widow sought, and as it were vainly, her Beloved in fervent and anxious prayer, she began to meditate on the causes of the flight of Jesus into Egypt, and earnestly wished that she could have them explained to her by some learned and holy monk. Immediately the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, and said, "If thou wilt be my pupil, I will be thy teacher; if thou wilt be my servant, I will be thy mistress." Elizabeth, not daring to believe herself worthy of so much honor, said, "Who are you who ask me to be your pupil and your servant?" Mary replied immediately, "I am the Mother of the living God, and I say unto thee that no monk could better instruct thee on what thou wishest to know than I could." At these words she extended her hands towards the Mother of Mercy, who took them in hers and said, "If thou wilt be my child, I will be thy mother; and when thou shalt be well instructed and obedient, like a good pupil, a faithful servant, and devoted child, I will present thee to my Son. Avoid all disputes, close thine ears against all the ill that is spoken of thee. Remember that my Divine Son fled into Egypt to escape the snares laid for him by Herod."

Still, so great a favor did not entirely tranquilize Elizabeth; her mistrust of self increased every day, yet never more was she abandoned by the Mother who had adopted her. On the feast of St. Agatha (5th February), as she wept bitterly for her disobedience to the instructions of her divine mistress, this blessed Consolatrix appeared, and said, "My child, whence this violent affliction? I have not chosen thee to be my child in order to do thee harm. Despair not, though thou hast not entirely observed my precepts; I knew that thou wouldst fail

in some. Say once my ‘Salutation,’ and this sin will be forgiven thee.” Some days later, on the feast of St. Scholastica (Feb. 10), Elizabeth wept again, and was sobbing violently when her sweet Protectress came, accompanied by St. John the Evangelist, the chosen patron of Elizabeth’s childhood, and said to her, “Thou hast chosen me for thy mistress and mother; thou hast given thyself to me, but I wish that this choice should be confirmed, and that is why I have brought my beloved John.” Elizabeth again joined her hands, and placed them in those of the Queen of Heaven, like a vassal tendering homage to a sovereign, and said, “Noble lady, do with me what you please, for I am your servant;” then she confirmed this offering of herself by a vow of which St. John was the witness.

One night, whilst Elizabeth recited the “Angelical Salutation,” she to whom this beauteous prayer is addressed appeared, and, amongst other things said, “I will teach thee all the prayers that I used to say whilst I was in the temple. Beyond all else, I used to beg of God that I might love Him, and hate my enemy. There is no virtue without this absolute love of God, by which alone the plenitude of grace descends into the soul; but, after entering there, it flows away again unless the soul hates its enemies, that is to say, vice and sin. He then who would preserve this grace should endeavor to make this love and this hatred operate in his heart. I wish that thou wouldst learn to do as I did. I arose every night, and, prostrate before the altar, I begged of God to teach me to observe all His commandments, and to grant me those graces most pleasing to Him. I supplicated Him to permit me to see the time wherein should live the holy virgin who was to bring forth His Son, that I might consecrate my whole being to serve and venerate her.” Elizabeth interrupted her to say, “O most sweet Lady, were you not already full of grace and virtue?” But the holy Virgin replied, “Be assured that I thought myself as guilty and as miserable as thou thinkest thyself, that was why I prayed to God to grant me His grace. The Lord,” added this blessed Queen, “did with me what the skilful musician does with his harp — disposing all its chords so as to produce the most harmonious sound. It was thus the Lord was pleased to adapt to His good pleasure my soul, my heart, my mind, and all my



senses. Thus governed by His wisdom, I was often borne by the angels to God's presence, and then I experienced so much joy, and sweetness, and consolation, that this world was entirely banished from my memory. So familiar was I with God and His angels, that it seemed as if I lived always with this holy court. Then, when it pleased the Almighty Father, I was again brought by the angels to the place where I had been praying. When I found myself again upon Earth, and remembered where I had been, this thought so inflamed my soul with such a love of God, that I embraced the Earth, the stones, the trees, and all created things through affection for their Creator. I wished to be the servant of all the holy women who dwelt in the temple; I wished to be subject to all creatures through love for the supreme Father. Thou shouldst do this also; but thou askest thyself always, *'Why are such favors granted to me who am so unworthy to receive them?'* and then thou fallest into a kind of despair and distrust of the goodness of God. Be careful not to speak thus any more, for it displeases God, who, like a good master, can confer his benefits on whom He pleases, and who, like a wise father, knows what is best suited to each child. In fine," said her heavenly instructress, in conclusion, "I have come to thee by a special favor; this night I am thine; ask what thou pleasest, I will answer all."

Elizabeth dared not at first avail herself of this permission, but Mary, having a second time exhorted her to speak, she asked, "Tell me, dearest lady, why you so ardently desired to see the virgin who was to bring forth the Son of God?" Then the blessed Mother related to her, how in seeking consolation in the absence of the supernatural favors of which she had spoken, she had been led, by meditating on the words of the prophet, to cherish this idea; that she resolved to consecrate her virginity to God, in order that she might be worthy to serve that predestined virgin; and how, at length, God deigned to reveal to her that she was the woman reserved for this high dignity.

Some time after, as Elizabeth prayed with fervor, her tender Mother appeared to her again, and said, "My child, thou thinkest that I received all these graces without trouble, but it was not so. Indeed, I say unto thee that I did not receive a single favor from God without

unceasing prayer, ardent desire, sincere devotion, many tears and trials. Be certain that no grace comes to the soul without prayer, and the mortification of the body. When we have given to God all that we can from ourselves, however little it may be, He visits our souls, and imparts to them these wonderful gifts, that make them feel how trifling are their efforts to please God. The soul then becomes in its own eyes more contemptible than ever. What then should this creature do? Render fervent thanks to God for these favors. When God sees the soul humble and thankful, He replenishes it with joys greater than its most ardent hopes could conceive. It was in this manner He acted towards me when He deputed His angel Gabriel to me. What did I then? I knelt, and joining my hands humbly, I said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.' Then God gave me His Son, and with him the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. And wouldst thou know why? Because I believed in His word, and humbled myself before Him; I tell thee these things, my child, that thou mayest correct thy failings in the virtues of Faith and Hope. When the Lord shall have promised any grace say, like me, 'Behold Thy handmaid,' and expect in firm faith the coming of that grace, until the promise shall be accomplished. And if it comes not, say that thou has committed some fault which has rendered thee unworthy of its fulfilment."

During the vigil of Christmas, Elizabeth begged of the Lord to grant her grace to love Him with her whole heart; the Blessed among women appeared to her again and asked, "Who is it that loves God? Dost thou?" The humble Elizabeth dared not affirm that she did, and yet was unwilling to deny it. While she hesitated to answer, Mary continued: "Dost thou wish that I should tell thee who loved Him? The blessed Bartholomew did, likewise did St. John and Saint Lawrence. Wouldst thou, like them, endure being flayed alive, or burned for His sake? Elizabeth, remaining still silent, Mary resumed: "Indeed I say unto thee, if thou wilt consent to be deprived of all that is dear, precious and lovable to thee, and even of thy own will, I will obtain for thee the same reward that Bartholomew received, when his skin was flayed off. If thou endurest insults patiently, thou wilt be like

unto Lawrence when he suffered martyrdom; if thou keepest silence when reproached and offended, thou wilt merit grace, as John did when the wicked sought to poison him, and in all this I will be near to instruct and fortify thee.”

One day, when at meditation Elizabeth thought upon the prayers the Holy Virgin had told her she made in the Temple, she asked herself, “Why did Mary seek for graces that never failed her?” The Queen of Heaven appeared, and answered her with gentle sweetness and familiarity. “I did,” said she, “as a man who would wish to construct a fair fountain. He goes to the foot of a mountain, examines carefully whence springs the water, he digs until he finds the source, and then directs the stream to the spot wherein he would have his fountain; this place he constructs, so that the water must remain pure and fresh; he surrounds his fountain with a wall, erects canals wherein the water may flow plentifully, for the comfort of all. Thus did I act — I went to the mountain when I began to study the Holy Law. I found the source, when I learned that to love God with the whole heart was the origin of all good. I prepared the place, when I conceived the desire of loving all that He loved. I willed that the water should be pure and clear, when I resolved to fly and hate sin. I surrounded it with walls, when I joined humility, patience and meekness to the fire of charity. I erected the pillar and formed the canals, when I became, as it were, an universal refuge, for I am always ready to bring floods of grace and consolation from On High to those who invoke me for themselves or others. I have revealed to thee,” said she in conclusion, “my beloved daughter, all the prayers that I used, in order that by my example thou shouldst supplicate God in all confidence and humility for all thou requirest. Knowest thou why virtues are not equally given to all men? Because some know not how to ask them with such humility, nor preserve them with so much care as others; that is why God wishes that he who has less should be aided by those who possess more. And I wish that thou shouldst pray fervently for thy own salvation and that of others.” These wonderful interviews over, Elizabeth saw one day a tomb covered with flowers, out of which her sweet Consolatrix arose and was borne to Heaven by myriads of celestial spirits who

conducted her to the arms of her divine Son. An angel came to explain to her this vision of the Assumption, which was granted as a favor intended to enable her to endure her present sufferings, and also to foreshow the glory which God had in store for her, should she persevere to the end faithful and docile to His divine will.

The humble servant of Christ, in relating these prodigies, said that she had seen and understood them in a manner so clear and convincing that she would rather die than deny their existence.

It was thus that God, even in this world, rewarded His faithful servant. He gave Himself as Spouse to the solitary widow, to the young and sorely afflicted woman. He gave to her as mother and mistress, she who is at once the mother of mercies, and of sorrows. To the soul deprived of all earthly consolation, He even in this vale of tears opened the inexhaustible and imperishable treasures of Heaven.

## CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH REFUSED TO MARRY A SECOND TIME, AND HOW SHE CONSECRATED HER WEDDING GARMENTS TO JESUS, THE SPOUSE OF HER SOUL.

Ego dilecto meo et dilectus meus mihi qui pascitur inter illia.  
— Cant. vi. 2.

The true widow in the Church is a little violet of March, which sends forth an incomparable sweetness by the odor of her devotion, and almost always keeps herself concealed under the broad leaves of her abjection . . . She grows in cool and uncultivated places, not willing to be importuned with the conversations of worldlings, the better to preserve the coolness of her heart against all the heats which the desire of riches, of honours, or even of fond loves might bring upon her.

— St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, iii. 2.

**S**HE melancholy state to which this Princess of birth so illustrious, and connected with the most powerful houses of the empire, was reduced, could not fail to excite the compassion and intervention of her relatives, as soon as it became known to them. The Duchess Sophia, after making many unsuccessful efforts to prevail on her sons to ameliorate the condition of poor Elizabeth, sent secretly to inform her aunt, Matilda, Abbess of Kitzingen, sister of the Queen of Hungary, her mother, of her misfortunes. This pious princess was moved with compassion on hearing the sad tale, and sent at once faithful messengers, with two carriages, to seek for her niece and her children, and to bring them to the Abbey. Elizabeth, overjoyed to be again with her little ones whom she loved so ardently, accepted this invitation at once; and it seems that her persecutors dared not to hinder her so doing. So she traveled

through the vast forests and over the mountains that separate Thuringia from Franconia, until she arrived at Kitzingen on the Main.

The Abbess received her with maternal tenderness, and many tears; she assigned her a lodging suitable to her rank, and strove by her kindness to make her forget the many sufferings of soul and body which she had endured. But the young Duchess found no sweeter consolation than in conforming to the rule of the monastic life, and she often expressed a regret that the care of her children prevented her from entering the Order as a religious. Meanwhile Egbert, Prince Bishop of Bamberg, brother of the Abbess Matilda, of the Duchess Hedwige of Poland, of Queen Gertrude, and consequently maternal uncle of Elizabeth, having heard of her sufferings and of her arrival at Kitzingen, thought that her prolonged sojourn in the Monastery was neither suited to her position, nor to the customs of a religious house, so he invited her to his dominions. The gentle Princess obeyed, though perhaps with regret, leaving to the care of her aunt her second daughter Sophia, then scarcely two years old, who afterwards took the veil in this abbey, which had served as an asylum to her mother, and which had been the cradle of her own childhood. The Prelate gave his niece a welcome, such as tended to convince her of his affection for herself, and of respect for her misfortunes. He proposed to conduct her to Hungary to the king, her father, but this she refused, owing probably to the sad remembrance of the death of her mother, Queen Gertrude. The bishop then assigned to her the castle of Botenstein as a residence, this he furnished according to her rank, and provided eight domestics, over all of whom she might rule as she pleased. Hither then she went with her children, and her faithful maidens, Ysentrude and Guta, who had nobly shared in all her trials, and in this peaceful home they resumed by day and by night their practices of piety. But the Prelate, seeing that Elizabeth was very young, being only twenty years old, and besides of remarkable beauty — remembering the precept of St. Paul, he conceived the project of re-marrying her. According to many authors, he wished that she should wed the Emperor Frederick II, who had just lost his second wife, Yolande of Jerusalem. The Emperor himself was also anxious for this, according to the account of

a contemporary writer. The Bishop went to communicate to the Duchess his design; he told her that he wished to espouse her to a lord far more illustrious and powerful than her late husband. Elizabeth replied, with great sweetness, that she would prefer remaining single during the rest of her life, and thus to serve God alone. Her uncle maintained that she was still too young to embrace such a life, he reminded her of the persecutions she already had suffered, and showed her the possibility of their renewal after his death; for though he resolved to leave her Botenstein and its dependancies, once in the tomb, he could not defend her from the attacks of her enemies. But Elizabeth wavered not. A French poet has preserved her answer: — “Sire,” said the beauteous and pious princess, “I had for lord a husband who most tenderly loved me, and who was always my loyal friend. I shared in his honor and in his power; I had much of the riches, jewels, and pleasures of the world; I had all these, but I always thought, what you, my lord, know full well, that the joys of this Earth are worthless. For this reason I wish to abandon the wordly life, and to pay to God what I owe Him, the debts of my soul. You know that mundane pleasures produce but pains and torments, and the death of the soul. Sire, I am eager to join the followers of our blessed Lord. I ask but one thing on Earth. I have two children, by my late husband, who will be rich and powerful [Hermann and the elder Sophia who were not destined to the monastic life], I would rejoice and be grateful to God, if He loved me sufficiently, to take them to Himself.”

It does not appear that the Duchess then spoke of the vow of continence which she had made during her husband’s lifetime, in case of her surviving him, but she often mentioned it to her maids of honor, who had made a similar vow with her, and who feared that the Bishop would exert his power to annul it. She strove to inspire them with courage, by an assurance of her own perseverance under any circumstances.

“I have sworn,” said she, “to God, and to my lord and husband during his life, that never would I be the wife of any other man. God, who reads the heart and unveils its most secret thoughts, knows that I made this vow with a pure heart and a firm resolution. I rely on His

mercy — it is impossible but that He will defend my chastity against all the projects of men and against their violence. Mine was not a conditional vow, made in case that it should please my parents and friends — but a free, willing, and absolute one to consecrate myself entirely, after the death of my beloved husband, to the glory of my Creator. If they, then, in contempt of the freedom of choice in marriage, espouse me to any man, I will protest against it before the Altar, and if I find no other means of escaping, I will cut off my nose, and thus render myself an object of horror to all.” Still she was disquieted on this account, for from the firm will of the Bishop, she knew she would have many and severe conflicts to endure in order to remain faithful to God and her conscience. She was seized with a great sadness. She had recourse to the Supreme Consoler, and kneeling at His feet, bathed in tears, she begged of Him to watch over the treasure she had consecrated to Him. She also addressed herself to the Queen of Virgins, who had been given to her as a mother. Neither disdained her prayers, and peace was restored to her soul. She soon felt quite tranquilized, and animated with boundless confidence in the mercy of Heaven.

It is doubtless to this time that the recitals of local traditions, relating to some journeys made by Elizabeth, refer, and these she undertook, either to escape the importunities of her uncle, or to indulge some motives of devotion or pious curiosity.

These causes would suffice in that age, notwithstanding the difficulty of communication, to make men travel more, than could, even in our day, the desire of accumulating riches or the restlessness of modern travelers. The poor, the infirm, even women yielded to the desire of praying in some celebrated sanctuary, or of venerating the relics of some especially beloved saint — to provide for their old age some sweet memories of pilgrimages made under the protection of God and of His holy angels.

Elizabeth went twice to Erfurth, a town celebrated for the number and beauty of its sacred edifices, situated in the center of her husband's dominions, though belonging to the Archbishop of Mayence. She here selected, as her dwelling-place, a convent of



penitent women, called White Nuns, and there she remained during several days in the most strict retreat. When leaving, she gave them the glass which she was wont to use at her frugal meals, which is still preserved there as a memorial of her goodness and humility. The convent is now occupied by a community of Ursulines, and they show a little room looking over the Church, which, it is said, was occupied by the dear St. Elizabeth. About this time, she also went to visit the dwelling of her maternal ancestors at Andechs, situated on a height near the Alps which separate Bavaria from the Tyrol. This ancient and famous Castle had been just converted by Henry, Margrave of Istria, also an uncle of Elizabeth, into a monastery of Benedictines, or according to others, of regular canons of St. Augustine, which has since been rendered remarkable by the possession of some of the most precious relics in Christendom, and by the numerous miracles performed there — Elizabeth came to associate, by her presence, in the pious foundation which should forever tend to the honor of her family. From the summit of this holy mountain she contemplated Bavaria, then rich in the double beauty of nature and religion — full of celebrated monasteries, some hidden in the midst of the ancient forests — others reflected in the calm waters of the lakes of that country — all serving as nurseries of the Christian civilization of the land, and which for so many centuries still offered an inviolable sanctuary to science, a sweet, safe asylum to souls eager for repose and prayer, and a boundless hospitality to the numerous pilgrims who went by the northern kingdoms to visit the tombs of the Apostles. How many times did our Elizabeth fix her eyes on the majestic chain of the mountains of the Tyrol, where every Catholic heart rejoices in thinking that beyond them lie Italy and Rome!

Our dear Saint also contributed to the veneration with which this beautiful place was regarded. At the foot of the mountain, by her prayers, she obtained that a well of pure water, gifted with many healing qualities, should spring up, and so abundantly that it was never dry even during the most parched seasons. The pious princess also brought to this place, which had just passed from the protection of her family to that of the All-powerful God, a loved memorial of her

married life, which, in the simplicity of her heart, she offered to the chosen Spouse of her soul. This was her wedding robe — even that worn by her on the day that saw her united to her well-beloved Louis. This she laid upon the Altar, and gave at the same time to the religious a little silver cross containing some relics of the instruments of the Passion; her *Pax* or the Reliquary she always carried with her, and several other matters which were dear to her.

A few years passed by, and the name of the young widow, whom we have seen coming as an humble pilgrim to offer her gifts at this newly-formed sanctuary, filled the Christian world with its glory, and the hand of God's viceregent on Earth inscribed it amongst the blessed ones of Heaven. Can we be astonished if thenceforth the presents of this Saint should become, to this sacred place, priceless treasures, and that even to this day, notwithstanding past stormy and gloomy years, the simple and faithful people still come to venerate and kiss them with respectful love?

NOTE BY THE COUNT MONTALEMBERT.

The monastery of Andechs, on the occasion of the secularization of all the possessions of religious orders by king Maximilian of Bavaria in 1806, was sold to a Jew! yet the Church and its treasury of relics have been preserved. The wedding robe of Elizabeth serves there as a covering to three miraculous Hosts. On the principal festivals of the year, a number of pilgrims meet there, and the inhabitants of the neighboring villages come processionally, chanting Litanies. Andechs is about eight leagues from Munich, near the lovely lake Staremberg. From the height on which the Church is built, the eye embraces the entire chain of the Tyrolian Alps. Few places in Germany are more worthy of the visit of the Catholic traveler. Those who can go there are requested to remember, before God's Altar, the author of this book.

NOTE. — The translator entreats the pious pilgrim to the Holy Shrine at Andechs, to pray also for her, and all those she holds dear.

## CHAPTER XXI.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH RECEIVED THE REMAINS OF  
HUSBAND, AND HOW THEY WERE INTERRED AT  
REYNHARTSBRUNN.

Benedicti vos Domino, qui fecistis misericordiam hanc cum  
Domino vestro, et sepelistis eum. — *2 Reg.* ii. 5.

Requiem tibi dabit Dominus semper, et implebit splendoribus  
animam tuam, et ossa tua liberabit. — *Is.* lviii. 2.

**S**CARCELY had Elizabeth returned to Botenstein when a messenger from the Bishop came to request her presence at Bamberg, in order to receive the remains of her husband which the Thuringian knights, after their return from the Crusade, were bringing there.

As we have already seen, the companions of the late Duke, after having left his body at Otranto, set out for Syria in order to accomplish their vow. Those amongst them, who were able to reach Jerusalem, offered there gifts and prayers for his intentions, as he had requested them on his death-bed. On their return from the pilgrimage, they passed through Otranto in order to bring home the body of their Sovereign. They disinterred him, and found that his bones were white as snow, a sure sign in that age that the husband had preserved an inviolate fidelity to his wife.

After having placed these relics in a rich coffin, they laid it on a hearse and set out for their own country. Before the bier was a large silver cross, inlaid with precious stones, as a mark of their own piety and of their devotion to their master. In every city where they passed a night, they brought the bier into a Church, and had it watched by

monks or other pious persons, chanting the office of the dead and other prayers.

They departed not next day until they had heard Mass and made their offerings. If it were at a Cathedral or Conventual Church, they left the purple drapery that enveloped the coffin, that its worth might be distributed in alms for the repose of the good prince's soul. In man's memory were never witnessed more solemn obsequies.

The mournful cortege thus traversed all Italy and southern Germany. When arrived at a short distance from Bamberg, they sent to warn the Bishop of their approach, and he immediately summoned the Duchess from Botenstein. At the same time, he ordered all the nobles and dignitaries of his court to meet her with befitting sympathy, and to watch carefully over her, lest during the affecting ceremony of the next day her strength might abandon her. He then went out to meet the body, accompanied by all his clergy, the religious of the various monasteries, and the children of the schools; an immense crowd followed and mingled their voices with the funeral chants of the priests, and with the sound of all the bells of the episcopal city. Several nobles joined in the procession. The body was conveyed to the celebrated Cathedral, where the bodies of the Emperor St. Henry and of the Empress St. Cunegunda reposed. During the whole night the office for the dead was chanted.

The next day, Elizabeth, accompanied by her ever-faithful Ysentrude and Guta, was conducted to the place where the precious relics reposed; they opened the coffin and permitted her to look upon the remains of her husband. "Then," says the pious narrator of this scene, "what her heart felt of grief and love none could know but Him who reads the secrets of the hearts of the children of men." All the affliction of the moment wherein she first learned of her loss, was renewed in her soul; she threw herself on the bones, and fervently kissed them; her tears flowed abundantly; her agitation was so violent that the bishop and the nobles present strove to console her and to lead her away from the sad spectacle. But she remembered God, and immediately all her strength of mind was restored. "I thank Thee, O Lord," said she, "for having deigned to listen to my prayer, and for

having granted my earnest wish in permitting me to look upon the remains of him, my beloved and yours. I thank Thee for having thus consoled my afflicted and desolate soul; he offered himself, and I also offered him, to Thee for the defense of Thy Holy Land. I regret not this sacrifice, though I loved him with all my heart's ardor. Thou knowest, O my God, how I loved this husband, who loved Thee so much; Thou knowest that I would prefer him to all the delights of this world, if Thy goodness permitted it. Thou knowest that with him I would be willing to spend my life in misery, and to beg my bread with him from door to door, throughout the whole world, solely to have the happiness of being by his side, if Thou willed it, O my God! Now I resign myself and him to Thy Divine pleasure, and I would not, even if I could, purchase him back again at the price of a single hair of my head, unless it was agreeable to Thee, my good God!"

This was the last cry of vanquished nature, the last sigh of the earthly affections in this young heart, expiring under the yoke of Divine love. Having spoken these words, she dried the torrent of her tears, and left the Church in silence. She went and sat in a little grassy cloister near the cathedral, and sent to the Thuringian knights, who had brought the body of her husband, to come and meet her there. At their approach she arose humbly to do them honor, and requested them to seat themselves around, as she was not strong enough to remain standing. She spoke gently to them for a long time, and asked them, in the name of God and of Jesus Christ, to protect her little children, and to act as their guardians, She told them of the cruel conduct of the Landgraves Henry and Conrad to them and to herself, and of the misery they had endured at Eisenach. The Bishop, in his turn, confirmed the recital of the Duchess, and spoke with the knights on the means to be used to repair the wrongs done to the widow and orphans of their sovereign. A lively indignation was manifested by the pilgrims when they heard of the sufferings of the young Duchess. They declared that they would always regard her as their lady and mistress, and would defend her against all. At their head was the noble and faithful de Varila, son of him who sixteen years before brought from her father's palace the princess who now appealed to him as a

betrayed and oppressed widow; he thought upon the oath which his father had sworn to king Andrew to watch over his daughter, and with his brothers-in-arms he requested the prelate to confide to their care this noble, but distressed, family, that they might bring them, together with the mortal remains of Duke Louis, to Thuringia, where they vowed that ample justice should be done them. Assured by their promises, and by their renown as valiant knights, which the events of the late crusades served materially to increase, the bishop consented, and entrusted them with the charge of her whose defenders they had constituted themselves. It does not appear that he mentioned his project of a second marriage for the young Duchess. After having, himself; celebrated for the repose of the soul of the defunct prince a solemn pontifical mass, at which all the inhabitants of the city assisted, and having generously defrayed the expenses of the guests during their sojourn at Bamberg, he bade them farewell, and took leave also of the Duchess and her children. The mournful procession set out for the abbey of Reinhartsbrunn, where the pious Louis had chosen his burial place. Meanwhile the news of the arrival of the remains of the beloved sovereign reached Thuringia, and created there a great sensation. Not only did the Duchess Sophia, mother of Louis, with her sons, Henry and Conrad, hasten to Reinhartsbrunn to meet the funeral, but also the counts, lords, and knights of the country, and, in remembrance of the good prince who had so tenderly cared for and energetically protected them, an immense multitude of people, rich and poor, of town and of country, men and women, assembled at Reinhartsbrunn to pay the last honors to him who so short a time before parted from them for God's honor to meet under a foreign sky the fate of a too premature death.

Many motives contributed to swell this crowd; the very natural desire to see who of the crusaders had escaped the perils of the voyage, brought there all who had friends or relatives engaged in the Holy Wars; and also the interest which was everywhere, but at Eisenach, felt for the Duchess Elizabeth, the recital of her woes, and of her exile which had been heard in the country, and the wish to know what should become of this young and defenceless woman,

attracted thither many pious and compassionate souls. Several bishops and abbots came also to testify their respect for the champion of the Church and of the Holy Sepulcher. The monks from whom he had parted with so much affection, and with a too surely realized presentiment, had now to perform the sad duty of rendering to him the highest honors which the Church decrees to her departed children in the faith. They went to meet his body, followed by a great number of the secular clergy, and a multitude of people chanting psalms and hymns, frequently interrupted by their weeping. The obsequies were celebrated in the abbey church, in presence of the two Duchesses, and the two young Landgraves, who, before the remains of Louis, were united in a mutual and sincere sorrow.

All the magnificence of ecclesiastical ceremony was used on this occasion, and the solemnities were prolonged for several days. The sighs and tears of the poor were the most novel and beautiful features in the funeral pomp. Generous offerings were given to the Church, and abundant alms distributed to the indigent, as the last tribute of respect to him who had so well loved the poor and venerated the Church. His remains were enclosed in a shrine, which was laid in a tomb hewn out of stone, in such a manner that they remained exposed, and many pilgrimages were made to visit them. The people's love, and the gratitude of the monks, decreed to Louis the surname of the *pious*, under which he is known in history, and which was confirmed by many miraculous cures obtained at his tomb through his invocation. Thus was he during three centuries the object of popular veneration, which, however, was never confirmed by ecclesiastical authority. At the present day the Catholic traveler may see the broken stone of his sepulcher in that Church which is no longer Catholic. In contemplating this last memorial, we cannot refuse a tribute of respect and admiration to this prince, who, though the Church has not enrolled him amongst her holy ones, was at least the worthy husband of a saint.

## CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE THURINGIAN KNIGHTS MADE DUKE HENRY REPENT OF HIS WICKEDNESS, AND MADE HIM RENDER AMPLE JUSTICE TO THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH.

Aperi os tuum muto, et causis omnium filiorum qui pertranseunt: aperi os tuum, decerne quod justum est, et judica inopem et pauperum. — *Prov.* xxxi:8, 9.

**I**MMEDIATELY after the termination of the obsequies, the Lord de Varila reminded the Thuringian knights who surrounded the Duchess Elizabeth of the pledge they had given the bishop of Bamberg in regard to his niece. They retired to deliberate upon it. “We must now,” said Lord Rodolph, “keep the vow which we made to our noble prince, and to our lady Elizabeth, who has already endured such misery; otherwise, I very much fear that our conduct will deserve for us the eternal fire of Hell.”

All understood this language, for in those times the bravest warriors were not ashamed of being guided in their actions by the thought of another life. They unanimously resolved to address vigorous remonstrances to the Landgrave Henry and his brother, and they specially charged with this unpleasant duty four knights, whose names, says the historian, merit to be preserved with immortal glory. These were, first, the Lord de Varila, great cupbearer, who was to speak in the name of all, as being the most eloquent, and who, with his family, was most attached to the Duchess; and with him, Ludolph de Berstetten, Hartwig do Herba, and Gaultier de Varila, related to Rodolph. Preceded by these, all the knights went to meet the young princes, whom they found with their mother. The Lord de Varila, turning towards Duke Henry, addressed to him the following words,



which have been carefully and with good reason recorded in the chronicles of the country

“My Lord, my friends and your vassals who are here present, have requested me to speak to you in their name. We have heard in Franconia, and even here in Thuringia, of conduct of yours so blameable, that it has filled us with consternation, and given us reason to blush in thinking that in our country and amongst our princes, so much impiety and infidelity, and such a want of honor, could be found.

“Young prince, what have you done, and who has given you counsels so nefarious? What! you have driven ignominiously from your castles and from your cities, as if she was a wicked woman, your brother’s wife, the afflicted widow, the daughter of an illustrious king, whom, on the contrary, you should have honored and consoled. Forgetting even your own renown, you have exposed her to suffering and left her to wander through the streets as a mendicant. When your brother devoted his life for the love of God, his little orphans, whom you should have defended and cherished like a faithful guardian, were cruelly repulsed by you, and you knew that they even had to be separated from their dear mother to prevent them dying of hunger with her. Is this your fraternal love? Is this what you learned from your brother, that virtuous prince, who would not act in such a manner towards the meanest of his subjects? No; the rudest peasant would not be so guilty towards one of his fellows, as you, a prince, have been to your brother, when he went to fight and die for the love of God! How can we now trust to your fidelity or your honor? You know that as a knight you are sworn to protect widows and orphans, and you are yourself the first to wrong the orphans and the widow of your brother. I tell you plainly that such conduct cries to Heaven for vengeance.”

The Duchess Sophia, on hearing these well-merited reproaches addressed to her son, burst into tears. The young Duke, annoyed and ashamed, hung his head, without replying. The Lord de Varila then resumed: — “And, my Lord, what had you to fear from a poor weakly woman, anguish-stricken and alone, without friends or allies in this country? What injury would this noble and virtuous lady have done

you, even if she had remained mistress of all your castles? What will now be said of you in other countries? How shameful! I blush to think of your degradation. Know that you have offended God — that you have dishonored this country of Thuringia — that you have sullied your own fame and that of your noble house; and I fear, indeed, that the wrath of God will fall heavily on our land, unless you do penance before Him, and become reconciled to this pious lady, by restoring to her and to your brother's son all that of which you have unjustly deprived them."

All present were astonished at the courageous boldness of the noble knight's language, and God made use of his words to touch a heart which had long remained insensible to the inspirations of justice and piety.

The young prince, who had remained silent until then, burst into tears, and wept for some time without uttering a word, but at length he said — "I repent sincerely of what I have done. I will never again listen to those who counseled me to act thus; restore to me your confidence and your friendship, and I will do willingly all that my sister Elizabeth shall require. I give you full power to dispose of my life and my possessions as you will." The Lord de Varila replied — "'Tis well; that is the only means of escaping the wrath of God." Nevertheless, Henry could not refrain from saying, in a low voice — "If my sister Elizabeth owned the whole empire of Germany, none of it would she retain for herself, but would give it all away for the love of God."

De Varila then went with his companions to announce to Elizabeth the result of his remonstrances, and to inform her that her brother-in-law was anxious to be reconciled, and to do her justice. When they began to speak of the conditions to be imposed on Duke Henry, she cried out — "I want neither his castles nor his riches, nor anything that would tend to trouble or distract me; but I would be grateful to my brother-in-law if he would give me what is due of my dowry, in order to defray the expenses of what I wish to do for the salvation of my own soul, and the repose of that of my beloved husband."

The knights then conducted Henry to Elizabeth. He came accompanied by his mother and his brother Conrad. When he saw her, he begged forgiveness for the injuries he had done her, said that he regretted them sincerely, and that he would make ample atonement. Elizabeth answered by embracing him tenderly and beginning to weep. The two brothers and the Duchess Sophia mingled their tears with hers, and the valiant warriors could no longer remain unmoved spectators of this touching scene, and they too wept, remembering the mild and gracious prince who had been the connecting link of all this family, and who was now hopelessly lost to them.

The rights of the children were also secured, particularly those of Hermann, the first-born, and lawful heir to the duchies of Thuringia and Hesse. The Regency, as by right, was given during his minority, to the elder of his uncles, the Landgrave Henry. All these arrangements concluded, the crusader knights separated to return to their castles; and Elizabeth, with her children, accompanied by the Duchess Sophia and the young Duke, set out for that Wartburg from which she had been so heartlessly expelled. (A. D. 1228-1229.)

## CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW THE DEAR SAINT ELIZABETH RENOUNCED THE WORLDLY LIFE,  
AND, RETIRING TO MARBURG, ASSUMED THERE THE HABIT OF  
THE ORDER OF THE GLORIOUS SAINT FRANCIS.

Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo  
Domino omnibus diebus vitæ meæ: ut videam voluptatem Domini.  
. . . Quoniam abscondit me in tabernaculo suo. — Psalm xxvi. 7-9

Pro Francisi chordula,  
Mantello, tunicula,  
Purpuram deposuit.

*Ancient prose for St. Elizabeth, in the  
Franciscan Manual of 1615*

**D**UKE Henry was faithful to his promises, and, during all the time that Elizabeth remained with him, he strove by the most respectful affection to obliterate the remembrance of the many sufferings he had caused her to endure. He restored to her all the honors due to her rank, and gave her full liberty to continue all her pious exercises and works of charity; and these she resumed with her wonted ardor. About this time she founded the hospital of Saint Mary Magdalene, at Gotha, which she had planned during her husband's lifetime, and which she completed at her return to her possessions.

As before, her love for the poor occupied in her heart all that was not devoted to prayer and contemplation. Freed by her widowhood from the obligation of appearing at festivals and public ceremonies, she avoided all occasions of sharing in the banquets given to the nobles, or in the other rejoicings of the court, which she knew were too frequently provided by means derived from the oppression and hard labor of the lowly. She preferred to the pomp of this world's

power the humiliations of God's poor people, and associated herself to them as much as possible by the practice of voluntary poverty.

The sight of such a life offered too severe a lesson to the courtiers and to the false knights, who had caused her so much suffering in her youth and in the early days of her widowhood, not to re-animate their dislike towards her. To be revenged for her contempt for the riches and pleasures which they prized above all things, they affected to despise herself. They would neither speak to nor visit her. If by chance they met her, they profited of the opportunity afforded them to call her, in an audible tone, *a mad woman* and a fool. She endured these insults with equanimity; her face expressed so much happiness and resignation, that they accused her of having already forgotten the death of her husband and of indulging in unseemly joy. "Miserable wretches!" says an author of that time, "they understood not that she possessed the peace and joy which are not granted to the impious."

Even the Duchess Sophia appears to have been prejudiced against her by calumnies, and to have manifested to her daughter-in-law feelings of surprise and indignation; but Elizabeth was not troubled, for the Lord, Who was all in all to her, read the secrets of her heart.

On the other hand, pious persons, whose souls were truly wise, appreciated and admired her humility. Besides, she received at this time the noblest encouragement to a Christian soul — the most powerful protection to a maligned woman. From the Holy See, which was then the only sure refuge of the feeble and the persecuted, words of friendly and fatherly tenderness were uttered to strengthen and to honor her. The same Cardinal Ugolino, whom we have already seen acting as intermediary between our princess and St. Francis of Assisium, had become Pope, under the name of Gregory IX, and having heard of her sufferings, and of her unalterable fidelity in the path traced out for her by God, addressed to her a letter replete with apostolic consolation. He exhorted her, by the examples of the saints, and by the hope of eternal life, to persevere in continence and patience: he enjoined her to place confidence in him, for that during his life he would not abandon her; that, on the contrary, he would ever look upon her as his child, and that thenceforth he took her person and

property under his special protection. At the same time, he granted her the privilege of having a church and cemetery attached to her hospital of Saint Mary Magdalene at Gotha. This tender and vigilant father also ordered Master Conrad, who was still invested with Apostolic authority in Germany, and who had just returned to Thuringia, to take charge more than ever, absolutely and specially, of the spiritual direction of the Duchess Elizabeth, and at the same time to defend her against all who might endeavor to do her any injury.

Whether these exhortations of the common father of the faithful gave a new impulse to her courage, or whether obeying the wonderful influence of Divine grace in her heart, she soon entertained the idea and earnest desire of embracing a life more perfect and more united to God. Though, assuredly, she was as much as possible detached from the splendors and pleasures of her rank, that did not satisfy her ardor. Her soul came too frequently in contact with the world, and that world she loved not. After having for a long time considered upon what manner of life would be most pleasing to God, and having examined the different rules of the Monastic Orders then existing, and even the solitary life of the recluses, the remembrance and example of the glorious seraph-saint of Assisium, whose child she was already, as a Penitent of the Third Order, gained the mastery in her heart; she felt the same courage, the same love of God and of poverty, as he did; she resolved upon embracing his rule in all its primitive rigor, and like him and his fervent disciples, after having renounced all things, to go and beg her bread from door to door. She mentioned her decision to Master Conrad, and humbly requested his consent. But this prudent director rejected this idea with indignation, and gave her a severe reprimand, being persuaded that her sex and weakness forbade her such a life. She still insisted earnestly, shedding an abundance of tears; but, as he was steadfast in refusing, she left him, crying out, "You shall see; I will do something that you cannot prevent!" But when she saw that she could not vanquish Conrad's resistance for that time, she had recourse to other means to satisfy the ardor and zeal by which she was animated.

The Regent Henry, as we have already said, whatever might have been his secret thoughts upon the manners and feelings of his sister-in-law, always testified to her the respect and affection which he had sworn over the ashes of his brother, and paid to her honors which the humble princess would fain decline receiving; counting on those good dispositions, and after having resided for about a year with her family, Elizabeth besought Duke Henry to assign to her some residence where she might entirely devote herself to God, without allowing any earthly care to interfere with her works of piety and charity. Henry, after consulting his mother and brother, granted the city of Marburg, in Hesse, with all its dependencies and revenues, to provide for her maintenance. Penetrated with gratitude, she thanked her mother and brothers-in-law, saying that they did for her more than she deserved, and gave more than would suffice for all her wants. But the Landgrave promised to give also 500 marks of silver, to defray the first expenses of her establishment.

Master Conrad seems not to have approved of this arrangement, since we find that he wrote to the Pope that it was against his will that the Duchess came into his country. But as he did not oppose it positively, she profited of his approaching departure, to leave Thuringia, and to go and dwell near her spiritual Father in the city which derived from her name so pure and glorious a renown.

On her arrival at Marbourg, she followed the advice given by Master Conrad, and appointed officers and bailiffs, who were to administer the laws in her name. The people of the city were so eager to pay their homage to their young sovereign, that her humility could scarce endure such honor; so she retired to a little village called Wehrda, about a league from the city, on the charming banks of the Lahn, a river which runs by Marburg. On entering it, she selected as her habitation the first cabin which she saw, and it was one deserted and almost in ruins; this she did, that she might not cause any trouble to the people in the village, for her tender solicitude was already awakened in behalf of her new subjects. For shelter, she had to lie under the projection of a staircase or of a chimney, and to gather the leafy branches of trees to cover the openings by which the sun and

wind entered too freely. She prepared also her meager food as well as she was able, and always returned thanks to God. This miserable hovel protected her neither from the heat nor from the cold, and the smoke seriously injured her eyes, but for God's sake she endured all these mortifications joyfully. Meanwhile, she caused to be constructed at Marburg, near the convent of the Friars Minors, a small house composed of wood and brick, like a poor cabin, in order that all might know that it was not as a great princess that she came to establish herself in her capital, but as an humble and patient widow, who came there to serve the Lord in poverty and peace. As soon as this palace of Christian abnegation was completed, she went to dwell there with her children and her faithful servants.

Yet Elizabeth still sought a more signal and entire detachment from the world, and a closer and more manifest bond of union with God. Her confessor continued steadfast in refusing her permission to embrace the Franciscan rule in all its severity, and to beg her bread like the poor Clares; yet she was still anxious to imitate, as far as possible, this life, which seemed to her to be the type of evangelical perfection. We have seen that during her husband's lifetime she had been enrolled in the Third Order of St. Francis. She resolved thenceforth to give to that affiliation an irrevocable and solemn character; and though, previous to that time, this branch of the Franciscan family was not looked upon as forming a regular, or, correctly speaking, a monastic order, she wished to make a public profession, as used the cloistered religious, and to renew solemnly the vows of chastity, obedience, and absolute poverty which she had so frequently made in her heart. Elizabeth was thus enabled to associate herself, as far as possible, in that glorious renunciation of this world's wealth which has during so many centuries merited for the Seraphic Order the special protection of God and the admiration of the Christian world.

Master Conrad approved of this design, but he would not permit her to consider her vow of poverty as depriving her of the free disposal of the revenues proceeding from her dowry, and the estates assigned for her use by the Landgrave Henry. But, on the contrary, she was



gradually to apply them to the relief of the poor, and to the liquidation of certain debts incurred by her late husband, the good Duke Louis,

Nevertheless, she renounced this wealth in spirit, as she did all earthly affections, even the most legitimate. To gain the victory, not only over the world, but even over her own soul, the pious Elizabeth knew that greater strength was required than what could be derived from her own will, and the examples of the Blessed Francis, and of the other holy souls who had preceded her in the paths of perfection. She knew that grace from above was alone sufficiently powerful for this, and she begged it from God, with more than her wonted fervor, for several days before she assumed the habit. She informed her friend Ysentrude that she incessantly prayed to the Lord for three favors, — first, an entire disregard of all temporal wealth, then the courage to disdain the injuries and calumnies of men, and, finally, the diminution of the excessive love she bore to her children. After having for some time sought these graces, she came one day to her companions, radiant with more than earthly joy, and said to them — “The Lord has heard my prayer; behold! I formerly loved the wealth and pleasures of the world, and now they are become worthless in my eyes. The calumnies of men, the false sayings of the wicked, and the contempt which they lavish upon me, have become to me sources of pride and happiness. My little ones, these children beloved of my heart, are become, as it were, strangers to me. This God sees. It is to him I offer them — to His care I confide them. May His holy will be done in all things! I no longer love anything, nor any creature: henceforth the Great Creator alone possesses my heart.” Inflamed with this heroic love, Elizabeth thought herself sufficiently well-disposed to make her vows and to take the habit consecrated by her glorious models, St. Francis and St. Clare. “If I could,” said she, “find a rule poorer than that of Clare, I would embrace it, to console myself for not being allowed to enter her Order. But I know of none such.” She selected for this ceremony the Church of the Friars Minors, and the feast of Good Friday. The day when Jesus Christ, despoiled of all for our love, was nailed to the Cross, and on which the altars are bared and uncovered as He was, to remind the faithful of the Supreme Sacrifice; and this

was the day that Elizabeth preferred in her turn to renounce all things, and to rend the last ties that bound her to Earth, in order to follow more perfectly the Spouse of her soul in the ways of poverty and charity.

Thus, on this blessed day, in the presence of her children, her friends, and several Franciscan Fathers, she came to lay her holy hands on the bare altar stone, and there vowed to renounce her will, her children, her relations, her companions, and all the pomps and pleasures of this world.

Brother Burkhard, Guardian of the Friars Minors of Hesse, who looked upon Elizabeth as his spiritual child and friend, cut off her hair, clothed her with the gray robe, and girded her with the cord which was the distinctive mark of the order of St Francis, whilst Master Conrad celebrated Mass. She wore this costume, and ever after went barefooted. From this moment, too, as if to obliterate the remembrance of her past grandeur, she substituted on her seal the figure of a barefooted Franciscan religious in place of the armorial bearings of her husband's family and her own.

Guta, her maid of honor, who had been her faithful and inseparable companion from childhood, was now unwilling to lead a different kind of life from that of her dear mistress. She also assumed the habit of the Third Order, and solemnly renewed the vow of chastity which she had made some years before during the life of Duke Louis. This community of life and feeling was to Elizabeth a consolation, which she probably would have denied herself, had she been aware of Guta's intention; it was one, however, of which she was very soon deprived.

But now it became necessary to part with her children, whom she reproached herself for loving too ardently. Her son Hermann, her first born, and heir to the sovereignty of his father's possessions, at this time between six and seven years of age, was sent to the castle of Kreutzburg, to remain in good and safe keeping until he should be old enough to assume the reins of government, which were then held by his uncle, as regent.

It is probable that the same place was also the home of her eldest daughter, Sophia, already affianced to the young Duke of Brabant.

Her second daughter, Sophia, returned to the abbey of Kitzingen, where she was to take the veil and where she remained during her whole life. The youngest of all, the little Gertrude, scarcely two years old, born after her father's death, was sent to the convent of the Premonstratensian nuns of Aldenburg, near Wetzlar. Everyone was astonished that this young princess should be placed in a poor and newly founded house, and some severely reproached Elizabeth for it, but she answered them that she did so according to the agreement made between her husband and herself at the moment of parting, even before the birth of the child "It was Heaven," said she, "that inspired us to choose that monastery, for it wills that my child shall contribute to the spiritual and temporal advancement of that holy house." Now, indeed, was her sacrifice perfect — her entire separation from the world consummated, by one of those efforts which even exceed the precepts of Christian duty. There remained no longer anything for her to renounce — all in this world was dead to her — at the age of twenty-two years she could say with the Apostle, "*I live, but it is no longer I who live, but it is Jesus Christ who lives in me.*" — Gal. ii. 20.

And the world, and its powerful ones, who still pursued her with their hatred, awaited but this moment to redouble their insulting attacks. The wise and great people of the time had but one voice to proclaim aloud the madness of this spouse of Christ, and they were not deceived, for she had indeed comprehended and embraced in its fullest extent the sacred folly of the cross.

What the courtiers of Thuringia then said is, and doubtless will be, often repeated by those who, having admired the poetic history of her early years, are amazed and shocked at this decisive crisis in her life. "What!" say they, "still so young, and having so many duties to perform, so much of lawful happiness to enjoy, to choose so extraordinary an existence! to impose on herself such unnecessary penance! to renounce the care of her children, and all the duties of her position in society!" And many other futile reasons in which this worldly wisdom is so rich, that it but knows how to calumniate all that

is above the comprehension of its selfishness, or stronger than its weakness.

Faithful souls! shall these be our thoughts in contemplating the triumphs of this Christian heroine? If, because we are too weak to imitate or to follow her, shall we be blind enough not to admire her virtues? Shall we not bow with a tender respect before these secrets of divine love, this absolute obedience to the words of our Savior, "*If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*" — St. Luke, xiv. 26.

We must not be surprised that the world should despise and insult her, for, following Christ, she conquered the world. In the war that it wages, from earliest youth, with the soul redeemed by the blood of God, she had bravely fought; with her weak hand she took up the gauntlet in the lists, and fearlessly engaged in the conflict, avoiding not its wounds, but living in the midst of attacks and innumerable snares. At an age when so many faults are excusable from inexperience, she had already condemned the rash judgments of this world, with its prejudices and its falsehoods. She had denied its rights over her, braved its calumnies, scorned its contempt. She vanquished it in every place and at every time — in the riches and splendor of a court, as well as in the bitterness of hunger — pinched poverty — in the most cherished affections of the heart, as well as in its most severe trials, in anguish, desolation, and death. Neither the ties of conjugal life, nor the maternal love of her heart, nor even reputation, the last of earthly treasures, was over-prized by her. And if now she retired from her foe, it was because she had been victorious in the struggle. Entering the battlefield in her childhood, she left it not until she had completely vanquished her enemy.

Now that she had overcome the wiles of the wicked serpent, it was permitted to her to lay down her arms, and to await, surrounded by the mysterious joys of poverty and obedience, the day of Eternal triumph.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

OF THE GREAT POVERTY IN WHICH THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH LIVED,  
AND HOW SHE ADVANCED IN HUMILITY AND MERCY TOWARDS  
ALL CREATURES.

Manum suam misit ad fortia et digiti eius apprehenderunt  
fusum. Manum suam aperuit inopi et palmas suas extendit ad  
pauperem. — Prov. xxxi. 19. 20.

Amen, dico vobis, quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus mei  
minimis, mihi fecistis. — St. Matth. v. 40.

Elegi abjectus esse. — Ps. lxxxiii. 11.

**E**LIZABETH, devoted alone to God, wished that the voluntary poverty she had embraced should be as complete as possible; she was anxious that all should correspond with the poor cottage she had chosen for her dwelling-place. She consecrated all the revenues that Master Conrad obliged her to retain nominally to the relief of the poor, and to the sustainment of charitable institutions.

Not having succeeded in obtaining her confessor's permission to seek her daily food from the charitable, she resolved to earn her livelihood by the labor of her hands. For this purpose she could spin wool, not being able to spin flax. She used to get from the monastery of Altenberg wool for her work, and, when it was all spun, she used to send it to the nuns, who paid her for her labor, but not always to the full value. She, on the contrary, was scrupulously exact in performing her task. One day that she had received payment in advance for a certain quantity of work, Master Conrad sent for her to go with him from Marburg to Eisenach; seeing that she could not spin all the wool, she sent the little that remained undone, with the yarn, to the convent,

and with it a Cologne penny, lest she might be accused of taking too much money for her labor. She worked so incessantly, that even when weakness or illness confined her to bed, and when her companions took away the distaff, that she might have some rest, to avoid idleness she used to disentangle and arrange wool for future use. She earned by this means sufficient to make her offerings to the churches, and to provide for her support. Nothing could be coarser or more simple than her food. If any brought her anything delicate or savory, she used at once to send it to some poor person in her hospital without even tasting of it. Still she neglected not the counsels of Christian prudence in this matter, for she begged of her physician to point out what the exact limits of her abstinence ought to be, lest by fasting too severely she should bring upon herself infirmities which would prevent her from serving God well, and for which He would call her to a strict account ; yet she was very frequently ill.

She most generally ate vegetables boiled in pure water, without salt, and, well or ill, she prepared them herself. While she was thus occupied in the cares of her house, she ceased not to elevate her soul to God in prayer and meditation; and often when alone by the fireside, either engaged in cooking, or when she approached to warm herself, so absorbed used she to be in contemplation that sparks and cinders would sometimes fall upon her garments and burn them without her knowledge, though, when her companions would return, they would feel almost suffocated by the smoke and odor of the burning stuff.

Her clothing might be compared to her food in its poverty. She generally wore a robe of undyed cloth, such as was used by the peasantry and the poorest classes only; this robe was often torn and patched, and was confined round her waist by a coarse cord. Her mantle, of the same stuff as her gown, had become too short, and was lengthened by a piece of another color. Whenever she found scraps of cloth she used to gather them up, to mend the rents and burns on her garments, with her own hands, though she did not well know how to sew. She feared not to go out in this costume and this confirmed profane men in the opinion they had conceived of her insanity; whilst pious souls looked upon her as a second Saint Clare. And wretched as

these clothes were, she frequently deprived herself of them to give them to poor people, so that through the intense cold of winter she was often obliged to remain by her humble hearth, or to lie under her scanty bed-covering, when she would say, "Here am I resting as if in my coffin," and this new trial was to her a source of pure joy.

Enduring all these privations, she never lost the amiability of her character, nor the affability, nor extreme and continual goodness in her manners to all, by which she had ever been distinguished. From her childhood she had preferred the society of the poor and humble to any other; and now in her pious retreat she treated not only these maids of honor who would not part from her, but also the servants appointed by Master Conrad, with tender and sweet cordiality.

She wished that not one of them, however low her extraction might have been, should give her any title of distinction, but should simply call her by her baptismal name, Elizabeth; and also that when addressing her they should use the pronouns Thee and Thou, as if speaking to an equal or to an inferior.

She endeavored rather to serve them than to be served by them. This daughter of Kings took a pleasure in performing their menial offices — such as washing the utensils of her house. In order to perform, without incurring remarks, these works servile in the eyes of men, but ennobled before God by sublime humility, she used to give various commissions to her attendants, and when they had returned after executing them, they would find that their mistress had done all their work. After having prepared her repasts, as we have seen, she would make them sit by her at table and eat from the same plate. One of them, named Irmengarde, who related these matters to the ecclesiastical judges, amazed at the sight of so much humility in a princess formerly so powerful, said to her one day: "Surely, madam, you acquire great merit by your conduct towards us, but you forget the danger to which you expose us, that of filling us with pride, by permitting us to eat with you, and to sit by your side." To which the Duchess replied: "Ah, since it is thus with thee, thou must even come and sit upon my knees," and taking Irmengarde in her arms, she placed her as she had said. Her patience and charity were beyond

measure; nothing could irritate or provoke her to give way to the least discontent. She spoke frequently and for a long time with her companions; the heavenly sweetness and gaiety of her heart, as it were, flowed over, in these familiar conversations, which were most profitable to the souls of those who listened to her. But she could not bear that any one should utter in her presence words of vanity or levity, or that they should give way to anger or impatience; she would interrupt them always, saying, "Well, where is our Lord now?" and she would reprove the guilty one with an authority tempered by grace and gentleness.

In the midst of this life, apparently so mortified and humble, but so glorious before God, and so fruitful in ineffable joys to her who had devoted herself so entirely to Him, Elizabeth could not forget what was to her, after the care of her soul's salvation, the first and only interest of her terrestrial life, the comfort of her poor and afflicted brethren. Having renounced all, more surely to find Jesus in Heaven, she could not neglect his suffering members on Earth. Not contented with devoting to the use and comfort of the poor the entire proceeds of her property, so far as that she reserved not for herself as much as would serve to sustain life, and that her Director was obliged to set a limit to her expenditure; she, as in early years, sought by her cares to alleviate still further their miseries by cleansing the sores and wounds of their bodies, and pouring the balm of consolation into their weary hearts. When she arrived at Marburg, her first care was to erect an hospital, which she dedicated to the memory of St. Francis of Assisium, according to the injunction of Pope Gregory IX. The pontiff, who had just canonized that angelic man, thought it right, on the occasion of the translation of his body, to send to his intrepid and faithful imitatrix, a present far more precious than the mantle which she formerly received with so much gratitude; and this present consisted of some drops of the blood which flowed from the wound in the side of St. Francis, when he received the sacred stigmata. Elizabeth received this blessed gift in the same spirit that inspired the Pope to send it to her, and looked upon it as a new pledge of her alliance with and affection for him who, from amongst all other men,



had followed most closely in the footsteps of our Redeemer. She thought she could not better dispose of this holy relic than to enshrine it in the hospital, to the service of which she intended to dedicate the remainder of her life.

As soon as this asylum was completed, she placed therein the greatest possible number of the sick. Every day, accompanied by her two faithful friends and sisters in religion, Guta and Ysentruide, she used to go and spend many hours amongst the patients, cleansing and dressing them, and administering to them the prescribed remedies; and above all, consoling each one with the most affectionate exhortations adapted to his state of corporal sufferings or the spiritual wants of his soul. It was not the charitable instincts of her heart, or the necessity of gratifying her desire of comforting her neighbor, alone that she seemed to obey, but as if she strove to find in these works of mercy another means of immolating her flesh so often conquered, she transformed them into mortifications of a new and extraordinary kind; and we can hardly discriminate which held the greatest sway in her heart, the love of her neighbor, or the hatred of that body of sin which alone separated her from her divine Savior. She was not alone the consolatrix of the poor, but even their slave, and no service appeared to her to be too repulsive, too difficult, too mean, for each one of them was, in her eyes, the living image of the Heavenly Spouse of her soul. Those amongst the sick whose disorders inspired all with disgust, and drove every one from them, became the objects of her care and tenderness, and her royal hands rendered to them every assistance. She spoke to them with familiarity, and often kissed their ulcers and frightful sores. In the memory of man was never heard of so wonderful a triumph over the repugnance of the senses, united to so much ardor and perseverance in the practice of the most humble devotion. All were astonished that such a life (the like of which had never been heard of, even in the histories of the saints) should have been voluntarily chosen by the daughter of a king; but the Spirit from above inspired her with that holy violence to which the kingdom of Heaven has been promised as a reward.

Such practices were far from obtaining for her universal sympathy or approbation, and there were found even pious people to say that she went too far; but she had too fully conquered herself to shrink before the opinions of men. One day when going to the Church she met a poor man whom she brought home, and whose hands and feet she washed: this time, the occupation so disgusted her that she shuddered, but immediately she repressed this feeling and said to herself, "Ah, ugly mouth, so thou dislikest this — know then that it is a salutary drink;" so saying she drank the water she had just used, and added: "Oh, Lord, when you were on the Cross, you tasted vinegar and gall — I am not worthy of that! Aid me to become more worthy of partaking your sufferings!" Lepers, who on account of the so easily spread contagion of their fearful malady, were objects of horror to mankind in general, were on this account more beloved and tenderly cared for by her. She bathed them herself, and often cut up curtains and other precious cloths to dry them after leaving the bath; she made their beds and laid them in them. "O! how happy are we," said she one day to her attendants, "to be able thus to cleanse and clothe our Lord!" To which one of them replied: "You, madam, may surely find it agreeable, but I know not if others would like it as well."

Master Conrad thought that her charity led her beyond the limits of Christian prudence, and he forbade her to touch or to kiss the sores of the lepers, or other sick people, lest she should contract their maladies, but this precaution failed, for the grief that prohibition caused to her compassionate heart was so great that she fell seriously ill.

But it was not alone to the corporal necessities of her brethren that this ardent disciple of Christ confined her solicitude and benevolence — she never lost sight of the weal of, and spiritual remedies for, their souls. She added, to the tender care she always gave them, pious and frequent exhortations. She watched carefully that poor people should have their children baptized immediately after birth, and that all the sick should ask for and receive the holy Sacraments, not alone at their last hour, but also when they entered the hospital. Though her own example, added to these exhortations, should have been all-powerful, yet she sometimes met with resistance from souls embittered by

misfortune, or rendered tepid by a long absence from their duties as members of the Church; then did she unite the energy of Christian zeal to her habitual sweetness.

One day a blind man presented himself at the hospital and demanded admittance. Elizabeth came up at the same moment, accompanied by Master Conrad; she joyfully consented to the poor man's admission on condition that he would commence by healing the wounds of his soul, and approach the tribunal of penance. But the blind man, impatient from his malady, and annoyed by this exhortation, began to blaspheme and to curse such superstitious customs, as he called them; Elizabeth, indignant at such language, reproved him with such vehemence that he was suddenly touched with compunction, and kneeling, he immediately confessed his sins to Master Conrad.

Far from confining the exercise of her benevolence to this hospital, Elizabeth, attended by her maidens, was in the habit of visiting the huts of the poor people in the neighborhood of Marburg, and at the same time of bringing to them bread, meat, and other food which she distributed herself. With a deep interest she inquired even into the most trifling details of their manner of living, and carefully examined their clothes and bed-covering, that she might know what would be most suitable to relieve their wants.

She distributed amongst them all the money she had received for her jewels, rings, silken vesture, and other remnants of her worldly life, which she had secretly sold. She was always ready to perform even the most menial offices for these poor people and to supply their least wants. One day in winter a sick woman asked her for some fish; Elizabeth ran immediately to a neighboring stream, invoking thus the Divine Provider of all good: "Lord Jesus Christ, if it be your will, send me some fish for your suffering one." And having searched the water she found therein a large fish, with which she hastened to gratify her patient.

When, on her benevolent missions, she met with any creature whose weakness or state of suffering seemed to her to require a special exercise of compassion, or if their devotion or resignation was

more perfect than that of other patients, she would bring them not only to her hospital, but even into her own dwelling, there to nurse them with the tenderest care, and to make them sit at her own table. Conrad remonstrated with her on this subject, but she replied to him, "O my dear Master, leave them to me! Remember my past life in the pride and pomp of the world; we must cure an evil by its contrary virtue. I must now live with the poor and humble; this society is fruitful in graces to me, let me enjoy it."

One of those whom she thus adopted was a little boy, without father or mother — a paralytic from his birth, one-eyed, and suffering always from a most repulsive malady. This poor being, overwhelmed with so much misery, received from her more than a mother's care. She used to pass whole nights watching by his side, rendering to him the most humiliating services, and tenderly consoling him with the most affectionate words.

He died, and was succeeded in her care by a young girl stricken with a leprosy so fearful, that in the hospital no one would dare to touch her, nor even to look at her. As soon as Elizabeth saw her she approached with a pious veneration as if it was the Lord who had deigned to present Himself to her concealed in the person of this poor creature under a veil of sorrows; the Princess knelt before her, and notwithstanding the child's resistance, she took off her shoes, and began to bathe the ulcers, to anoint them with the prescribed remedies, to cut off the toe and finger nails, and altogether to tend her with such pious skill that the condition of the patient rapidly improved. After removing her to her own dwelling, Elizabeth used to spend many hours by her bed-side, playing with her to attract her attention from her suffering, and always speaking to her in language the most consoling. However, when Conrad learned the conduct of his penitent, he removed the leper from her, lest she should catch the disorder, and for this excess of zeal imposed on her a penance so severe that he afterwards thought himself bound to repent of it to the Pope. But Elizabeth, whose indefatigable ardor nothing could discourage, replaced her patient by a little child afflicted with a complaint almost as revolting as the leprosy — and the child she treated with a care and

skill with which Charity alone, that supreme science, could inspire her. She kept this patient with her until her death.

Still, the lepers were the objects of her predilection, we might almost say of her envy, as no other sickness so completely detached its victims from this life

Brother Gerard, Provincial of the Franciscans in Germany and who was, after Master Conrad, the friend to whom she most intimately confided her pious thoughts, came to visit her one day, and she began to speak of the joys of holy poverty — towards the end of their discourse she said: “Ah, Father, what in my heart I would like best, would be to be treated like a leper. I would wish to be given a straw-thatched hovel, like those in which people place such sufferers, and that it would have before the door a rag, and a little box into which the passers-by might sometimes throw an alms.” At these words she fell into a kind of ecstasy, during which the Father Provincial who raised her from the ground heard her chanting hymns. Soon after this she was restored to her usual state of being.

We may be permitted to embody in this recital some account of how persons stricken with leprosy, and the disorder itself, were considered and treated during Catholic ages, particularly as our doing so will more clearly explain the meaning of the words above recorded, as uttered by our dear saint.

In these times of universal faith, Religion was the absolute sovereign of society, and consequently was enabled to meet every evil with some remedy, and from extreme human misery she cultivated all the noble feelings of piety and charity in Christian souls. Not being able to resist the deplorable material sufferings which were sure to result from the fearful malady, she was, at least, omnipotent in destroying the moral reprobation, which in later times would be sure to attach itself to the unhappy victims of this disorder — so the Church, in a manner, consecrated them, as the representatives of the burthen of human sorrow, from which Jesus Christ had rescued mankind, and which this holy Mother taught her children to revere in the persons of their thus afflicted brethren.

Leprosy, then, was at this time a something sacred in the sight of the Church and the people — it was a gift from God, a special distinction, even as it were, a mark of Divine attention. The hand of God, the ever just and merciful Father, had touched a Christian — had stricken His child in a mysterious manner, and one to heal which human science was unavailing; thenceforth there was something venerable in his affliction. Solitude, reflection and retreat with God alone became necessary for a leper, but the love and prayers of his brethren followed him to his retirement.

The Church knew how to reconcile the most tender solicitude for these her suffering children, with the measures required to ensure the health of all, by preventing the spread of contagion. Perhaps there is not in her Liturgy a more affecting and solemn ceremonial than that called *Separatio Leprosorum*, which she used when separating one stricken by God, in towns where there was no leper-hospital. In his presence the Mass for the Dead was celebrated, and all the furniture and utensils required for him were blessed, after which every one present gave an alms, and the clergy, preceded by a Cross-bearer, and accompanied by all the faithful, conducted him to the solitary hut assigned to him for a dwelling place. On the roof of this house the priest laid some consecrated earth from a burial ground, saying,

Sis mortuos mundo, vivens iterum Deo.  
(Be thou dead to the world, living again to God.)

The priest then addressed to him a consolatory discourse, wherein he depicted the joys of Paradise, and the community of spirit with the Church whose prayers would be more unceasingly offered for him in solitude than before.

Then he erected a wooden cross before the door, and appended to it a little box for alms, after which everyone went away. At Easter only, the lepers were permitted to leave their tombs, in commemoration of Christ's resurrection, when they might enter into villages and towns to share in the universal joy of Christendom. When these sufferers died in isolation, the Church celebrated their obsequies with the office for Confessors not Bishops.

The feelings of the Church were always responded to by her children. Hence the lepers received from the people the most affectionate and consoling names. They called them, "God's own sick ones — God's dear poor — The good people." They loved to remember that Jesus Christ Himself had been prefigured as a leper by the Holy Spirit, "*Et nos putavimus eum quasi leprosum;*" that He was the guest of a leper when Mary Magdalene poured on him the precious ointment and washed his feet with her tears; that he had chosen the leper Lazarus as the type of the elect soul; and that He had frequently assumed that form when appearing to his saints on Earth, as we read in the legends of St. Julian, St. Leo IX, pope, St. Martyrius, &c. &c. Besides this, also, it was from the Pilgrimages to the Holy Land and the Crusades that the leprosy was brought into Europe, and this derivation added to its sacred character.

An order of knights had been formed at Jerusalem, that of St. Lazarus, to consecrate itself exclusively to the service of lepers, one of whom was chosen its Grand Master; and an order of women had consecrated themselves to the same object in the same city, at the Hospice of St. John the almoner.

Amongst the sovereigns and nobles of the Earth, our Elizabeth was not the only one of royal race who honored Christ in these successors of Lazarus — illustrious and powerful princes regarded this duty as one of the prerogatives of their crowns. Robert, king of France, incessantly visited their hospitals. Saint Louis treated them with fraternal affection, visited them at the Quarter Tenses, and kissed their ulcers. Henry III of England did the same. The Countess Sybella of Flanders, having accompanied her husband Theodoric to the Holy Land, employed the time while he was fighting against the infidels, in the above-mentioned hospital of St. John, tending the lepers. One day, as she bathed their sores, she felt, as once did our Elizabeth, her senses revolting against so unpleasing an occupation; to chastise herself she took some of the water in her mouth and swallowed it, saying, "Thou must learn to serve God in His poor, it is a good occupation for thee, why then dost thou permit thy heart to shrink from it?" When her husband was leaving Palestine, she requested his

permission to remain there, in order to devote the remainder of her life to the service of the lepers.

Her brother, Baldwin III, king of Jerusalem, joined his prayers to those of this heroine of charity; the Count resisted for a long time, and did not consent to part from Sybella until he had received from his brother-in-law, as a recompense for his sacrifice, a priceless relic, a drop of blood from our Lord's sacred body, saved by Joseph of Arimathea at the taking down from the Cross. He returned alone to his country, carrying with him this sacred treasure, which he enshrined at Bruges, and the pious people of Flanders heard, with great veneration, how their Count had sold his wife to Christ and His poor, and how he received as her price the blood of their God.

But above all, the saints of the Middle Ages are those who treated lepers with a sublime devotion.

Saint Catherine of Siena had her hands affected with it while attending a poor old woman who was its victim; but after persevering to the end in her noble sacrifice, and burying her poor patient, her hands became as pure and white as those of a little child, and a halo of mild light played around the parts that had been most affected. Saint Francis of Assisium and St. Clare his noble companion, St. Odila of Alsace, St. Judith of Poland, St. Edmund of Canterbury, and later still, St. Francis Xavier, and St. Jane Frances de Chantal, took pleasure in humbly serving the lepers; and often the prayers of these holy souls obtained for the afflicted ones an instantaneous cure.

In this glorious company, Elizabeth had already taken her place, by the unceasing aspirings of her soul to God, Who was ever present to her in the persons of the poor. But whilst awaiting her summons to a blissful eternity with them, nothing could satiate the desires of her compassionate heart, nor soothe the languishing of her soul, so often suffering from the contemplation of the miseries of her fellow creatures.



## CHAPTER XXV.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH REFUSED TO RETURN TO HER FATHER'S KINGDOM, IN ORDER THAT SHE MIGHT MORE SURELY ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

*Regnum mundi et omnem ornatum sæculi contempsi propter amorem Domini mei Jesu Christi, quem vidi, quem amavi, in quem credidi, quem dilexi. — Roman Breviary.*

*In nidulo meo moriar. — Job xxix. 18.*



IN the mean time the King of Hungary, the rich and powerful father of this poor nursing mother of the sick, heard from the Hungarian pilgrims who returned from Aix-la-Chapelle and other holy places on the banks of the Rhine, of the state of poverty and desolation to which his daughter was reduced. They related to him how shocked they were to find that their princess lived without honors, without a court, without the least possible mark of her royal rank.

The king was alarmed and moved even to tears on learning this story, he complained before his council of the injuries done his child, and resolved to send an ambassador to bring her to him. He confided this mission to Count Banfi; this noble set out for Thuringia, and soon arrived at Wartburg. He there found the Landgrave Henry, and demanded from him the reason of the extraordinary position wherein the Duchess was placed. The Prince thus replied to him: "My sister has become quite mad, everyone knows it, you will see it yourself." He then related to the Count how she had retired to Marburg, the extraordinary life she led there, tending the lepers and associating only with the poor, with many other details of this kind.

He pointed out to the Ambassador how Elizabeth's poverty was quite voluntary, as he had ensured to her the possession of all she could desire. The Count was astonished, and set out for Marburg. When he arrived there he asked the inn-keeper with whom he stopped, what he thought of the Lady named Elizabeth who had come from Hungary to this country; why lived she thus in misery; why she quitted the princes of her late husband's family; and whether there was any charge against her honor. "She is a most pious lady and right virtuous," replied the inn-keeper, "she is as rich as she can wish to be, for this city and its neighborhood, which is extensive, is her sole property; and if she wished, she could have chosen from amongst many princes a spouse. But in her great humility she lives thus in misery, she would not dwell in the city, but remains near the hospital which she built, for she despises all this world's wealth. God conferred on us a great favor in sending to us this pious lady, it is profitable to the salvation of all even to come in contact with her. She never wearies in her works of charity, she is most chaste, most gentle, most merciful, but beyond all, she is the most humble woman in the world."

The Count then asked this good man to bring him to her; when arrived, the inn-keeper went in first and said: "Madam, here is one of your friends seeking you, and who I think wishes to speak to you." The Ambassador having entered the hut, and seeing the daughter of his royal master engaged at work, was so affected that he burst into tears, and making the Sign of the Cross he cried out, "Did any one ever before see a king's daughter spinning wool?" Being seated then beside her he began to tell how her father had sent him to seek her, and to bring her back to the country wherein she was born, where she would be treated with all the honor due to her rank, and where the king would ever regard her as his best beloved child. But she listened not to his persuasions. "For what do you take me?" said she to him, "I am but a poor sinner who never obeyed the law of God as I ought to have done." "And who has reduced you to this state of misery?" asked the Count. "No one," replied she, "but the infinitely rich Son of my Heavenly Father, who has taught me by His example to despise riches

and to love poverty beyond all the kingdoms of this world." And then she told him her history since her widowhood, and her intentions for her future life. She assured him that she had no reason to complain of anyone, that she wanted not for anything, and that she was perfectly happy.

Notwithstanding this contentment, the Count strove to induce her to accompany him. "Come," said he, "noble Queen, come with me to your dear father, come, possess your kingdom and your inheritance." "I hope indeed," replied she, "that I already possess my Father's inheritance, — that is to say, the eternal mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Still the Ambassador entreated of her not to afflict her royal father by leading a life so unworthy of her rank, and not to grieve him by refusing to accede to his hope that she would return to him. "Say to my dearest lord and father," replied Elizabeth, "that I am more happy in this contemptible life than he is in his regal pomp, and that far from sorrowing over me, he ought to rejoice that he has a child in the service of the King of Heaven. All that I ask of him is to pray, and to have prayers offered for me, and I will ceaselessly pray for him as long as life is left me."

The Count, seeing that all his efforts were vain, took leave of her with sincere grief. But she returned to her spindle, happy to be able, as she had renounced all for Jesus, to realize in anticipation the sublime words which the Church uses in the office of holy women:

"The kingdom of this world and all the vanities of the age have I despised for the love of my Lord Jesus Christ, Him whom I have seen, whom I have loved, in whom I have believed, and whom I have preferred."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH DISTRIBUTED ALL HER PROPERTY  
AMONGST THE POOR.

Si dederit homo omnem substantiam domus eius pro dilectione,  
quasi nihil despiciet eam. — Cantic. viii. 7.

Calore charitatis  
Calefacti pauperes  
Juxta prunas nuditatis  
Lætantur immemores.

*Anthem of St. Elizabeth, in the ancient  
Breviary of the Dominicans.*

**S**OWEVER convinced the Landgrave Henry might have been of the folly of his sister-in-law, he did not think himself the less obliged to fulfil the promises he had of his free will made to her; the fear of the Pope who had constituted himself Elizabeth's protector, and the influence of Conrad of Marburg, which was as great over him as it had been over his brother Louis, might have contributed to this fidelity. He sent her then the five hundred marks of silver that he had promised at the time of her departure from Wartburg to defray the expense incurred in forming her new establishment.

This increase of riches appeared to the charitable princess as a favorable opportunity for realizing a project which she had long entertained, namely, that of throwing off the care of the wealth which she held as her private property by depriving herself of the means of enjoying it.

Regardless of the order of Master Conrad, and perhap unknown to him, she had parted with all that her brother-in-law had been obliged to restore to her at the return of the Crusader knights, and this

produced the very considerable sum, for those times, of two thousand marks. "She endeavored," says one of her pious historians, "to use the changeful riches of this world in such a manner, as would tend to purchase for her the changeless happiness of eternal life." She sold all the jewels that remained in her possession, and all the presents that had been sent her by her relatives in Hungary; amongst them, vases of gold and silver, stuffs embroidered in gold and some ornaments set with gems of the highest value. All the money that she received for these, as well as what she derived from her domains, she distributed amongst the poor at different times, and so abundantly, that it gained for her the reputation of being wasteful and even mad, from those who stood not in need of her assistance. But she was not grieved by this, for she knew that it was good to buy her eternal salvation by sacrificing these perishable riches. When she received the five hundred marks from Duke Henry, she resolved to give it all away at one time. To give her charity an extension proportionate to the sum of which she had to dispose, she had published in every place for twenty-five leagues around Marburg, that all the poor were to assemble on a certain day in a plain near Wehrda, that village wherein she had passed the first days of her voluntary poverty.

At the appointed time there came there several thousand mendicants, blind, lame and infirm of both sexes; and in addition a vast crowd to witness this extraordinary spectacle. To maintain order in this multitude the Duchess had appointed officers, robust men, whose duty it was to keep all in their places, so that thus strict justice was established in distributing the alms equally amongst the poor, who were too frequently rude and impatient, and care was taken that none could apply twice, thus to deprive some other of his destined portion. Elizabeth ordered that any one who should transgress this rule by leaving a place, should have his or her hair cut off immediately.

A young girl named Radeconda, remarkable for the beauty of her hair, having been discovered leaving her place, was deprived of the fair ringlets, which, according to the custom of the maidens of Marburg, she wore flowing down over her shoulders. Radeconda began to weep and cry out loudly. She was brought before the

Duchess, who at first congratulated her on being, from the loss of her tresses, no longer able to share in profane rejoicings; and then with the profound instinct of holy souls, Elizabeth asked her if ever she had entertained the project of leading a better life. Radegonda replied: "A long time ago I would have consecrated myself to the Lord by assuming the religious habit, if it were not too great an effort to sacrifice the beauty of my hair." At these words Elizabeth cried out joyfully: "I am happier, then, that they have cut away thy curls, than if I heard that my son was elected Emperor of the Romans." She then took with her this young girl, who, profiting of the warning involuntarily received that day, consecrated herself to the service of God and of the poor in the hospital founded by the Duchess.

Meanwhile the announced distribution was made by steady and faithful men whom Elizabeth had appointed for the purpose. She presided over all, and went from rank to rank girded round with a cloth, as was our Lord when he ministered to his disciples. She wandered amongst the vast assemblage, glorying in and enjoying the happiness of which she was the cause — her face serene and tranquil, gladness in her heart, gentle and affectionate words upon her lips, particularly when addressing the strangers whom she saw for the first time, adding a sweet gaiety to her compassion, a celestial simplicity to her boundless generosity, finding at every step new comfort for new sorrows. This daughter of a king found herself at length in the midst of a court that well pleased her, truly Queen of that day by her mercy; there were she in the midst of her army of poor, as an enthroned sovereign, and notwithstanding the miserable costume which she had adopted, to the admiring eyes of those whose griefs she assuaged, she appeared as brilliant as the sun, and clad in garments whiter than the snow.

The five hundred marks distributed, night began to fall, and the moon rose in unclouded splendor, the poor people set out to regain their distant homes; but a great number were too feeble to be able to depart so soon, and these were preparing to pass the night in some of the buildings adjacent to the hospital. Elizabeth at her return perceived them, and always influenced by her tender compassion, she said to her

attendants, "Ah, here are some poor creatures, let us give them something." Upon which she handed to each one sixpence of Cologne, and gave to the little children amongst them as much as to the grown people.

Then she sent for a great quantity of bread and distributed it to them, after which she said, "I wish that these poor ones should enjoy an entire feast, give them some fire." According to her orders, large fires were kindled, and the attendants washed the feet of the weary travelers. These poor ones, seeing themselves so well treated, rejoiced and began to sing. Elizabeth, hearing their cheerful voices, felt her tender and innocent heart moved, and cried out joyfully, "I said indeed that we ought to make these poor people as happy as possible," and immediately she went forth to witness their gladness.

Well, oh, noble and holy soul, did you study the wonderful power of contributing to the happiness of others! So severe and pitiless to yourself, you were early initiated into the plenitude of this heart-touching mystery!

The terrestrial bliss that you completely renounced in your own life, you sought with generous perseverance to bestow upon your poor brethren!

How we rejoice in thinking that in Heaven, where you receive the eternal reward of all fervent charity, you are still animated by the pious solicitude that replenished your heart when on Earth! and how consoling it is to us to believe that the poor souls who, in their sadness and poverty, call upon you from this world of woe, are not unheeded by this inexhaustible pity, which has but acquired redoubled energy and ardor from your blessed immortality!

## CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH LEARNED FROM MASTER CONRAD,  
HOW IN ALL THINGS TO DESTROY SELF-WILL.

Mellor est obedientia quam victimæ. — 1 *Reg.* xv. 22.

Woe to them that disdain to humble themselves willingly with the little children, for the low gate of the heavenly kingdom will not suffer them to enter thither. — *Imitation of Christ*, B. III. c. 58.

**S**E may have thought that nothing now hindered our Elizabeth from arriving at the end she had so courageously proposed to herself, the exclusive love of God and of her brethren in God, and the entire contempt of this world and all that it contains. Yet in this wonderful path of Christian perfection she had still many obstacles to surmount, many victories, and these the most difficult of all to gain.

It was not sufficient for her to have conquered the love of this Earth and all its fleeting pleasures, she had still to combat against that which it is the greatest task of all to vanquish, her own will.

It became necessary that however pure this will might be, however eager for Heaven, however detached from terrestrial matters, it should do nothing of itself but that it should bend before every inspiration of the Divine Will, like an ear of corn laden with its grains, awaiting the coming of the Heavenly gleaner to gather it for eternity.

The common Father of the faithful had specially charged one person with the care of this precious soul.

Master Conrad of Marburg well knew what Elizabeth was capable of doing for God's love, and he resolved to lead her to the supreme attainment of evangelical perfection, by a way, repugnant enough, surely, to these wise times, and still more so to the sensuality and



tepidity of our languid souls, so utterly unaccustomed to all ideas of lively and practical faith, but which provoked no murmurs, nor even excited surprise, in those ages of heartfelt simplicity, of absolute abandonment, at least in intention, to all that could unite the soul to God.

We do not here purpose to defend, absolutely, all the conduct of Master Conrad towards his illustrious penitent; the natural violence of his character, to which he at length fell a victim, may have often led him beyond the bounds of Christian moderation; but we can say that, not only was such conduct authorized by numerous examples throughout all Christian ages, but that even we prefer, rather than to judge harshly of the character of such a man, to associate ourselves in the entire submission of this noble princess, who in all things sought to bend her head to the Divine Yoke, and to follow in the footsteps of Him "Who for our sakes became obedient even unto the death of the Cross."

Master Conrad, having then resolved to combat and to eradicate from the soul of Elizabeth the only source of human consolation which he could now discover there, commenced by attacking her will in the point where it was most praiseworthy and deep-rooted, namely, in the exercise of all the works of mercy.

He placed a restriction, a very cruel one to her, upon her generosity, of which we have related so many signal proofs, by forbidding her to give any poor person more than one penny. Before submitting to so unpleasing a command, Elizabeth sought to evade it in many ways without being disobedient. She first had pence struck of silver instead of copper, and these she gave as pence, though they were equal in value to a shilling of the country. The poor people, accustomed to her former munificence, soon began to complain of the parsimony of her gifts, but she said to them, "I am forbidden to give you more than a penny at one time, but that does not hinder me from giving one each time you come." The mendicants did not fail to profit of this suggestion; and after having received the first donation, they would walk around the hospital and then return for another. This conduct they carried to excess.

In place of being affected by these innocent wiles, Conrad, having discovered them, was so angry with her as to give her blows, but she endured this punishment with joy, for during a long time she had ardently desired to partake of every insult that her Divine Savior had endured before He died for her salvation.

Conrad then prohibited her from giving away money at all, but he permitted her to distribute bread. Soon, however, he discovered that she was too prodigal of this species of relief, and he forbade her to give loaves, but allowed her to share them in slices. Still later, he made her cease all alms-giving, and left her no means of exercising her ardent charity, but in tending the sick and infirm; and even here he took the precaution of forbidding her all intercourse with those most dear to her — the lepers — and when her compassion forced her to transgress this injunction, he hesitated not to strike her severely. We can imagine the grief that Elizabeth experienced in finding herself thus deprived of a liberty which during her whole life had been so precious and so necessary to her, and in thus seeing a barrier raised between her affectionate pity and the wants of the unhappy. Nevertheless she felt that her new duty had assumed the place of all the others; she understood that the entire self-denial of which she had made a vow required that she should give up everything which afforded her enjoyment or human consolation; and certainly there was much of both for her in the practice of alms-giving. She knew how to make the sacrifice, she learned to obey without a murmur, and soon she became well skilled in the supreme science which is to a Christian the achievement of victory.

No fatigue, no trouble seemed too great for her when it became necessary to conform to the wishes of him whom she had accustomed herself to regard as the representative of the Divine Will towards her. No distance seemed too long for her to travel when he sent for her, yet he used not towards her any of the inducements that we would be inclined to think that her sex, her youth, her rank required; it would appear as if he strove to make the way of salvation rough and thorny to her, that she might go before the eternal judge adorned with more merit.

A French writer says: "The holy man did all he could to conquer her will, to fix all her love upon God, and to forget her former glory. And in all things she was eager to obey and firm to endure. In patience she possessed her soul, and her victory was ennobled by obedience."

This obedience was prompt and perfect in the least things, as well as in the greatest.

One day when she had set out to visit a hermit who dwelt near Marburg, Conrad sent her word to come back immediately. She did so, saying smilingly to the messenger, "If we are wise, we will act like the snails, who in time of rain keep within their shells, let us obey and return at once." She concealed not the fear that she had of her director, not for his own sake, but as God's representative towards her. She used to say to her maidens, "If I so much fear a mortal man, how far more shall I tremble before God who is the Lord and judge of all mankind."

This fear was all spiritual, for she had given up her will into his keeping, principally because he was poor and deprived of all worldly greatness as she wished to be herself. "I have chosen," she remarked, "the life of the poorest order because it is the most despised; and had there been one still lower I would have selected it. I could have made a vow of obedience to a Bishop or to a wealthy Abbot, but I preferred Master Conrad because he was nothing, he is but a poor mendicant, and thus I have no resource in this life."

And Master Conrad pitilessly used the power with which she had invested him. He, having been at the convent of Aldenburg where her daughter Gertrude was, had an idea of making Elizabeth enter it, and he sent for her to Marburg to come and deliberate with him on the subject. She obeyed his orders. The nuns, having heard of her arrival, asked Master Conrad's permission for her to enter the cloister that they might see her. He, wishing to test her obedience, after informing her that any person of either sex who crossed the cloister incurred excommunication, said, "Let her go in if she wishes." Elizabeth, taking these words for permission, entered the prohibited ground. Conrad made her come out immediately and, showing her the book

wherein her vow of obedience to him in all things was inscribed, he ordered a monk who accompanied him to inflict on her and on her maid Irmengarde, as a penance, a certain number of blows with a long stick which he found there. During the execution of this sentence Conrad chanted the *Miserere*, and the Duchess submitted with supernatural patience to this severe punishment for so trifling a fault.

Speaking of the matter in a little while afterwards to Irmengarde, she said: "We must patiently endure these chastisements, for we are like reeds growing by the water-side — when the river overflows the reed bends and the inundation passes over without breaking it, and when the waters decline it rises in its strength and enjoys a new life. If we, too, sometimes bend towards the earth in all humility, we can arise with new-found joy and confidence."

On another occasion, Conrad preached on the Passion, that Elizabeth might gain the indulgence granted by the Pope to all who would assist at his sermons, as Commissary Apostolic. But, absorbed in the care of some newly-admitted patients in her hospital, she neglected going to hear him. The sermon over, he sent for her, and inquired what she had been doing, that caused her absence; and, without giving her time to reply, he struck her rudely, saying, "Take that, to remind you to come the next time I send for you." The humble and patient princess smiled, and was about to excuse herself when he struck her so severely as to cause blood to flow. She raised her eyes to Heaven, and kept them fixed thereon for some time; then she said, "Lord, I thank thee for having chosen me for this." Her women came to console her, and, seeing her garments blood-stained, they asked her how she had been able to endure so many blows. She replied, "For having endured them patiently, God permitted me to see Christ in the midst of his angels; for the Master's blows elevated me to the third heaven." This saying was reported to Conrad, and he cried out, "Then I will for ever regret that I did not transport her to the ninth heaven."

We repeat, that it is not with the thoughts of this nineteenth century we must judge of such scenes. The customs of the ascetic life, of Christian trials, are not the same in every age of the Church; but at no time do they merit the disdain or contempt of the faithful, for they

have ever offered to all souls immortal victories of charity, humility, and self-denial to gain, and the power of achieving a pure and holy glory.

Whilst the Supreme Judge weighed in His eternally just balance this severity of His minister and this invincible patience of His humble spouse, profane men found in these relations food for their malignity, and prepared for Elizabeth a new sacrifice, to join to all those previously offered to her Divine Master.

After they had cried her down as wasteful and foolish, and proclaimed everywhere that she had lost her senses, they strove to asperse her fair fame by infamous suspicions and obscure hints on the nature of her connection with Master Conrad. They said that this monk had seduced the widow of Duke Louis, and carried her away to Marburg, there to enjoy her property and riches. The youth of the Duchess, who was then but about the age of twenty-two years, gave a shadow of a pretext for these calumnies. They appeared sufficiently serious to the Lord Rodolph de Varila, to induce him to go and visit her. This true and prudent knight went then to Marburg, and, approaching the Duchess with great respect, said to her, "Will you permit me; madam, to speak to you freely without any reserve?" Elizabeth replied humbly that she was most willing to listen. "I beg, then," said he, "of my dear lady to watch over her renown, for her familiarity with Master Conrad has given rise to false notions and unjust suspicions in the minds of the vulgar and ignoble herd." Elizabeth raised her eyes to Heaven, and with an unruffled countenance she replied — "Blessed in all things be our most dear and merciful Lord Jesus Christ, my only Friend, who deigns to receive from me this little offering. For his love I devoted myself to his service; I forgot my noble birth; I despised my riches and possessions; I permitted my youth and beauty to fade away; I renounced my father, my country, my children, and, with them, all the consolations of life; I became poorest of the poor. One only treasure did I retain, — my womanly honor and reputation: but now, from what I learn, it seems that He requires *that* also; as He accepts, as a special sacrifice, my fair fame, I must strive to endure for His sake this ignominy. I consent to

be looked upon as a dishonored woman; but oh, my dear Lord, remember my poor children; they are innocent; deign to preserve them from any shame that might come upon them on my account.”

Wishing to assure her old friend, and to testify her gratitude for his devotion, she added, “For your part, my dear lord, have no suspicion of me; see my wounded shoulders” — and she bared them, to show the marks of the last blows she had received — “behold,” said she, “the love this holy priest entertains for me! or, rather, see how he animates me to the love of God!” “Admirable union,” says her historian, “of humility, patience, and pious prudence, which, while rendering glory to God, while enduring unmerited ignominy, knew also how to banish thoughts of evil from the mind of her neighbor!”

And it was not alone by those external and corporal punishments that Conrad exercised the unlimited power wherewith she had intrusted him; he strove still more to conquer her heart, by tearing from it every fiber of affection and effacing every human predilection, in order that it should be filled alone with the thought and love of God. Of all the enjoyments of her past life, Elizabeth had retained but one, and that was, the custom of living with the friends of her youth, who had shared in the grandeur of her life as a sovereign, who had eaten with her the bread of misery on her expulsion from Wartburg, and who at length, inseparable and faithful companions as they were, had associated themselves in all the voluntary privations of her religious life — in all her works of mercy — in all her penance and her piety.

It may have been that, unknown to her, the ties of tender sympathy which united Elizabeth to her faithful friends had softened many a pang — had lessened the galling of the yoke of so many mortifications and trials; and this young heart, which we have seen glowing with unspeakable charity for all mankind, necessarily appreciated this sweet and pious consolation. No intimacy could be more perfect or more beautiful, than that which existed between the princess and her attendants, and this may be traced in every line of their narrative of her life. Conrad resolved to rend asunder this chain of true friendship.

One by one, he sent away the retainers of her former establishment, and the departure of each caused her inexpressible grief. Then he came to her two friends. It was first the fate of Ysentrude, whom Elizabeth loved most dearly, and from whom she never concealed a thought, either before or since her retreat from the world. This faithful friend says, "She was obliged to see me driven from her — even me, Ysentrude, whom she loved beyond all others; and when parting from me, her heart was almost riven with anguish, and the tears were streaming from her eyes." And afterwards, Guta, who had never left her since she was five years old, and to whom she was most tenderly attached, was sent away, notwithstanding the bitter sobbing and weeping of the suffering Elizabeth.

"It seemed to her," says a pious historian (Père Kochem), whose simple language we love to quote on this subject, "as if her heart was broken; and this faithful servant of God preserved this grief until her death. Any true soul can comprehend this easily, for there is not in this world a greater sorrow than when two faithful hearts are separated. O, dear St. Elizabeth! I recall this parting to thy memory, and, by the bitter anguish thou didst suffer then with thy best-beloved friends, obtain for me the grace to understand what evil it was in me to separate myself, by sin, so often from my God!"

The victim, then, before the God to whom she had immolated herself, was not permitted even the consolation of entire solitude. Conrad replaced these cherished companions of her loneliness by two women of a very different stamp. One, named Elizabeth, was chosen from amongst the common people, tolerably pious, but excessively vulgar and rude — and, withal, so ugly, that even to mention her was sufficient to frighten children. The other was a widow, old, and deaf, of a bitter-speaking and revengeful character, always discontented and wrathful.

Elizabeth resigned herself to this annoying change in her household with perfect docility. She strove to advance in humility by her intercourse with the rude peasant, and to learn patience by submitting to the invectives of the ever-angry old woman. These two servants gave her every day many trials, and treated her very badly.

Far from opposing her when, through a spirit of penance, she was anxious to share in their labors and domestic cares, they, on the contrary, permitted her to do the most fatiguing work, to sweep the house, &c.; and, when watching by the kitchen fire, the princess would be sometimes so absorbed in religious contemplation, as to suffer the meager food upon it to burn, then her servants would reproach her bitterly, and taunt her that she did not even know how to make a soup. "Yet during her life the royal lady had never learned to cook," says the good friar whom we have before quoted.

These women also pitilessly denounced her to Master Conrad, whenever she obeyed the compassionate impulse of her heart, and gave alms, forgetting the command she found it so difficult to submit to, and elicited for her from her director severe reproof. But nothing could render her unfaithful for an instant, nor even excite an involuntary movement of impatience to the entire submission she had vowed to him who seemed to her to be specially charged to conduct her promptly and surely to the eternal country. So scrupulous was her docility, that when her former dearly beloved friends, Ysentrude and Guta, came to visit her, she scarcely dared to salute them, or to offer them any refreshment, until she had received permission from Master Conrad.

Yet still another trial was in store for this soul, so loving yet withal so determined to crush its own tender feelings, and this was to be a new source of triumph. We have seen how she was separated from her children, whom she cherished with a devotion so intense, that her love of God alone could surpass it; yet this separation had neither been complete nor absolute — the maternal heart could not be stilled, and if she had not always one or other of her children with her, which the expression of some of her biographers would lead us to think, she at least had these dear ones frequently brought to visit her, to console her by their presence, to permit her to express in some little manner her unspeakable love, by looking on them, caressing them, and imprinting kisses a thousand-fold on their young brows. But soon she discovered that in her heart there was not room for two loves, — that no creature should partake of what she had devoted to God. She found that the



presence and fondling of her children hindered her from applying herself with her usual assiduity to prayer. She feared to love any creature more than God, and — whether at the instigation of Master Conrad, or from her own determination, we know not — she sent away for ever from her these last and most fervently cherished of all the sources of her earthly happiness.

So many supernatural victories of the Divine Grace which Elizabeth regarded as her only and absolute Sovereign, could not remain long unknown; and it was not even in Heaven alone that they were to receive the entire of their ineffable reward. Men at last prepared themselves to do homage to this heroine of faith and charity, and to reward the children whom she had, as it were, abandoned for God's love by paying to them all the veneration with which an age of faith could invest the offspring of a saint.

Scarcely had a few years flown by, when, at the great assembly held by King Louis IX of France, was seen a young German prince, about eighteen years old. He served with the Count de Saint Pol and the Count de Boulogne at the table of the Queen — even of the Queen of France, who during the Middle Ages was to all true knights the supreme type of feminine beauty and excellence. Blanche of Castile then filled this proud position. The attendants whispered one another that this youth was the son of St. Elizabeth of Thuringia, and that Queen Blanche often embraced him with devotion, seeking on his fair forehead the traces of the fond kisses his noble mother had impressed there. It was thus that the mother of a saint did homage to the son of a saint; it was in these touching and pious kisses that were associated in history and in the memory of men, as they were incessantly united before God, the tender, fervent, and pure souls of Saint Louis of France and St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOW THE LORD EXERCISED HIS POWER AND HIS MERCY AT THE INTERCESSION OF THE DEAR SAINT ELIZABETH, AND OF THE MARVELLOUS EFFICACY OF HER PRAYERS.

*Fecit mihi magna qui potens est. — St. Luke i. 49.*

*Voluntatem timentium se faciet, et deprecationem eorum exaudit. — Ps. cxliv. 20.*

**T**HE time was approaching when Elizabeth should be summoned to receive from her Heavenly Father the eternal recompense of the trials of her short life; but before calling her to share in His glory, it pleased the Almighty to surround the remainder of her days with a halo of majesty, to invest her in the eyes, even of those who had persecuted and calumniated her, with a power emanating from His own, and to commit to this weak woman, who had so nobly vanquished the failings of our fallen nature, the supernatural strength to conquer in, and to exterminate from, her brethren all the miseries which are the result of sin.

It will be no longer by her deep compassion, by her affectionate sympathy, by her boundless generosity, by her unwearied devotion alone, that we shall see her occupied in solacing the woes of the unhappy, and in bearing with them their burthens; the Divine Charity, to which nothing is impossible and which was identified with her life, thenceforward received an impulse so great, that one word, or one prayer from her lips sufficed to dissipate and drive away for ever the sufferings which before she could but strive to heal.

Thenceforth when devotion or charity summoned her from her miserable dwelling, it was to exercise, not only the promptings of her own kindness, but also the miraculous power which the Lord is often pleased to confer on His chosen souls; and the new blessings which

she obtained for her poor ones, preserved by their memories even in the least details, with the most affecting particularity, afford to us the latest and most brilliant testimony of her sanctity.

No day passed that she did not go twice to visit her hospital patients, and bring to them all that was necessary for their maintenance and comfort. One morning when she arrived at this hospital, she saw on the threshold of its door, a lame and deformed boy lying motionless. He was a poor, deaf and dumb child, whose limbs were all distorted by a painful malady, so that he could only drag himself along on his hands and feet like an unclean animal. His mother, who was ashamed of his appearance, had brought him to that place and left him there in the hope that the good Duchess would have compassion on him.

Indeed, when Elizabeth came up she looked upon him with anxious pity, and bending gently over him she said: "Tell me, dear child, where are thy parents? who brought thee hither?" But as the boy did not seem to hear her, she repeated the question in a clear, sweet-toned voice, and caressing him added, "From what dost thou suffer? wilt thou not speak?" The child looked at her without answering; Elizabeth, not knowing that he was dumb, imagined that he was possessed by some demon, and feeling her pity for him increase, she said in a loud voice, "In the name of our Lord, I command thee, and him that is in thee, to reply, and to tell me whence thou camest."

At that moment the child stood erect before her — speech was given to him and he said, "It was my mother who brought me." He then related to her how he had never heard nor spoken before, that from his birth he had been as she found him, feeble and deformed in all his body. "But now," said he, extending his limbs one after the other, "behold, God has given me motion, and speech, and hearing, and I say words that I never learned from any one." Then he wept and thanked God. "I knew not God," he continued, "for all my senses were dead. I knew not what man was, but now I feel that I am no longer like a beast. I can speak of God. Blessed be the words of your mouth, that obtained for me the grace of not dying in the state wherein I have hitherto lived." At these expressions of the feelings of a soul

newly awakened by Omnipotent power to a knowledge of God and of itself, Elizabeth knew what it had pleased the Almighty to permit her to work, but alarmed and troubled by this wonderful ministry, she fell upon her knees and mingled her tears with those of the child she had saved. After having blessed God for the favor, she said to him, "Return now to thy parents, and tell not what has happened to thee; above all things, speak not of me to any one. Say that God's mercy assisted thee. Guard thyself by night and by day from mortal sin, otherwise thou mayest relapse into thy former state. Remember what thou hast suffered ere this, and pray for me as I will ever pray for thee." Then she went away to escape the praise of this miracle, but the mother of the boy came up at the moment and, seeing her child standing and speaking, she was amazed and cried out, "Who has given thee speech?" The boy replied, "A beautiful lady in a gray robe commanded me to speak to her in the name of Jesus Christ, and words were granted to me to reply." Whereupon the mother ran in the direction that Elizabeth had taken and, seeing her passing on quickly, she recognized her, and everywhere published this miracle.

Thus, notwithstanding the modesty of Elizabeth, the report of the power wherewith God had endowed her was propagated to a great distance, and crowds of the unfortunate and suffering came to invoke her assistance. Her compassion ever prevented her from refusing to accede to their requests, but never did the magnitude of the wonders which the Almighty permitted her to work induce her for a moment to go astray from the profound and fervent humility which rendered her so agreeable to Him. One day a sick man asked her to heal him in the name of the beloved Apostle St. John, for whom she felt a special devotion; after she prayed for him he felt cured, and he threw himself before her to thank her; but she, kneeling down, blessed God, for that He had deigned to grant her request through the intercession of His dear Apostle St. John, though, says the writer from whom we take this narrative, "God listened to her prayers as well as He did to those of St. John."

Another day, a poor creature whose hands and feet were paralyzed, cried out, "Oh woman, bright as the sun amongst thy sex, I come from

Reynhartsbrunn where thy husband reposes — by thy love for his soul, come and heal me.” On hearing the name of her husband, she remembered their holy and happy life; she stopped and looked with infinite tenderness upon him who invoked her thus, and by that gentle glance alone the paralytic was cured, and for this she fervently thanked the Lord. Sometime after, as she was walking to the Convent of Aldenburg, a poor man called after her, saying, “Behold, for twelve years I have been the prey of a wicked spirit — let me but touch the hem of thy garment, and he must leave me.” She returned immediately, and kneeling by the wayside she embraced and blessed him in the name of Jesus Christ, and at that moment the possessed one was delivered from his tormentor.

On another occasion, having gone to the church which she had erected near her hospital, about noon — which was the hour she preferred, as the people were generally at dinner, and she could then indulge her devotion uninterruptedly — she saw a blind man walking alone around the church; his eyelids were open, but the eyeballs were withered and the sight had departed from them. She went and asked him why he was thus wandering alone about the church. He replied, “I would wish to go to the dear lady who comforts the poor, in the hope that she would give me some assistance for God’s sake; but first I came to say a prayer in this church, and I am now going round it to feel how long and how wide it is, as my eyes cannot see it.” “And wouldst thou like to behold the church?” asked the compassionate Elizabeth. “If it was God’s will,” replied the blind man, “I would indeed be glad to look upon it, but as I was born blind, I have never seen the sunlight, so I have been God’s prisoner.” Then he began to tell her of all his misery. “I would have been glad to labour like other men,” said he, “but I am useless to myself and to everyone else; the hours, so short to others, appear to me to be long and weary; when I am amongst men I can hardly avoid the sin of envy; when I am alone I deplore my misfortune, for I cannot pray always, and even when praying I think upon it incessantly.” “It is all for thy good that God has sent thee this misfortune,” said Elizabeth, “if thou hadst sight, thou mightest have fallen into excesses and committed many more

sins than thou hast done.” “No, no,” replied the blind man, “I would have worked hard and been free from the sad thoughts that possess me today.” Elizabeth, quite moved with compassion, then said to him, “Pray that God may give thee light and I will pray with thee.” Then was the man aware that it was the holy Duchess Elizabeth who spoke to him and, prostrating himself before her, he cried out, “Oh, noble and merciful lady, have pity on me!” But she enjoined him again to pray to God with entire confidence, and kneeling at some distance she also prayed fervently. Immediately sight was given to the poor man, and eyes of heavenly beauty were formed in the hitherto vacant orbits. He arose, looked about him, and went towards Elizabeth. “Madam,” said he to her, “may God be for ever blessed; I see well and clearly — your words are verified.”

But the pious princess, who always united the prudent care of a Christian mother to her charity, said to him, “Now that sight is given to thee, remember that thou art to serve God and to avoid sin — labor, and be an honest man, humble and loyal in all things.”

The prayers of this servant of the Lord, so powerful in assuaging the sufferings of the body, were not the less efficacious in promoting the salvation of souls.

Madam Gertrude de Leinbach, the wife of a noble knight in the neighborhood, came one day to visit the Duchess, and brought with her her son, named Berthold, a youth of about twelve or fourteen years old, who was magnificently clad, and who appeared to take great pride and pleasure in the elegance of his attire. Elizabeth, after conversing a long time with his mother, turned and said to him, “My dear child, thou art, in my mind, too richly clad; thou art too anxious to serve the world, and from this thou wilt not derive any benefit, either to thy soul or body. Why wilt thou not think rather of serving thy Creator? Tell me, dear one, dost thou think that thy Savior and mine wore such clothes when He came in all humility to shed His blood for us?”

The boy replied — “Oh! dear lady, I beg of thee to ask the Lord to give me grace to serve Him.” “Dost thou wish truly, that I should pray for thee?” asked the Duchess “Yes, I do, indeed,” said Berthold.

“Then dispose thyself to receive the grace thou seekest,” said Elizabeth — “I will cheerfully pray for thee; let us go together to the Church, and both unite in supplication.” He followed her, and, when arrived, he prostrated himself before the Altar, as did also his mother, at some distance from the place in which Elizabeth knelt. After their prayers had lasted a certain time, the youth cried out — “Oh, dear lady, cease, I pray thee!” Still Elizabeth heeded not, but continued most fervently. Again Berthold cried out more loudly, “Cease, madam, I can endure it no longer; my body is all inflamed.” And indeed he seemed all burning — a vapor exhaled from his body; his mother and two of the attendants ran towards him, and found his garments saturated with perspiration, and his skin so hot that they could scarcely touch him. Elizabeth was still praying, until the boy cried out in desperation, “In the name of the Lord, I conjure thee to pray no more; for I am consumed by an interior fire, and my heart is ready to break.” Then she discontinued, and Berthold gradually regained his former state — with this difference, however, that his heart never lost the flame of Divine Love which the prayers of Elizabeth had caused to be enkindled in it, and, soon after, he entered the Order of Saint Francis.

Such examples soon brought to Elizabeth a crowd of suffering souls, seeking her powerful intercession. She acceded with pious humility to their requests, and many of them, enlightened and tranquilized by her prayers, like the young Berthold, embraced the religious life. This sweet and benevolent influence extended even beyond this world. This efficacious assistance was sought by some departed souls, who had not yet expiated all their faults.

One night, she saw, in a dream, her mother, Queen Gertrude, who had been cruelly assassinated many years before; she appeared to kneel, and to say, “My dear child, beloved of God, wilt thou pray for me, for I have still to expiate some of the transgressions I committed during life. Be mindful of the pains I endured when I brought thee into the world, and have pity on my present sufferings. Beg of God to shorten the time of my punishment, and to look rather upon the ignominious death which I suffered, though innocent, than upon my

sins. This thou canst do if thou wilt, for thou art full of grace in His eyes." Elizabeth awoke weeping. She arose from her bed, and knelt down. After praying for some time for the repose of her mother's soul, she again lay down and slept. Her mother appeared a second time, and said to her, "Blessed be the day and the hour that I brought thee forth! Thy prayer has delivered me; tomorrow I shall enter into eternal glory. But ever pray for all thou lovest, for God will comfort those who invoke thee in their afflictions." Elizabeth awoke again, and shed tears of heart-felt joy. Again she slumbered, through fatigue, and did not hear the bell toll for Matins at the Church of the Friar Minors, whither she was accustomed to go. She did not awake until the hour of Prime, when she arose, went to confess her slothfulness, and requested her director to inflict on her a penance for this fault.

This voice, so efficacious in obtaining the mercy of Heaven, was often equally so in seeking for justice on Earth.

In one of her walks, Elizabeth, who was so justly termed the nursing-mother of the poor, discovered a woman in the pains of childbirth. She had her immediately conveyed to the hospital, and attended with all possible care. She wished to stand sponsor for the infant, on which she bestowed her own sweet name, Elizabeth. Every day she went to visit the mother, gave her her blessing, and brought whatever would be necessary for her comfort. After having kept her for a month, until she was entirely recovered, the Duchess gave her a cloak, and the shoes off her own feet, together with provisions and twelve pieces of money; she also wrapped the infant in a furred mantle, which she took off one of her attendants. But the unnatural mother, far from being affected by such generosity, only speculated on its prolongation. After having taken leave of the Duchess in the evening, she stifled all the instincts of maternal love, and went away at a very early hour, thus abandoning her child. Meanwhile, Elizabeth, whose thoughts were with the poor by day and by night, said to one of her maidens, just as they were entering the church for matins, "I have some money in my purse; go thou with it to that poor woman; it may be of some use to her and her babe." But the girl returned, announcing that the woman was gone, and had left her infant. "Run and bring the



little one to me," said the good Elizabeth, "that it may not be neglected." Full though her heart was of mercy, yet well did she know what were the rights of justice; so she sent for the judge of the city, and ordered him to send out soldiers to the different roads leading from the town, to seek out the guilty mother. They returned without success; then Elizabeth went to pray, and one of her maidens, who dreaded the wrath of Conrad when he should have heard the story, told her mistress to pray that the ungrateful woman should be discovered. Elizabeth replied thus to this suggestion: — "I know not how to ask any thing of God, but that His will be done in all things." In a little time they perceived the husband and wife, who came and threw themselves at the feet of the Duchess, supplicating for pardon of their fault; at the same time, they declared that they had found their flight impeded by an invisible force, which absolutely prevented their going forward, but which impelled them to return to the city. No one doubted but that this was the effect of the prayers of the Duchess. The attendants took from the ungrateful woman all that had been previously given to her, and distributed it amongst poor people who were more deserving. But Elizabeth, in whose heart compassion quickly regained the empire, gave her another pair of shoes and a cloak to cover her.

Notwithstanding so many proofs of her power with God, her extreme humility sometimes assumed the appearance of a kind of diffidence in God's mercy.

She occasionally experienced moments of discouragement and interior darkness, such as are sometimes felt by souls the most advanced in the ways leading to Heaven, when they bend under the burthen of this mortal life; and then her heart, always inflamed with love, would doubt if she could find in God a love proportionate to that she had centered upon Him

Her former confessor, Father Roderer of Wurtzburg, came to visit her, and, accompanied by three of her maidens, she went to walk with him on the banks of the Lahn; in her conversation with this old friend, of whom she was undoubtedly less afraid than of Conrad, she said to him — "Reverend Father, there is one thing that torments me more

than any other; and that is, that I fear my Creator has but little affection for me. Not but that He is infinitely good and always prodigal of His love, but on account of my many faults, that keep me far away, whilst my heart is inflamed with love for Him." "There is nothing to fear in that," said the good Friar — "for the Divine mercy is so great, that it is impossible to think but that God loves infinitely more those who love Him, than He is beloved by them." "How, then, is it," said Elizabeth, "that He permits sadness or languor of soul to remove me from Him, to whom I would wish everywhere and always to be united?" The religious remarked that these were the marks of an elect soul, and not of an abandoned one, and the sure means of acquiring an increase of Divine love; then he pointed her attention to a tree growing on the opposite bank of the river, and said that God would more surely permit that tree to come by itself across the river, than that she should for a moment think that His love did not infinitely surpass that of any of His creatures for him.

No sooner had he spoken these words, than the wonder-stricken group saw the tree crossing the river and implanting itself on the shore where they were walking. At this miraculous testimony of Divine love, Elizabeth recognized the power and eternal truth of Him who said to His disciples, "If you had faith like to a grain of mustard-seed, you might say to this mulberry tree, Be thou rooted up, and be thou transplanted into the sea: and it would obey you." — Saint Luke, xvii. 6. And she knelt at the feet of Father Rodinger, to confess the sin of distrust in God's mercy, and to obtain his pardon.

To give to her prayers the wonderful power which we have seen in their effects, Elizabeth had no other means than the perpetual exercise of this great faculty; and notwithstanding the number and fatiguing nature of the works of mercy in which she was continually engaged, and which, one would think, were sufficient to occupy all her time, yet she devoted many hours daily to prayer and meditation. With a rare happiness, she united in her person the active and contemplative lives.

After having, like Martha, provided with the greatest care for the wants of Jesus Christ, in the persons of His poor, she used to go, like

Mary, to the feet of her Savior, and there forget this world in the recollection of His graces and mercies. "Before God, I declare that I have rarely seen a more contemplative woman," wrote her severe confessor to the Pope. She often remained for hours at prayer, with her heart, her eyes, her hands, lifted to Heaven. It was also her custom to spend many hours of the night in the church, notwithstanding the prohibitions of Conrad, who did not wish that she should deprive herself of necessary repose. As she sometimes did not feel sufficiently alone or unobserved in the churches of Marburg, she loved to pray in the fields, under Heaven's canopy, surrounded by that nature which in all its beauties reminded her of the greatness and clemency of the Creator. Tradition informs us, that, when praying thus in the open air, when it rained, she alone was not wet. Her favorite refuge was near a clear fountain, in a wood, at the foot of a rugged hill, at a little distance from Schroeck, two leagues from Marburg. The road to it was steep and dangerous; she had a paved pathway made there, and erected near the spring a little chapel. Soon this solitary spot received the name of *Elizabeth's Fountain*, which it preserves to this day. The worst weather could not hinder her from visiting this beloved retreat. She always prayed whilst walking; but coming hither from Marburg, she used to recite but one *Pater*, so mingled was her prayer with reflection and contemplation. Elizabeth always assisted with exemplary devotion and exactitude at all the Divine Offices. She entertained for the Saints of God an affectionate reverence; she listened to the histories of their lives with the deepest interest; she scrupulously observed their festivals, and regarded their precious relics with great veneration, and continually lighted tapers and burned incense before their shrines. After her special friend, St. John the Evangelist, it was for St. Mary Magdalene that she professed the greatest devotion. The Holy Virgin was naturally the object of her fervent love; she always carried about her four images of this Queen of Heaven, which she preserved until her death, and which she then bequeathed to her eldest daughter, Sophia. Yet she was far from attaching undue importance to these exterior signs of devotion, and she knew perfectly how to distinguish between their mere material

value and the pure one which faith assigns them. Thus, she was one day visiting a monastery, and about twenty-four of the monks assembled to show her, with a certain degree of complaisance, some richly-gilt carvings that adorned their church. She said to them — “Indeed, it would have been better to keep the money that these cost you for your food and clothing, for the subjects here represented should be engraven on your hearts.” She was not less severe to herself, for as a person was speaking to her of the beauty of a picture, and striving to induce her to purchase it, she said, “I do not want that picture, for I feel the subject of it in my soul.”

The same feeling predominated in the mind of one of her most illustrious contemporaries, though of a very different stamp of character from herself, — Simon, Count de Montfort, of whom St. Louis related with admiration the following anecdote to Joinville: that when a person came to tell him, “that he had just seen the body of our Savior, that the host had become flesh and blood in the hands of a priest, and at which those present were much astonished,” the Count said to him — “Go to, you who doubt; as for me, I believe it implicitly, and I hope for thus believing to receive a brighter crown in Paradise, than that the angels wear, because they, seeing God’s wonders face to face, must believe them.”

God’s image was surely too deeply engraven in Elizabeth’s heart, too frequently present to her love, for her to require the assistance which the Church offers with generous compassion to common souls. Ravished in incessant contemplation, even into the very presence of the Divinity and His most august mysteries, she needed not the imperfect figures that the human imagination could form of them. According as she approached the end of her career, her prayers became more frequently transformed into ecstasies; and these wonderful interruptions of her ordinary life increased, as if to prepare her gently for the passage to eternity. In a little time, no day passed that she quitted not this world of grief and weariness, to enjoy a foretaste of the bliss of Heaven. The number of revelations, of visions, and of supernatural communications, was very great; and though she endeavored to conceal these wonderful saviors, they could not pass

unnoticed by those who lived with her; her joy and gratitude often betrayed her, and the occurrence of these visions was looked upon by her contemporaries as incontestable facts. The angels were the usual messengers from Heaven to this predestined soul; not only did they convey to her warnings and celestial instructions, but they also came to console her in the trials and accidents of this passing life.

To relate one instance, from amongst many others, Ellzabeth brought to her house a poor woman who was sick; on her the tenderest care was lavished; she recovered and took to flight one morning at a very early hour, carrying away with her all the clothes belonging to her benefactress — who now, not having wherewith to cover herself, was obliged to remain in bed; but far from becoming impatient or discontented, she said, “My dear Lord, I thank you for having thus permitted me to resemble you. Naked you came into the world, and naked did you die, nailed to the cross” — and immediately, as when she had formerly given all her raiment to the poor, she saw an angel coming with a fair garment, which he gave to her, saying, “I do not now bring thee a crown as I did in other times, for God himself will soon bestow on thee the crown of glory.”

But often, also, the Divine Spouse of her soul, the Master of her life, Jesus Himself appeared to her, accompanied by a multitude of saints. He consoled her by His gentle words, and fortified her by His presence. After these celestial visions, her face, according to the grave Conrad, beamed with a marvelous brightness — a reflection of the Divine splendor which had shone upon her, and from her beautiful eyes proceeded rays like those of the sun. Those only who were free from the stain of mortal sin could look at her without being dazzled. If she continued long in the state of ecstasy, she acquired such strength that she had not any need of even the most trifling nourishment for a long space of time. This spiritual food sufficed for the sustenance of her body. For the remainder of the day, she lived only in Him, in Whose love she was all absorbed; the only words she could use to express her feelings on these occasions were the following, from the Sacred Text, “My soul fainted away when my beloved spoke unto me.”

Thus was realized the prophetic instinct which had impelled her in her childhood to choose for patron, friend and model the blessed Evangelist who had received the *Privilege of Love*, and who, when reposing on the bosom of his Savior, had read there all the secrets of Heaven. A divine radiance was then shed over her life, which illumined her whole being. No trial, no tribulation, could disturb her gentle sweetness; never was she troubled or irritated; on the contrary, she appeared even gayer in her sorrows.

Those who were most intimate with her never saw upon her countenance an expression of discontent; yet she wept incessantly, and the holy gift of tears, which she had received in her early days, became more plenteous according as she approached the tomb. The happier was she, the more she wept; but her tears flowed as from a tranquil and hidden source, without leaving a trace on her features; and far from in the least degree disturbing the pure beauty and placidity of her countenance, they added to it a new charm; they were the expressions of a heart for whose feelings words were all too weak.

And surely, as we before read of the tears that human love and cruel persecution had forced from her, these tears of supernatural joy, that now flowed into the chalice of her life, were received, drop by drop, by her celestial Spouse, and became the pearls of that crown which was placed on her fair brow, at her entrance to the eternal glory of Heaven!

## CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH, WHEN AGED TWENTY-FOUR YEARS,  
WAS SUMMONED TO THE ETERNAL WEDDING FEAST.

Iam hiems transiit, imber abiit et recessit: surgea mica mea,  
speciosa mea, et veni . . . Veni sponsa mea, et coronaberis.  
— *Cant.* ii 11, 14.

**T**WO years had scarcely passed away, since the humble Elizabeth had been clothed in the Habit of the Order of St. Francis, and with it had received strength to despise all the joys of this world, and to seek Heaven by a path strewn with thorns; and already the Lord had deemed the trial sufficiently long — the laborious task she had imposed on herself sufficiently well fulfilled. “He ordained that she who had given up the kingdom of this world should be received into the realm of the angels.” Like the spouse in the inspired canticles, He came to announce to His beloved one that the dark winter of her life, with all its storms, had passed away, and that the dawning of an eternal spring was about to open for her. The year 1231 was nigh expired, — the year wherein the Order of St. Francis had resigned to Heaven the great St. Anthony of Padua, the glory of Italy and Portugal; and the Almighty, willing to increase the number of the Saints, demanded from the same order a new sacrifice, and proceeded to cull its fairest flower.

One night when Elizabeth was praying, though in a state between sleeping and waking, Christ appeared to her, surrounded by a beauteous light, and said in a sweet voice, — “Come, Elizabeth, my spouse, my beloved one, come to the tabernacle I have prepared for thee from eternity; come, I myself will conduct thee thither.” On awaking, she was overjoyed, and began to make all the preparations for this happy passage. She arranged all matters for her burial. She

went for the last time to visit her patients, and gave to them and to her followers all that it was in her power to bestow. Master Conrad was at this time stricken with a grievous malady, which caused him acute pain. He sent for his gentle penitent, and she went immediately, faithful to the last to her mission, as the consolatrix and friend of the poor and sick. He received her with affection, and she grieved to see him suffering so much. Then said he to her: "What will become of you, my lady and dear child, when I am dead? How will you regulate your life? Who will be your protector against the wicked, and who will lead you to God?" She replied immediately, "Your question is a vain one, for I will die before you; believe me, I shall not have need of another protector."

On the fourth day after this conversation she was attacked by the illness which was to terminate the long death of her terrestrial existence, and to conduct her to the only true and eternal life.

She was obliged to remain in bed, where for twelve or fourteen days, she lay the victim of a scorching fever, still always joyous and gay, and continually occupied in prayer. Towards the end of this time, one day, as she seemed to slumber, with her face turned towards the wall, one of her women, named like herself Elizabeth, heard a sweet and exquisite melody, proceeding, as it were, from the throat of the Duchess. In a moment after she changed her position, and turning towards her attendant, she said: "Where art thou, my beloved?" "Behold me," said the servant, adding, "O dear lady, how charmingly you have sung!" "What," said Elizabeth, "hast thou too heard something?" and on receiving her response in the affirmative, the invalid resumed, "I will tell thee how a little bird stood between me and the wall, and he sung to me for a long time so sweetly that my heart and soul were gladdened, and I was impelled to sing also. He revealed to me that I should die in three days."

"Doubtless," says an ancient narrator, "it was her guardian angel, who came under the form of a little bird to announce the approach of eternal joy."

From this moment, having so little time to prepare for the last great conflict, she did not wish to see any secular persons, not even the



noble ladies who were accustomed to visit her. She bade all who inquired after her farewell, and blessed them for the last time. She received only, besides her domestics, some religious women who were especially attached to her, her confessor, and the poor child who succeeded in her care the leper whom Conrad had sent away. When they asked her why she excluded everyone, she said, "I wish to remain alone with God, and to meditate on the dreadful day of the last judgment, and on my Almighty Judge." Then she began to weep and to invoke the mercy of God.

On Sunday, the vigil of the octave of St. Martin's day, after Matins, she confessed to Conrad who was sufficiently recovered to attend her. "She took her heart into her hands, and read therein all that it contained," says a contemporary manuscript, "but nought was there for accusation, nothing that had not been a thousand times washed away by the most sincere contrition." Her confession concluded, Conrad asked what was her last will with regard to her wealth and possessions. "I am astonished," said she, "that you should put such a question to me; for you know that when I made a vow of obedience to you, I renounced all my property, as well as my will, my beloved children, and all earthly pleasures. I retained no more than was sufficient to pay debts and to give alms. If you had granted permission, I would have been glad to give up all, and to live in a cell, subsisting on the daily pittance that other poor ones would have bestowed upon me. For a long time, all of which I was apparently mistress, belonged in reality to the poor. Distribute amongst them whatever I leave, except this old robe I now wear, and in which I wish to be buried. I make no will, I have no heir but Jesus Christ." But as one of her companions requested her to leave her some memorial, she gave her the old mantle of her holy Father St. Francis which the Pope had sent her "I leave thee my mantle," said she, "heed not that it is patched, torn and miserable — for it was the most precious treasure I ever possessed. I declare to thee, that whenever I asked any special favor from my beloved Jesus, and that I prayed covered with this cloak, He granted my wishes, always with infinite mercy."

She then requested that she should be buried in the Church of the hospital she had founded and dedicated in honor of St. Francis. She had no further care for the burial of her body, so absorbed was she in the anticipation of her soul's entrance into Heaven. After she had conversed a long time with Master Conrad, and when Mass was said, towards the hour of Prime they administered to her the last sacraments, which she expected with a pious eagerness. Who could know and judge with what tenderness, what purity of heart, what ardent desire, what celestial joy she received this sweet repast! Certainly He alone who became her guide and viaticum in this last journey. But what was manifested in her exterior served to show the attendants the presence of the divine grace by which she was replenished.

After having communicated and received extreme unction, she remained motionless and silent during the entire day, absorbed in contemplation, enraptured with that Banquet of life of which she had partaken for the last time in this world. Towards the Vesper hour her lips were unsealed to give utterance to a torrent of pious and fervent aspirations; her tongue, usually so slow to speak, proclaimed her feelings so fervently, and with such prudence and efficacy, that though she had never spoken so much before, not a single word was lost.

Those present remarked that all she had ever heard from preachers, or read in devout books, or learned in her ecstasies, came to her mind to be imparted to her maidens before her death. A wonderful fountain of eloquence and learning seemed to spring up in her soul at the very moment in which it was about to fly from this world. In remembering the Holy Scriptures, she selected the passages most affecting to the memory of a loving soul like hers. She recited the whole passage of the Gospel relating to the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and spoke with wonderful pathos of the visit that Jesus made to the blessed sisters Martha and Mary, when He deigned to sympathize in their grief — when He went with them to their brother's tomb, and showed His tender and sincere compassion, in mingling with their sorrow, tears from His divine eyes. Fixing on this idea, she spoke most

ferently and to the great admiration of the attendants, of those tears of Christ, as well as of those shed by Him in contemplation of Jerusalem, and while He hung upon the Cross; her words were so earnest, so tender, so fitted to penetrate the heart, that tears soon abundantly flowed from the eyes of all who heard her. The expiring saint perceived their sorrow, and as if to give them a last warning she repeated the words that our Lord spoke when going to death, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep over yourselves." Her heart, always so full of compassion and sympathy, though winging its flight to Heaven, was still accessible to her beloved ones. She again sought to alleviate the anguish of her attendants, by addressing to them the most affectionate consolation, and calling them thus "*My friends, my beloved ones.*" And then she bowed her head and for a long time kept a complete silence. In a little time after, though the bystanders saw no motion of her lips, they again heard a faint, sweet music. When they questioned her on this subject she replied, "Have you not heard them who chanted with me? I sung as well as I could with them." "No faithful soul will doubt," says her historian, "but that she already united her sweet voice to the songs of triumph, and the delicious harmony of the celestial choirs who expected the moment of her entrance into their ranks; already she magnified the praises of the Lord with His angels."

She remained from the closing of the day until the first crowing of the cock in a state of boundless joy, of pious exultation and fervent devotion. At the moment of victory, with good reason she celebrated the termination of her many trials. Already sure of her glorious crown, she said to her attendants a few minutes before midnight: "What shall we do if our enemy, the Devil, should appear?" In an instant after, she cried out in a loud clear voice, "Fly, fly, thou wicked one, I renounce thee!" Then again she said: "He goes, let us now speak of God and of His Son, it will not fatigue you — it will not continue long." Towards midnight her face became so radiant that they could scarcely look upon her. At the sound of the cockcrow, she said: "At this hour did the Virgin Mary bring to the world its Savior. Let us speak of God and of the infant Jesus, for it is now midnight, the hour in which Jesus was

born, and laid in a manger, and that He created a new star, which had never been seen before; at this hour He came to redeem the world; He will redeem me also; at this hour He arose from the dead, and delivered the imprisoned souls; He will also deliver mine from this miserable world.”

Her joy and happiness increased every moment. “I am weak,” said she, “but I feel no more pain than if I was not ill — I recommend you all to God.” She spoke again, inspired by the Holy Spirit, but her words, which breathed the purest love of God, have not been particularly recorded. At length she said, “Oh, Mary, come to my assistance! the moment has arrived when God summons his friend to the wedding feast. The Bridegroom seeks His spouse.” Then, in a low tone, she added, “Silence! . . . Silence! . . . ” In pronouncing these words she bowed her head as if falling into a gentle slumber, and in bliss breathed her last sigh. Her soul ascended to Heaven surrounded by angels and saints who had come to meet her. A delicious perfume filled the humble cottage which now contained but her mortal remains, and those present heard a chorus of heavenly voices singing with ineffable harmony the sublime anthem of the Church, “*Regnum mundi, et omnem ornatum sæculi contempsi propter amorem Domini mei Jesu Christi!*”

This was during the night of the 19th of November, A. D. 1231; the Saint had not entirely completed her twenty-fourth year.

A manuscript entitled, “*Antiquitates monasterii Aldenbergensis,*” relates that the little Gertrude, aged four years, who was then at Aldenberg, said at that time to her companions, “I hear the passing bell at Marburg; at this moment the dear lady, my mother, is dead!”

One of the good religious who wrote the life of the dear Saint, exclaims, “Do you blame me, dear reader, for having written that Elizabeth is dead? Do you accuse me for not having alleged other causes for her death than love and joy? Yes, love and joy led her from this vale of tears; she left it not with pain. Death, which is so hard and so terrible a struggle, had no share in this departure, in which a virtuous and holy life was succeeded by a triumphant and blessed

eternity: it was rather a privilege of grace than a punishment of sin; an achievement of victory, not a failing of human nature”

## CHAPTER XXX.

HOW THE DEAR SAINT ELIZABETH WAS BURIED IN THE CHURCH  
NEAR THE HOSPITAL, AND HOW EVEN THE LITTLE BIRDS OF  
HEAVEN CELEBRATED HER OBSEQUIES.

Ecce quod concupivi, iam video; quod speravi, iam teneo; ipsi  
sum iuncta in cœlis quem in terris posita, tota devotione dilexi.

— *Anthem of St. Agnes* — *Roman Breviary*.

**D**IFFERENT from all human glory, that of the saints commences on Earth, as it does in Heaven, but with their death; it appears that as if, in His parental solicitude, the Lord wills always to leave their humility under the protection of the forgetfulness, or even of the insults of the world, until nothing but their mortal part remains to be exposed to its dangerous praises.

Thus, scarcely had the soul of our Elizabeth sought the rich repose of Heaven, when her body became the object of a veneration which had too frequently been refused to her during life; and we find that this poor widow, who for a long time had been persecuted, despised, and calumniated, occupied the thoughts and filled the hearts of all faithful Catholics, from the Supreme Head of the Church to the humblest pilgrim of pious Germany.

When she had breathed her last sigh, her faithful maidens and some other devout women washed her body, with the greatest respect for her who in her last moments so nobly fulfilled the promises of the glorious victories she had gained over all human frailties during her short life.

They gave her for a shroud the torn garments which had been her only clothing, and which she herself had desired should form her grave-clothes. Her sacred body was then taken by Franciscan

religious, accompanied by the secular clergy and the people, while chanting holy hymns (though many were weeping), to the chapel of the hospital of St. Francis, which was destined to be the first theater of her glory, as it had been the place where many of her heroic sacrifices for the love of God and of the poor had been made. In this chapel she most frequently prayed, and performed many acts of devotion. The report of her death was soon noised abroad, and all the priests and monks of the country, particularly the Cistercians, as well as an immense crowd of people, both rich and poor, came to render the last honors to her who was so early summoned to receive the reward of her labors. Animated by that popular instinct which is so frequently the forerunner of true renown, and anticipating the honor which the Church was so soon to decree to her precious remains, the most ardent sought to procure relics of the Saint. They threw themselves on her bier; some tore away pieces of her robe; others cut her nails and her hair; some women went even so far as to cut away the tips of her ears and of her breast. The grief occasioned by her loss was general; tears flowed from every eye; on all sides were heard the groans and lamentations of the poor and sick, who were thus deprived of her tender care, and who came in crowds to take a last look of their benefactress; all wept together — it seemed as if each one had lost a mother. But how could we describe the anguish of those who had lost in her a support and an example? Amongst others, the Franciscans, whose sister she was by rule and by habit, and to whom she had ever been a mother, by the powerful protection she had afforded them, deplored her loss with deep affliction. The father who has left us her biography says — “When I think upon Elizabeth, I would far rather weep than write.”

The love and devotion of the people exacted permission to have her cherished remains left for four days in the Church, in the midst of the pious multitude, who continually prayed there and sung canticles. Her countenance was uncovered, and offered to their contemplation the most enchanting sight. Her youthful beauty had reappeared, with all its freshness and brilliancy; the bloom of her early life again visited her cheeks. Her flesh, far from being rendered stark by death, was as

flexible to the touch as if she was still alive. "Before her death," says one of her historians, "her countenance was like that of one who had passed her life in bitter sufferings. But scarcely had she expired, when her face became so smooth, so majestic, and so beautiful, that this sudden change could only excite admiration; and one might say that Death, the ruthless destroyer of all things fair, visited her but to obliterate the traces, not of old age and time, but those of sorrow and austerity, as if that grace which hitherto replenished her soul would now in turn animate her body. It seemed as if, through the mists of death, some of the immortal loveliness beamed upon her, or that glory had in anticipation shed some of its rays upon a body that was one day to be received into the splendor of light inaccessible."

This charming tradition, which says that the physical beauty was renewed and increased in the body of Elizabeth, after her soul was delivered from it, has been faithfully followed by the unknown artist who sculptured the principal events of her life upon the altars at Marburg, and who has represented her, exposed on the bier, as far more lovely in her death-sleep, than in all the other subjects.

It was not the sight alone that was rejoiced in this sad moment by the body of the youthful saint; there exhaled from it a delicious perfume, which was a type of the grace and virtue of which it had been the mortal covering. Pious souls remembered the words of the wise man, when he said that "the memory of the just is like the odor of an aromatic balm."

"This wonderful fragrance," says the writer whom we previously quoted, "served to console the poor and all the people for the loss they had sustained; this heavenly balm gently soothed their weariness, and stayed the sad flow of their tears and regrets, by the assurance they received from this miraculous sign, that, though the holy one was dead, she could still be, even more than during her lifetime, the charitable mother of the poor — the certain refuge of the afflicted, and that the odoriferous incense of her prayers, ascending forever to the throne of Divine Majesty, would obtain graces for all those who invoked her in their necessities."



On the fourth day after her death, her obsequies were celebrated with the greatest solemnity. This pure and precious treasure, this rich and dazzling jewel, was hidden under a humble stone in the chapel of her hospital, in presence of the Abbots and Religious of several neighboring monasteries, and a crowd of people, whose grief was violent, but most expressive, and whom it required the best efforts of the clergy to keep in order.

It was certainly a wonderful homage, that paid to the departed saint on this occasion; but with the grief of these simple ones, many hearts beat with sentiments truly worthy of her, for all raised their voices to Heaven in accents of fervent devotion and pious gratitude, which they experienced, in having been permitted to see one, whose example was so glorious and so worthy of imitation.

But the Lord reserved for His friend a still sweeter and more affecting homage.

On the night preceding the solemnization of the last rite; the Abbess of Wechere, who had come to assist at the funeral ceremony, heard a harmony which astonished her extremely; she went outside, accompanied by several persons, to learn whence it proceeded — and they saw on the roof of the church an immense number of birds, of a species unknown to men before that time, and these sung in tones so sweet and varied, that all who listened were filled with admiration. These little creatures seemed to celebrate this glorious burial-service. They were, according to the opinions of some, the angels who had borne Elizabeth's happy soul to Heaven, and who had now returned to honor her body by their hymns of celestial gladness.

“These little birds,” says St. Bonaventure, “rendered testimony to her purity by speaking of her in their language at her burial, and singing with such wondrous sweetness over her tomb. He who spoke by the mouth of an ass, to reprove the folly of a prophet, could as well proclaim by the voice of birds the innocence of a saint.”

## CHAPTER XXXI.

OF THE WONDERFUL MIRACLES OBTAINED FROM GOD BY THE INTERCESSION OF THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH, AND HOW ANXIOUSLY HER BROTHER-IN-LAW, DUKE CONRAD, WISHED TO HAVE HER CANONIZED.

In vita sua fecit monstra, et in morte mirabilis operatus est.

— *Eccl.* xlviii. 15.

**T**HE Lord delayed not the manifestation of the miraculous power with which He was pleased henceforth to invest her whose whole life had been but one long act of humility. To the invincible love which had preferred in this world, loneliness and misery for His sake, He hastened to bestow, as a sure pledge of victory, the right of disposing of the treasures of Heaven.

On the second day after her funeral, a certain monk of the order of Citeaux came to kneel at her tomb and to request her assistance. For more than forty years, this unhappy one languished from an interior grief, a bitter heart-wound, that no human remedy could heal; but after having invoked this zealous consolatrix of all sufferings, with a firm faith, he felt himself delivered from the yoke under which he had so long mourned; and this he testified upon oath before Master Conrad and the Curate of Marburg. This was the first cure operated by her intercession; and it is interesting to remark how this tender and loving soul, who had endured so many heartfelt sorrows during her life, should have chosen as the first object of her merciful interposition in Heaven, one of those painful interior trials which the science of man knows not how to heal, nor even to compassionate.

Some little time after, there came to her tomb a prelate of most illustrious birth and high ecclesiastical dignity: history has not recorded his name, but has accused him of having been addicted to all

excesses of vice, which the sacred character of his office rendered still more odious. Oftentimes a prey to remorse and shame, he had recourse to the tribunal of penance, but fruitlessly; at the first temptation, he yielded again, and his relapses became more and more scandalous and deplorable. Still he struggled against his frailty, and, sin-stained as he was, he came to seek strength at the shrine of the pure and holy Elizabeth. He prayed, and invoked her protection and intercession, whilst shedding a torrent of tears, and remained kneeling for many hours, absorbed in fervor and deep contrition. He ceased not his ardent supplications, until in his soul he felt convinced that they had reached the Mercy-seat, and that the Lord had listened to the petition that his well-beloved Elizabeth had presented in the name of this poor victim of sin; he felt himself imbued with a spiritual strength far greater than the impulses of vice; and from that moment, as he declared when confessing to Master Conrad, the sting of the flesh was so vanquished in him, that thenceforward he had but to struggle against trivial temptations, which he was enabled to overcome quite easily.

Many other souls, suffering and oppressed under the chains of sin, learned to shake them off near the resting-place of this holy woman, who in her lifetime had so nobly rent them asunder; of these, the most frequently recorded are of men who learned to triumph over the passions of hatred, pride, avarice, and anger; and surely, to escape from such sins, they could not follow a more faithful guide than her who had humbled herself to the lowest — who had given her whole being to God, and all her wealth to His poor — and who had passed her life in the practice of universal love and forgiveness!

Not only did spiritual infirmities experience the effects of her efficacious piety; physical sufferings and infirmities, such as she had so continually soothed during her life, though losing in her the compassionate nurse, received instead, a share of the new and wonderful power which rendered her, by God's mercy, their unfailing healer and most skilful physician.

An interesting narrative informs us how quickly she exercised this benevolent faculty, and how her glorified soul retained the gentle

familiarity with the humble and the poor, which was the great charm of her mortal life. At the Monastery of Reinhartsbrunn, where Duke Louis reposed with his ancestors, there was a lay-brother, who filled the office of miller; he was a man of fervent piety, who practiced many austerities. Amongst others, he always wore an iron cuirass on his body, the better to mortify the flesh. The Duchess, in her frequent visits to the Abbey, had remarked this poor brother, and entertained for him, on account of his sanctity, a special affection. One day when she had come to pray at the tomb of her husband, she met the brother miller and spoke to him with great kindness; she exacted from him a promise of joining with her in a mutual and spiritual community of prayers, in pledge of which she extended her hand and took his, notwithstanding the resistance of the humble monk, who, in his simplicity, blushed at touching the hand of so illustrious a lady. Some time after, as he was repairing some of the implements of his occupation, one of the sails of the mill suddenly struck him, and shattered his arm. He suffered extreme torture from this accident, but he waited patiently until it should please the Lord to give him relief. During the night of the 19th November, while the soul of his noble and holy sister was returning to God who made it, the brother miller was keeping vigil, praying in his abbey-church, and groaning with the pain of his broken arm. Suddenly he saw the Duchess Elizabeth appear before him, clad in royal robes, and resplendent with a wonderful light. She said to him, with her accustomed gentleness — “What dost thou, good Brother Volkmar, and how art thou?” Though alarmed and dazzled by the clear brilliancy that shone around her, he recognized her and said — “How is it, dear lady, that you who, ordinarily, were clothed in such miserable garments, have now such beautiful and gorgeous raiment?” “It is because my condition is changed,” she replied; and then she raised his right hand — that which she had formerly taken as a sign of friendship — that which had been shattered by the mill, and healed it.

This touching of the wounded member seemed so painful to him, that he awoke, as if from a dream, and found his hand and arm

entirely sound and well. He then thanked the Lord, and that dear sister who had thought of him on her entrance into Heaven.

But still greater prodigies took place on the days immediately after her obsequies; unhappy creatures, suffering under painful maladies — deaf, lame, blind, idiots, lepers, paralytics, some of whom had come, thinking her still alive, to implore her assistance — all of whom were cured, after praying in the chapel wherein she rested. Contemporary writers have left us authentic details of these wonders; of the many, we will relate but one, the truth of which was sworn to before the Apostolic Judges; it will afford the reader some idea of the others.

A man of Marburg named Henry, aged forty years, had for some time such weak sight that he often mistook cornfields for the high road, and this drew upon him the ridicule of his companions.

At length he became entirely blind, and had to be led wherever he wished to go. He had himself guided to the tomb of her who was already denominated the *happy Elizabeth*, and he made a vow to her and offered two wax tapers. The judges asked him what words he used when invoking her, and he repeated the following:

“Dear Lady, St. Elizabeth, cure my eyes, and I will always be thy faithful servant, and I will pay each year two pence to thy hospital” — and immediately he received clearer sight than he had ever before possessed; this happened on the fifteenth day after the death of the saint.

The account of these wonders spread rapidly throughout the neighborhood of Marburg, and greater crowds daily came to solicit relief from their respective sufferings; the Divine Mercy responded to the faith of the Christian people, and granted to the prayers of those who petitioned Elizabeth as their advocate numerous and palpable graces.

Master Conrad, watchful of the glorious effects of a life for which he was in some degree responsible, and some part of the renown of which he could assume with just reason, failed not to communicate to Pope Gregory IX an account of the miracles which the Divine Power had been pleased to work at the tomb of the glorious dead, and of the ever increasing veneration of the people towards her; this he requested

him to confirm, by solemnly declaring her right to the invocation of the faithful. Notwithstanding that ninety years had rolled over the illustrious Pontiff, his heart was still youthful with love and solicitude for the honor of God and of the Church; he already had the happiness of canonizing Saint Francis of Assisium, and had in this same year inscribed by the side of the Seraph Saint in Heaven, his most illustrious disciple, St. Anthony of Padua. The holy Pope then replied to Conrad with affectionate haste, but also with consummate prudence, "We have learned from thy letter," wrote he, "dear son, Conrad, with tears of sweet joy, how the glorious Master, whose power is unlimited, has blessed His servant Elizabeth of illustrious memory, during her life, our dearest daughter in Jesus Christ and Duchess of Thuringia; how from weak and fragile as she was by nature, He by His grace made her strong — unalterable in the worship of His divine name and how after admitting her to the assembly of the Saints, He has manifested by glorious signs the beatitude which He has granted unto her."

Meanwhile, the Pontiff, remembering that *all that glistens is not gold*, and wishing to remove every shadow of doubt from minds even the most sceptical, he commanded the Archbishop of Mayence, the Abbot of Eberbach, and Master Conrad, to collect all the public and solemn testimonies on every circumstance in the life of the Duchess that could have been agreeable to God and man, as well as of the miracles which had been wrought after her death; and after having rewritten these depositions to affix to them their seals, and to send them to Rome by trustworthy messengers. He prescribed at the same time the forms which were to be observed in the examination of witnesses, with an attention even to the most minute details, which proves at once his care and wisdom in this delicate affair.

Sigefrid, Archbishop of Mayence, in whose diocese the city of Marburg and the tomb of Elizabeth were situated, had been equally impressed with admiration at the wonders the Divine Goodness was pleased to work amongst his flock. At the request of Master Conrad, and in the fulfilment of a revelation made to him in a vision, he went to Marburg to consecrate solemnly, on the feast of St. Lawrence (10th

August, 1232), two Altars which the faithful had erected in honor of Elizabeth in the chapel in which she was interred. An immense multitude had assembled to assist at this ceremony, as well as to listen to the sermon which Master Conrad was to preach in commemoration of his illustrious penitent. During his discourse, he remembered that he could not have a more favorable opportunity of fulfilling the mandate of the Pope, so without further reflection, he enjoined all those amongst his auditory who had obtained any cure or heavenly favor through the intercession of the Duchess, to present themselves with their witnesses on the next morning at the hour of Prime, before the Archbishop of Mayence, and the other Prelates who had come to assist at the dedication of the Altars.

At the appointed time, a considerable number of persons were assembled, all of whom affirmed that they had received graces through the intercession of Elizabeth; as the Archbishop was obliged to depart on account of some very pressing business, he waited only till the most remarkable statements were written out; he could not seal them, neither could the other Prelates, as none of them had brought their episcopal seals.

Master Conrad copied these depositions word for word, and received many others on oath; and after having re-read the entire for the Archbishop of Mayence, and the abbot of Eberbach, who found nothing to change therein, he forwarded them to the Pope, together with an account of the life of Elizabeth from his own recollections. This precious memorial has been preserved, and forms the most ancient source from which the historian of the saint's life could derive information. This first enumeration of miracles, transmitted by Master Conrad, contains detailed accounts of thirty-seven sudden and supernatural cures, made out according to the Pope's directions, with the most precise references, as to places, dates and persons, as well as the form of prayer used in each case. The greater number of these recitals excite in us at least the deepest interest. In them we perceive that the sufferers who had recourse to her, spoke always when seeking her assistance in the tender and familiar language which her extreme humility had permitted during her life: "Dear Saint Elizabeth," said

they, "cure my limb and I will ever be thy faithful servant." Or, "Dear sainted lady and Duchess Elizabeth, I recommend to thee my daughter." "O blessed Elizabeth," cried a poor mother, whose son had died and was about to be buried. "why have I thus lost my child? come to my assistance and bring him again to life." In a moment after the pulses of the child began to beat, he was restored from the dead, and after having for a long time striven to speak, he said towards midnight, "Where am I, beloved?" He had not as yet recognized his mother.

Another poor woman, whose daughter had been for five years suffering from painful infirmities, amongst others, from enormous tumors on the back and breast, brought her to the tomb of Elizabeth and remained there for two days in prayer. At the end of that time, thinking that her supplications were unheeded, she murmured loudly against the saint, saying, "As thou hast not listened to me, I will hinder everyone from coming to thy sepulcher." In this irritated mood she left Marburg, but had not gone beyond a mile and a half, when the screams and agony of her daughter obliged her to rest near a fountain in the village of Rosdorf; the girl slept for a few minutes, and when she awoke she said that she had seen a beauteous lady whose hands were smooth and white, that she had laid her hands gently on the sorest parts of her body, while saying to her, "Arise and walk," and immediately the young girl cried out, "O my mother, I feel myself recovered in all my body." They returned together to the tomb to give thanks to the saint, and left there the basket in which the sufferer had been carried.

A young man whose limbs were paralyzed, and who was also affected with a spinal malady, was brought in a chariot to the grave of the Duchess, where the pain in his back was cured, and as they brought him home he said, "Saint Elizabeth, I return no more to thy shrine, unless that by thy mercy I can go there on my feet; but indeed I will go if thou obtainest for me that favor." Some days after, on the feast of All Saints, he found that strength was entirely restored to his limbs, and that he was thus enabled to accomplish his vow.



It is almost with regret that we discontinue these anecdotes, so replete are they with precious traces of the faith and manners of that age.

This collection of testimony was not completed until the first months of the year 1233, and their transmission to Rome was delayed by some cause unknown to us. Before they were sent, Conrad had perished, the victim of his zeal for the faith.

The boldness with which he accused and pursued the nobles and even powerful princes, when once their tendency to heresy was suspected, excited their terrible hatred and rancour against him, and these feelings were augmented by the excessive, and perhaps sometimes, unjust severity of many of his proceedings. On the 30th of July, as he was journeying from Mayence to Marburg, he was surprised near the village of Kappel by several squires and vassals of the Count de Sayn, whom he had accused of heresy; they darted upon him and strangled him. The assassins wished to spare his disciple and companion, Brother Gerard, a Franciscan, but he clung so closely to his master that it was impossible to kill one without the other. The bodies of Conrad and his friend were carried to Marburg with the deep regret of the people. He was interred in the same chapel with the Duchess, and at a little distance from her sepulchral stone.

The death of Conrad, who had so faithfully watched over her posthumous glory, as he had over her soul's weal during her life, was a great obstacle in the way of the canonization of Elizabeth, which so many faithful souls had desired and hoped for. Some of the proofs that he had collected were neglected or lost, and the popular feeling on the subject began to decline.

But the Lord delayed not to raise up a new and zealous defender of the glory of His humble servant, and that at the time that it was least expected. Of the two brothers left by Duke Louis, husband of our dear Elizabeth, and of whose base conduct towards their sister-in-law we have read, the elder, Henry, governed the dominions during the minority of Hermann, son of Louis; the other, Conrad, reveled in all the unbridled indulgence that youthful passion could suggest. In 1232, on account of a penance inflicted by the Archbishop of Mayence on

the abbot of Reinhartsbrunn, who was always protected by the House of Thuringia, the Landgrave Conrad was so angry with the Prelate that he rushed upon him in the assembled chapter at Erfurth, dragged him by the hair, threw him on the ground and would have stabbed him but that his servants interfered. But not content with this excess, he began to ravage the possessions of the See of Mayence, and amongst other places the city of Fritzlar.

He took it by assault, and to revenge the derision with which he had been regarded by the inhabitants during the siege, he set fire to the town, and burned its convents, churches, and a great number of the people. He then retired to his castle of Tenneberg, where he was soon touched by the hand of God.

There came to his gate, one day, a girl of bad character, who asked him for some relief; the Landgrave reproached her severely on the infamy of her life; the unfortunate creature replied, that dire want had forced her to it, and gave him such a startling account of this misery that he was so far moved as to promise her to provide for her future wants in case she renounced her criminal ways. This incident produced a powerful effect on his mind; he passed the whole night in extreme agitation, reflecting how much more guilty he was than the unhappy woman whom he had insulted, whom poverty had impelled to vice, whilst he, who was rich and powerful, made so bad a use of all God's gifts. In the morning he communicated these thoughts to his companions in crime and violence, and learned with extreme surprise that they had made the same reflections; they regarded this interior voice, speaking to them simultaneously, as a warning from Heaven, and they resolved to do penance and to amend their lives.

They went first on a pilgrimage, barefooted, to Gladenbach, and thence to Rome, to obtain from the Pope himself absolution of their sins.

When they arrived at Rome (1233), Conrad gave an example of the most sincere repentance and fervent piety. Every day he received at his table twenty-four poor people whom he served himself. The Pope gave him absolution on condition of being reconciled with the Archbishop of Mayence and with all those whom he had wronged, of

building and endowing a monastery in place of those he had burned, of making a public apology at the ruins of Fritzlar, and of entering himself into a religious order. Whilst he was thus returning to God, the remembrance of his holy and humble sister-in-law, whom he had despised and persecuted, presented itself to his mind; he resolved to atone for the injuries he had done her by laboring to extend her glory; and in the conversations he had with the Sovereign Pontiff he spoke of her great sanctity and urged her speedy canonization.

Immediately after his return to Germany, he hastened to fulfil the conditions of his absolution. He went to Fritzlar, where those who had escaped from the massacre of the inhabitants had taken refuge near the ruins of the principal monastery; he prostrated himself before them and begged of them for the love of God to forgive him the injury he had done.

He then walked in procession, barefooted, with a whip in his hand, he knelt at the Church-porch and invited all who wished to do so to come and administer to him the discipline. Of all the crowd there was found but one willing to punish him, and that was an old woman who advanced and gave him several stripes on the back which he endured with great patience. He then set about re-constructing the Monastery and the Church where he established canons; and at the same time he conceded many important privileges to the town of Fritzlar. At his return to Eisenach, with the assistance of his brother Henry, he founded a convent of Friars Preachers, under the invocation of St. John, but for the special intention of his sister-in-law Elizabeth, to atone for his having been an accomplice in exposing her to the bitter sufferings she had endured in that same town of Eisenach after her cruel expulsion from Wartburg.

From this time forward, the young Landgrave devoted himself to the extension of Elizabeth's glory, with a zeal similar to that of the deceased Master Conrad. Having decided upon entering the Teutonic Order, he took the habit and Cross in the Church of the hospital of St. Francis, which Elizabeth had founded at Marburg; he made his brother confirm the donation that she had made to the hospital, with the property surrounding it to these knightly monks, and added all his

own possessions in Hesse and Thuringia. He obtained also a recognition of these settlements by the Pope, and that this hospital, thus become one of the strongholds of the Teutonic Order, should be exempt from all episcopal jurisdiction, and endowed with many other rights and prerogatives, all in honor of the Duchess Elizabeth, who was interred there, in order, as he said in his petition to the Pope, that this sacred body, already celebrated by the veneration of the faithful, should enjoy the privilege of liberty.

Meanwhile, he earnestly entreated the Pope to make a solemn recognition of the graces that God granted daily through the intercession of Elizabeth. The Pope yielded at length to his prayers, and wishing, says a contemporary writer, that the pious simplicity of the Church militant should not be deceived, if the facts brought forward were not proved, but also that the Church triumphant should not be deprived of this addition to its glory, if the truth was found equal to the renown, in a brief dated the 5th of the Ides of October, 1234, the Pontiff charged the Bishop of Hildesheim, the abbots Hermann de Georghenthal and Raymond de Herford to proceed to a new examination of the miracles attributed to Elizabeth. In this brief he also ordered the three Commissaries to send him the result of the inquiries made before by the Archbishop of Mayence and Master Conrad, and in case they could not find these, to take in writing the testimony of the persons previously examined, and of all others who could afford more information, and to send all to Rome before the expiration of five months from the receipt of this letter. The Bishop and his colleagues, docile to the injunctions of the Sovereign Pontiff, had this brief published in the surrounding dioceses, and appointed a day for all the faithful who knew of any cure or grace obtained through the intercession of the Duchess to come to Marburg, and where possible, that these facts should be attested by their prelates and pastors. On the day fixed, the Apostolic Commissaries went to Marburg, where they found assembled several thousand persons come from all parts of Europe, with many of the Abbots of the Cistercian and Premonstratensian Orders, a great number of Priors, and of Friars Minors and Preachers, of Canons regular of the Teutonic Order, and

of many other learned and prudent men. The witnesses made their depositions on oath before this solemn tribunal; their testimonies were scrupulously weighed and examined by ecclesiastical lawyers and professors of jurisprudence.

We do not recognize in this inquiry any names but those of the four attendants of the Duchess, Guta who had lived with her from her fifth year, Ysentrude her confidant and best friend, Elizabeth and Irmengarde who had been in her service during her sojourn at Marburg. These four then detailed all they knew of the life of their mistress; these priceless narratives have been preserved entire, and furnish us with most of the interesting and touching anecdotes that we have related in the course of this history. The depositions of most of the other witnesses referred to miracles obtained through her intercession; amongst the immense number reported, we remark the resuscitation of several persons from the dead. A hundred and twenty-nine cases were judged the worthiest of being transcribed and forwarded to Rome, after having been read and sealed by the Bishop of Hildesheim and the other Prelates and Abbots. The Abbot Bernard de Buch, Salomon Magnus, a Dominican, and Brother Conrad of the Teutonic Order, formerly Landgrave and brother-in-law of the Saint, were appointed to bring to the Pope the result of this examination, as well as of that made three years before by Master Conrad. They were at the same time the bearers of letters from a great number of Bishops, Abbots, Princes, Princesses, and nobles of every degree, who humbly requested the common Father of the faithful to confirm her right to veneration on Earth, who had already received the felicitations of the angels, and not to suffer the pure flame of celestial charity, enkindled by the hand of God to serve as an example to the world, to be obscured by the vapors of contempt, or extinguished by the scoffing of heresy.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

HOW THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH WAS CANONIZED BY POPE GREGORY  
AND THE GREAT JOY AND VENERATION OF THE FAITHFUL IN  
GERMANY ON THE OCCASION OF THE EXALTATION OF HER RELICS  
AT MARBURG.

Annuntiaverunt cœli justitiam eius, et viderunt omnes populi  
gloriam eius. — *Ps. xcvi.*

Mihi autem nimis honorificati sunt, amici tui, Deus. — *Ps. cxxxii. 16.*



IN the spring-time of the year 1235, the Pope was at Perugia, in the same city where seven years before he had canonized St. Francis of Assisium, when the penitent Conrad with the other messengers presented themselves before him to request that he would inscribe amongst the blessed ones of Heaven, and beside the Seraphic Father, the young and humble woman, who had been in Germany his first-born Minorite child, and the most ardent of his disciples. Their arrival made a great impression on the clergy and the people.

The Pontiff opened their despatches in presence of the Cardinals, of the principal prelates of the Roman court, and of a number of the clergy who had come to listen to them; he communicated all the details transmitted of the life of Elizabeth and of the miracles attributed to her. They were greatly surprised, we are informed, and affected even to tears by so much humility, so much love of the poor and of poverty, so many wonders wrought by grace from on high. Nevertheless, the Pope resolved to use the greatest vigilance and severity in the examination of these miracles; he proceeded to it with the seriousness which characterized him, and scrupulously observed all the formalities required to dissipate even the least shadow of doubt. The care and exactness which were used in this discussion were so

remarkable, that it merited to be cited as a model, after the lapse of five centuries, by Benedict XIV, one of the most illustrious successors of Gregory IX. All these precautions, however, served but to render the truth more incontestible and brilliant; the more severe was the examination in respect to facts and persons, the more complete was their certainty shown; and to use the language of contemporary writers, the ploughshare of apostolic authority, in passing over this yet unexplored field, brought to light an immense treasure of sanctity; and it was plainly seen that the hand of the Lord had guided the dear Elizabeth through the buffetings of the tempestuous waves of earthly tribulation, and landed her upon the shore of eternal repose.

In a Consistory presided over by the sovereign Pontiff, and at which assisted the Patriarchs of Antioch and Jerusalem, and a great number of Cardinals, the officially-authenticated documents on the life and sanctity of Elizabeth were read and all with one accord declared that, without delay, her glorious name should be inscribed in the catalogue of the saints on Earth, as it was already written in the Book of Life, as had been wonderfully proved by the Lord Himself.

This history was also read to the people, whose piety was profoundly affected by it, and who, filled with admiration, cried out, "Canonization, Most Holy Father, Canonization, and that without delay." The Pope required no further pressing to yield to this wonderful unanimity, and to give more splendor to the ceremony of canonization, he decided that it should take place on Pentecost day (26th May, 1235).

Duke Conrad, whose zeal was redoubled by the success of his efforts, engaged to make all the preparations necessary for this imposing solemnity.

The day of the great feast having arrived, the Pope, accompanied by the patriarchs, cardinals, and prelates, and followed by several thousand people, with the sound of trumpets and other instruments of music, walked in procession to the convent of the Dominicans at Perugia; every one, from the Pope to the lowest of the people, carried tapers which the Landgrave had provided at his own expense.

The procession entered the Church, and the preparatory ceremonies having been performed, the Cardinal Deacon, assistant of the Pope, read in a loud voice for the faithful, an account of the life and miracles of Elizabeth, in the midst of the acclamations of the people, and the torrents of tears of holy joy and pious enthusiasm which flowed from the eyes of these fervent Christians, happy in counting thus a new and powerful friend in Heaven. After this, the Pope requested all present to join him in praying that God would not permit them to be deceived in this matter. When every one was kneeling, the Pope intoned the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, which was all sung by the assembly. When the hymn was terminated, the Cardinal Deacon at the Pope's right hand said, *Flectamus genua*, and then his Holiness and all the people knelt and prayed during a certain time; then the Cardinal on the left said, *Levate*, and all arose. The Pope was enthroned and assumed the miter, then he declared Elizabeth a Saint in the following words:

“In honor of the Almighty God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, for the exaltation of the Catholic Faith and the increase of the Christian religion, by the authority of the same omnipotent God, by that of the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, and by our own, we declare and define that Elizabeth of happy memory, in her lifetime Duchess of Thuringia, is a saint, and should be inscribed in the catalogue of the saints. We insert her name there ourselves, and at the same time ordain that the Universal Church celebrate her feast and Office with due solemnity and devotion, every year on the anniversary day of her death, the 18th of the Kalends of December. And in addition, by the same authority, we grant to all the faithful, who with true contrition shall have confessed their sins and shall visit her tomb on that day, an indulgence of one year and forty days.”

The sound of organs and the peal of bells hailed the last words of the Pontiff, who having soon after laid down his miter, intoned the canticle of joy, *Te Deum laudamus*, which was sung by the congregation with harmony and enthusiasm sufficient to ascend even to the Heavens. A Cardinal Deacon at its conclusion said in a loud voice:

Ora pro nobis, Sancta Elisabeth. Alleluia!



and the Pope chanted the collect, or prayer, which he had himself composed in honor of the new saint. Then the Cardinal Deacon said the *Confiteor*, inserting therein the name of Elizabeth immediately after those of the Apostles; and the Pope gave the usual absolution and benediction, making mention of her when commemorating the merits and prayers of the Saints. The solemn Mass was then celebrated; at the Offertory three of the Cardinal Judges laid on the Altar, successively, the mystical oblations of tapers, bread, and wine; with two turtle-doves, as emblems of the contemplative and solitary life, and two doves representing the active, but pure and faithful life, and finally, a cage full of little birds, which were set at liberty as symbols of the aspirings of holy souls to God.

In the same convent of the Dominicans at Perugia, where this ceremony had taken place, a new Altar was erected in honor of the Saint, to which the Sovereign Pontiff attached the privilege of an indulgence of thirty days for all who came to pray there. This was then the first place where the veneration of the dear St. Elizabeth was officially celebrated, and ever after the religious of that convent honored her feast day by great solemnities, and by chanting her office with the same melodies used in that of their holy father, St. Dominic.

To increase the joy of this so happy day, the good Duke Conrad invited to his own table three hundred religious, and sent an abundance of bread, wine, fish, eggs, milk, &c. to several convents in the neighborhood, and particularly to those of the poor Clares, to whom the new Saint seemed to be a special Patroness in Heaven, after having been their rival upon Earth; he also distributed to several thousand poor people, in fact to all who sought relief, meat, bread, wine and money, not in his own name, but in that of the Teutonic Order, and especially in honor of her who had ever been to the poor a prodigal in generosity.

It was certainly the best way to do her homage that which would most surely have brought a smile to her benign lips. We may imagine, with pleasurable emotion, the gladness of these poor mendicants, to many of whom the renown of the royal and holy stranger was manifested in so benevolent a manner. Conrad's generosity so pleased

the Pope that he invited him to his own table, which was a great distinction, made him sit by his side, and directed that all his attendants should be treated magnificently. When he took leave in order to return to Germany, the Pope granted all the favors he requested for persons whose petitions were long under consideration. Then he gave his Papal benediction, and when embracing him shed many tears.

On the first of June, 1235, the Pope published the Bull of Canonization, which was immediately forwarded to all the Princes and Bishops of the Church.

The following translation, with some corrections, is that given by Father Appollinaris in his history, page 519:

GREGORY, SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

To all the Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Priors, Archdeacons, Priests, and other prelates of the Church by whom these letters shall be received. Health.

The infinite Majesty of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the sweet Savior and Redeemer of our souls, considering from the highest Heavens the original nobleness and excellence of our condition, now disfigured and corrupted by the sin of our first parents, and by a multiplicity of miseries, vices and crimes, touched with compassion for His dearest creature, resolved to exert His omnipotent mercy, to deliver mankind seated in the shadow of death, and to recall poor exiles to the country of blessed liberty, judging it most reasonable in His divine and infinite wisdom, that as it is the duty of a workman who has commenced some masterpiece to perfect it, and if through misfortune it should become decayed and lose its luster, to repair and restore it to its first form; so to Him beyond all others did it belong to redeem and to renew the original dignity of His fallen creature. With these designs He entered the narrow womb of the most holy Virgin, (if we can call that narrow which was sufficient to contain Him who was infinite,) from His Heavenly throne He entered and concealed Himself within the virginal body of His most blessed mother, He there assumed the weakness of our nature, and from invisible that He was, He became visible; by the adorable mystery of the incarnation, He tramples on, and overcomes the Prince of Darkness, He triumphs over his malice by the glorious redemption

of the human race, and points out to His faithful by His divine instructions a certain path by which they can regain their true country.

The blessed and gracious Elizabeth, of royal birth, and by alliance Duchess of Thuringia, considering with attention and wisely understanding this admirable economy of our salvation, courageously resolved to follow the footsteps of the Savior, and to labor with all her strength in the practice of virtue; in order to render herself worthy to be illumined with the eternal Light, from the dawning of her life until its evening, she never ceased to rejoice in the delights of celestial love, and with supernatural fervor she employed all the powers of her heart to love solely and sovereignly Jesus Christ, our Savior, who being true God and true eternal Son of God, became man and Son of the blessed Virgin, Queen of angels and of men; a most pure and ardent love which replenished her with an abundance of heavenly sweetness, and imparted to her the divine favors which are bestowed at the banquet of the adorable Lamb.

And being enlightened with this same ineffable clarity and acting as a true child of the Gospel, she saw in the person of her neighbor this divine Jesus, the only object of her affection; she loved Him with so admirable a charity that her delight was to see herself surrounded by the poor, to live and converse with them; she most dearly cherished those whose misery and disgusting maladies rendered them most horrible, and whose appearance would be sufficient to terrify the strongest hearts in the world: she so charitably distributed all her wealth amongst them that she left herself poor and indigent to supply all things necessary for them in abundance. She was but of that youthful age when children still require instructors, and already she was the good mother, the guardian and protectress of the poor, and her heart was full of compassion for their sufferings.

Having learned that the supreme Judge would in His last sentence make particular commemoration of the services done Him, and that the entrance to eternal glory was, in a manner, at the disposal of the poor, she entertained such an esteem for their condition, and strove with so much assiduity to conciliate the affection and favor of those whom people of her rank usually regard as contemptible and insupportable, that, not alone content with giving them alms from her abundant riches, exhausting her granaries, her coffers, and her purse to help them, she also

renounced the use of all delicacies prepared for her nourishment, and rigorously macerated her frail body by fasting and the pangs of hunger that they might fare better; she constrained herself to a perpetual parsimony that they might be more fully satiated, and she practiced an increasing austerity that all things might be more easy to them; virtues the more laudable and meritorious, as they proceeded from her pure charity and abundant devotion, without being constrained or obliged to perform them by any person.

What more can I say to you of her? This noble princess, renouncing all the pleasures that nature and her rank afforded her, and uniting all her desires into the single wish of pleasing and serving God, during the lifetime of the prince, her husband, with his permission and retention of his rights over her, she promised and preserved a most faithful obedience to her confessor.

But after the decease of her honored spouse, esteeming the good life she had led up to that period as still imperfect, she assumed the holy habit, and lived the remainder of her days as a most perfect religious, honoring by her state and continual prayers the sacred and adorable mysteries of the death and bitter passion of our Savior. O blessed woman! O admirable lady! O sweet Elizabeth! Most justly did this name, which signifies being filled with God, suit you, since you so frequently satiated the poor creatures who are the images and representatives of God, seeing that they are the dear members of His divine Son.

You have most justly merited to receive the bread of angels, since you so often ministered to the angels and terrestrial messengers of the King of Heaven.

O blessed and most noble widow! more fruitful in grace, than during your honorable marriage you had been in children, you sought that strength in virtue which nature seems to deny to woman, and became a valiant warrior against the enemies of our salvation. You have conquered them with the buckler of Faith, as the Apostle says, with the armor of Justice, the sword of the Spirit and of fervor, the Helmet of salvation, and the Lance of perseverance.

Thus, most amiable did this dear Elizabeth render herself to her immortal Spouse, always united to the Queen of virgins by the heartfelt affection she had for her service, and by the alliance of perfect conformity, following her example she bowed down her highness to the works of a most humble servant; thus did she also resemble her good patroness Elizabeth whose name she bore, and

the venerable Zachary, by walking simply and without reproach in the ways of God, preserving with affection the grace of God in her inmost soul; bringing it forth and manifesting it exteriorly by holy actions and continual good works; increasing and nourishing it by the constant acquisition of virtues, she thus merited at the close of her days to be received lovingly by Him, in whom alone we should put all our trust, and who has reserved for Himself the wonderful power of exalting the innocent and the humble, and who delivered her from the bonds of death to place her on a throne brilliant with light inaccessible. But while in the midst of the delights and riches of the eternal empire, triumphant in the company of the saints and angels, her spirit rejoices in the presence of God, and shines with splendor in the abyss of supreme glory; her charity has, as it were, made her descend from that throne to enlighten us who live in this world's darkness, and to console us by a great number of miracles, by virtue of which good Catholics are confirmed and increased in Faith, in Hope, and in Charity, infidels are illumined and informed of the true way of salvation, and hardened heretics cover their faces with shame and confusion.

For the enemies of the Church, seeing before their eyes, are unable to deny, that by the merits of her, who, while in the prison of the flesh, was a lover of poverty, full of sweetness and mercy, who wept frequently not only for her own sins, but through an excess of charity for those of others, who hungered after justice, who led a most pure and innocent life, and who in the continual persecution and opprobrium by which she was assailed, [text missing in book] that by the earnest invocation of this faithful spouse of Jesus Christ, the dead are miraculously restored to life, light is given to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and the lame are enabled to walk. Thus the miserable heretics, full of rage and envy, notwithstanding their fury and the poison wherewith they would infect all Germany, are forced to behold in this same country the religion which they would fain eradicate, arising gloriously, and with unspeakable joy triumphing over their malice and impiety.

These wonders having been attested before us, and supported by incontestible proofs, with the advice of our brethren the venerable patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops, and other prelates at our court assembled, according to the duty of our office, which obliges us to watch diligently over all that tends to the greater glory of our Savior, we have inscribed Elizabeth in the catalogue of the saints,

and enjoin you to cause her feast to be celebrated solemnly on the thirteenth day of the Kalends of December, being that on which she burst the bonds of death, and was admitted to the fountain of supreme delights: that by her intercession we may obtain what she already obtained from Christ, and which she will gloriously enjoy for eternity. And also, to employ the power which is committed to us from on High to enable the universal faithful to taste of these delights of the invisible court, and to exalt the name of the Almighty by causing Him to be honored by the crowds who will come to the venerated sepulcher of His spouse, full of confidence in the mercy of the Omnipotent, by the authority of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, we bounteously grant an indulgence of one year and forty days to all those pious men and women, who having worthily confessed their sins with contrition shall come there on her festival-day, and during its Octave, to offer their prayers and supplications.

Given at Perugia, in the Kalends of June, in the Ninth year of our Pontificate.

Scarcely had this bull been published, when the Pope seems to have been anxious to express his love and admiration for the new saint in a still more special manner. In seeking someone to whom he could address himself to unburthen his heart of the emotions with which it was filled, he thought of writing to a sovereign whom he cherished on account of her piety and devotion to the holy see: this was Beatrice, daughter of Philip, King of the Romans, and wife to Ferdinand III, king of Castile and Leon, since canonized. On the 7th of June, the Pontiff directed to her a long epistle, wherein he praised the virtues of Elizabeth, and in support of them quoted many scriptural texts.

During these past days, there has been presented to us, according to the expression of Jesus, son of Sirach, an *admirable vessel, the work of the Most High*, destined to serve as a furnace of charity by the ardor of its good works. This vessel of election, consecrated to the Lord, is no other than St. Elizabeth, whose name interpreted signifies, *Satiety of God*, because she often satisfied God in the persons of the poor and the sick.

She nourished the Lord with three loaves which she borrowed from her friend in the night of her tribulation — the bread of truth, the bread of charity, and the bread of courage. . . . This Elizabeth,

so great a lover of the eternal felicity, served to the table of the Master of Heaven and Earth three precious viands, in renouncing all He forbids, in obeying all He ordains, in accomplishing all He counsels. . . . Yes, she is truly one of whom it is written, *an admirable vessel, the work of the Most High*. — A vessel admirable by the virtue of her humility, the lowliness of her body, the tenderness of her compassion, which shall be admired throughout all ages! Oh, vessel of election, vessel of mercy! Thou hast offered to the tyrants and to the great ones of this world the wine of true compunction! Behold, from amongst them, already one, thy brother Conrad, lately Landgrave, still young and beloved by the world, whom thou hast so inebriated with this sacred drink, that forsaking all dignities, and renouncing all, even to his tunic, he has escaped, as it were, naked, from the hands of those who crucify the Savior and taken refuge under the shadow of the Cross, which sacred seal he has impressed upon his heart. Again, behold thy sister, the virgin Agnes, daughter of the king of Bohemia, who in her so tender age fled from the imperial magnificence as from a venomous reptile, and, seizing the triumphant banner of the Cross, walks before her spouse, accompanied by a train of consecrated virgins. Work of the Most High! a new wonder which the Lord has wrought upon the Earth, since St. Elizabeth enshrined Jesus Christ in her heart — since, by her love, she conceived and brought Him to the world and nourished Him. The Devil, our enemy, raised two great walls to hide from our eyes the splendor of the eternal Light: thus are, the ignorance of our minds and the concupiscence of the flesh. But St. Elizabeth, taking refuge in her humility, overthrew the wall of ignorance, and leveled the barriers of pride so as to enjoy the inaccessible Light; she uprooted concupiscence from her soul, and perfectly detached her heart from all terrestrial affection, the more surely to gain the only true and divine Love.

Already has she been introduced by the Virgin Mother of God to the couch of her heavenly Spouse. She is blessed amongst all women, and crowned with a diadem of ineffable glory; and whilst the Church triumphant rejoices in her presence, she glorifies the Church militant by the splendor of her miracles.

Most dear daughter in Jesus Christ, we have wished to place before thee the example of St. Elizabeth, as a most precious pearl, for two reasons: first, that thou mayest often look into it as into a spotless mirror, in order to discover whether anything is hidden in thy conscience that could offend the eyes of the divine Majesty;

again, that nothing should be wanted to thee that is necessary for the beautifying of a bride of Heaven; and finally, that when thou shalt be invited to appear before Assuerus, that is, the eternal King, He may find thee adorned with all virtues and clothed with good works.

Given at Perugia, the 7th of the Ides of June, in the Ninth year of our Pontificate.

The bull of canonization soon arrived in Germany and was received with enthusiasm. It appears that it was first published at Erfurth, where on the occasion a festival of ten days was observed, and numerous distributions of alms were made to the poor. The Archbishop Sigefrid of Mayence fixed a day for the exaltation and translation of the body of the Saint, which did not take place until the following spring, in order to give the Bishop and the faithful of Germany time to com to Marburg to assist at the ceremony. The first day of May was that appointed for its celebration. On its approach the little city of Marburg and its environs were thronged by an immense concourse of people of all ranks; if we are to believe contemporary historians, twelve hundred thousand Christians, united by faith and fervor, assembled before the tomb of the humble Elizabeth.

All nations and tongues were there represented. Several pilgrims of both sexes came from France, from Bohemia and from her native land, the distant Hungary. All united in saying that for centuries no such crowd had been seen as that which came to honor the dear St. Elizabeth.

All the royal family of Thuringia were present, the Duchess Sophia, her mother-in-law, with the Dukes Henery and Conrad, all anxious to expiate by this solemn homage the injuries which she had so nobly forgiven them. Her four little children were also there, with an immense number of princes, nobles, priests, religious and prelates. Amongst these were, besides Sigefrid of Mayence, who presided at the ceremony, the Archbishops of Cologne, Treves and Bremen; the Bishops of Hamburg, Halberstadt, Merseburg, Bamberg, Worms, Spire, Paderborn and Hildesheim. The Emperor Frederic II, then at the height of his glory, reconciled with the Pope, lately married to the young Isabella of England so celebrated for her beauty, had suspended



all his occupations and military expeditions, to yield to the attraction which led to Marburg so many of his subjects, and he came there to do homage to her who had rejected his hand to give herself to God.

The Teutonic knights, having heard of the arrival of the Emperor, thought it would be impossible to disinter the body of the Saint in his presence, so they resolved to anticipate the appointed time. Three days before that fixed, the Prior Ulric, accompanied by seven of the brethren, entered the Church where she reposed, and after having carefully sealed all the doors, they proceeded to open the vault wherein was her tomb

Scarcely had the covering-stone been removed when a delightful perfume was exhaled from her blessed remains; the monks were penetrated with admiration at this sign of the divine mercy, for they knew that she had been buried without being embalmed, or having aromatics or perfumes of any kind laid in her tomb. They found the holy body entire, without any appearance of corruption, though it had been nearly five years in the ground. The hands were still piously joined in the form of a cross on her breast.

They said to each other that doubtless this delicate and precious body suffered not the corruption of death, because during life she had never shrunk from any infection or stain, when there was question of relieving the poor. They took it then from its coffin, enveloped it in a rich drapery of purple, and laid it in a leaden case which they placed in the vault without shutting it down, so that no difficulty should be encountered in removing it on the day of the ceremony.

On the first of May, before daybreak, the multitude assembled around the Church, and it was with difficulty that the Emperor could make his way through them, so as to reach the interior of the building.

He seemed quite penetrated with devotion and humility; he was barefooted and clad in an old gray tunic, such as that the Saint he came to honor used to wear, but he had on the imperial crown; around him were the princes and electors also crowned, and the Bishops and abbots with their miters. This pompous procession advanced to the tomb of Elizabeth, and it was then, says a narrator, that was paid in glory and honor to the dear lady the price of the sufferings and self-

denial she had endured in this world. The Emperor wished to be the first who should descend to the vault and lift the stone. The same pure and exquisite perfume by which the religious had been charmed and surprised, again exhaled itself, and served to increase the piety of all who were present. The Bishops wished to raise the body from its tomb, the Emperor assisted them, and fervently kissed the coffin when they did so. The Bishops' seals were immediately affixed to it, and it was then solemnly carried by them and the Emperor with the sound of musical instruments and hymns of triumph to the place prepared for its reception. The hearts of the thousands who surrounded the Sanctuary burned with a fervent impatience while expecting the coming of the holy relics, which they were anxious to look upon, to touch, and to kiss reverently. "O happy land," cried they, "sanctified by such a trust! Guardian of such a treasure! O blessed time in which this treasure is revealed to us!" When the procession entered through the ranks of the people, when they saw the coffin borne on the shoulders of the Emperor, of the princes and prelates, when they breathed the sweet odor that exhaled from it, their enthusiasm became boundless. "O light, but most sacred body," cried they, "what weight have you with the Lord, what power to succor men! Who would not be drawn to you by this fragrant perfume, who would not run after the brilliant sanctity and marvelous beauty of thee, O holy woman? Let the heretics tremble, and the perfidious Jews be afraid. The faith of Elizabeth has confounded them. Behold her who was called a fool, and whose folly has triumphed over this world's wisdom! Even the angels have honored the tomb; and now, behold all the people gathering around it, the nobles and the Roman Emperor come to visit it. O, the wonderful mercy of the divine majesty! Behold her who during her life despised the glory of the world, and shunned the society of the great, now honored magnificently by the Pope and the Emperor! She who always took the lowest place, who sat upon the ground, who slept in the dust, is now exalted, lifted up by right royal hands! And justly so, for she became poor and sold all she possessed to purchase the priceless pearl of eternal bliss."

The sacred body having been exposed to the veneration of the faithful, the Office was solemnly celebrated in her honor, the proper Mass of the Saint was chanted by the Archbishop of Mayence. At the Offertory the Emperor approached the shrine, and placed on the head of the dear Elizabeth a golden crown, saying: "Since in thy lifetime thou wouldst not be crowned as my empress, I wish at least to crown thee today as an immortal Queen in the Kingdom of God."

He also gave a magnificent gold cup in which he used to be served at banquets, and then led to the offering the young Hermann, son of the Saint; the Empress conducting thither the little princesses, the two Sophias and Gertrude.

The Old Duchess Sophia, with her two sons Henry and Conrad, also approached the glorified remains of her whom they had so long slighted, they remained a considerable time in prayer, and made rich presents in her honor.

The nobility and the people thronged around the shrine to say prayers and to make their offerings.

The inhabitants of each country insisted upon singing the canticles of the Office in their own languages, which protracted the ceremonies for an immense time.

Nothing could exceed the richness and abundance of the gifts which these pious souls brought to the miracle-famed shrine where reposed the dear Elizabeth; the women left their rings, brooches and other jewels; some persons already presented chalices, missals, and sacerdotal requisites for the stately and beautiful Church, which they insisted should be immediately erected in her honor, "that she might rest there in a manner befitting her great sanctity, and that her soul might be more disposed to invoke God's mercies for her brethren."

But soon a new wonder was perceived which still more increased the veneration of the faithful, and demonstrated the solitude of the Lord for the glory of His Holy One. The next morning, when the coffin containing the sacred body, and to which had been affixed the seals of the Bishops, was opened, they found it full of a pure and delicate oil which gave forth a perfume like to that of the most precious spikenard. This oil flowed drop by drop from the relics of the

Saint, like the bounteous dew of Heaven; and when they collected or wiped these drops away, there came others, almost imperceptibly, and forming a kind of vapory exhalation. At this sight the clergy and the people experienced an increase of gratitude towards the Omnipotent Worker of so many wonders, and of enthusiasm towards her who was their object.

They understood at once, with the penetration conferred by Faith, the symbolic and mystic meaning of this phenomenon. "O wonderful miracle," said they, "worthy of her and responsive to our prayers! These limbs, which were worn by so many saintly mortifications, exhale a perfume like to that which would have been shed from Saint Magdalene's precious vase, had it been broken. Her body distils a holy and healing oil, because her life was passed in works of mercy; and as oil floats over every liquid whereon it is shed, so is mercy above all the judgments of God. This oil flows principally from her feet, because they so frequently bore her to the cabins of the poor, and to every spot where misery required consolation. This dear Elizabeth, like a fair and fruitful olive-tree, covered with bloom and perfumed with virtue, has been endowed with the gifts of oil, to illumine, to nourish and to cure. How many suffering bodies, how many languishing souls has she not healed by her charity and the example of her sanctity! How many thousand poor ones has she not supported with her own bread! By how many prodigies has she not illumined the Church? It is then with reason that this sweet liquid, this odoriferous oil appears to proclaim the sanctity of her who shone with so pure a splendor, who healed with so much sweetness, who fed the poor with so much generosity, and who through her whole life exhaled the rich and fragrant perfume of all virtues!"

This precious oil was gathered with great care and zeal by the people, and many cures were effected by its use in serious maladies and dangerous wounds. So many celestial favors, confirmed by the supreme suffrage of the Church, and the honors which it had so solemnly decreed to the new Saint, could not but increase the number and fervor of the faithful who visited her tomb, either to augment their piety, or to seek relief in their sufferings: her glory was soon extended

throughout the Christian world; it attracted to Marburg a crowd of pilgrims as great as that which all Europe contributed to send annually to the tomb of St. James of Compostella.

Numerous miracles were worked in favor of the humble and faithful pilgrims who made so long and so weary a journey. Amongst the many related we shall transcribe but two, which seem to us impressed with a character peculiarly interesting; and also because they tend to demonstrate how rapidly love for, and confidence in our dear Saint, were propagated and confirmed even in the most distant countries.

It was but natural that veneration for Elizabeth should be speedily established in Hungary, the land of her birth, and that the history of her holy life and the news of her canonization should have excited the most extraordinary feelings of joy and admiration in that country to which she specially belonged. Now, there was at Strigonia, in Hungary, an honest and pious couple, whose only child had just died. The father and mother were grievously afflicted by this loss. After having groaned and wept for a long time, they retired to rest, but still could not cease speaking of their little one. The mother slumbered for a while, and had a dream which inspired her to take at once the body of her deceased child to the tomb of St. Elizabeth, in Germany. Having awoke, she placed her trust in the Lord and said to her husband: "Let us not bury our little girl, but let us take her with faith to Saint Elizabeth, whom the Lord has glorified by many miracles, in order that by her prayers our child's life may be restored." The husband yielded to the wishes of his wife.

At an early hour next morning, when the friends were waiting to accompany the body to the church, in order to have it interred, they were amazed to see the father and mother laying it in a basket and setting out for the sanctuary of Elizabeth, heedless of the murmurs and derision by which they were assailed. They traveled for thirty days, weeping, and enduring great privation; but, at the end of that time, God had pity on their faith and grief, and regarding the merits of His dear Elizabeth, He sent back the innocent soul of the child to the inanimate body which was offered to Him with such simple

confidence, and restored the little one to life. Notwithstanding their excessive joy, the pious parents resolved upon completing their pilgrimage to the tomb of Elizabeth; they brought their resuscitated child to Marburg, and after making their thanksgiving there, they returned to Hungary to enjoy their miraculous happiness. This same young girl, in after years, accompanied into Germany a daughter of the king of Hungary who was given in marriage to the Duke of Bavaria; when she came to Ratisbon with her royal mistress, she there entered a Convent of Dominicans, over whom she became Prioress, and was still living in great sanctity when Theodoric wrote his history.

At the other extremity of Europe, in England, there was at this time a noble lady who had no children, and who, after living with her husband for twenty years, saw him die, to her great grief. In her widowhood and loneliness, she cut off her hair, assumed a plain, gray dress, and sought some solace by adopting twelve poor creatures as her children. These she lodged in her own house; she nourished and clothed, and with her own hands washed and served them. Wherever she found poor or sick people, she gave them alms for the love of God and of St. Elizabeth; for she had heard of Elizabeth, and had learned to love her better than anything in this world, and more than all the other saints of God. The thought of this beloved one never quitted her, and by day and by night she meditated on her blessed life. At the moment willed by God, this noble and pious lady died. Whilst all were regretting her, her confessor said to those who wept, that her body should be brought to the tomb of St. Elizabeth, for that during her life she had made a vow to go there. Her friends agreed to this, and they crossed the sea and traveled through an immense tract of country.

After seven weeks' journey, they arrived with her body at Marburg; when they had invoked the Saint with great fervor, the body of the good lady became re-animated, and she was restored to life, saying: "Oh, how happy am I! I have reposed on the bosom of St. Elizabeth!" Her friends wished her to return to England, but she refused to leave the place sanctified by her celestial protectress; she led there for fifteen years, a most holy life, in almost entire silence — speaking, in

fact, but to her confessor. He asked her one day why she had imposed on herself this perpetual silence. She replied, "Whilst I reposed on the bosom of Elizabeth, I experienced too much happiness and joy ever to occupy myself with anything else but to think how I could regain such bliss for eternity."

For three centuries, surrounded by a halo of glory, and receiving daily homage and thanksgiving for so many blessings, the body of Elizabeth remained in her magnificent church in the custody of the Teutonic knights, who always wore the badge of the cross for the defence of the Faith. But her heart — that most noble relic — was asked for and obtained by Godfrey, Bishop of Cambrai; was transported to his Episcopal city, and laid on an altar in his cathedral. Neither history nor tradition informs us of the motives that influenced the faithful of Germany to deprive themselves of this precious treasure in favor of a distant diocese. But can we not discover in it a mysterious dispensation of Providence, which permitted that this pure and tender heart should await at Cambrai another worthy of her, by its humility, charity, and ardent love of God — the heart of Fenelon?

The veneration of the dear St. Elizabeth was soon propagated throughout Christendom. Whilst millions came to pray at her tomb, a vast number of churches were erected under her invocation, particularly at Treves, Strasburg, Cassel, Prague, and Winchester; convents, hospitals, asylums for all kinds of moral and physical suffering, took her for their special patroness and protectress under God.

Her festival day was, according to the directions of the Sovereign Pontiff, observed throughout all the Church, and in some localities with surpassing pomp and splendor. The diocese of Hildesheim was distinguished for the solemnity with which this holy feast was celebrated, and for the harmony of the chant which resounded in the noble cathedral built there in honor of Mary, around the gigantic rose-tree of Louis the Good.

No sooner was Innocent IV seated on the Pontifical throne, than he granted an indulgence of one year and forty days to all who should

visit the tomb and church of our dear Saint during the last three days of Holy Week.

Sextus IV granted an indulgence of fifty years and fifty quarantines to all the faithful, who, penitent and confessed, should visit the churches of the order of St. Francis, in Saint Elizabeth's honor on her festival-day.

On the same day may be gained indulgences of one hundred days in two of the seven Basilicas of the Eternal City, Rome, viz, at "Santa Croce di Gerusalemme," and at "Santa Maria degli Angeli."

The rich inspirations of the Liturgy, the true Christian poetry, were also devoted to our dear Saint.

Proses, hymns, and numerous anthems, were composed and generally used in her honor.

The religious Orders, particularly the Franciscan, Dominican, Cistercian, and Premonstratensian, each consecrated to her a special Office.

These effusions of the faith and gratitude of generations, contemporaries of her glory, possessed all the charms of simplicity, grace, and tender piety, which distinguished the ancient liturgies, many of which are now unhappily forgotten; and thus were concentrated on this Elizabeth, whom we have seen so full of humility and contempt for self all the brilliant honors, the ineffable rewards, the unrivaled glories, which Holy Church has created and reserved for her Saints.

Yes, we may say it without fear — Saints of God, what glory is like unto yours! what human memory is cherished, preserved, consecrated as yours! what popularity can be compared to that which you enjoy in the hearts of all Christian people!

Had you sought after human glory, the contempt for which is one of the noblest features in your lives, your greatest efforts could never attain to that which you have acquired by trampling it under foot! Conquerors, legislators, geniuses, are forgotten, or are but honored at occasional moments by the vacillating feelings of men; most of them are disregarded or unknown. On the contrary, you, blessed children of the Earth you have sanctified, of the Heaven you enjoy, are known



and loved by all Christians; for every Christian has chosen at least one from amongst you, to be his friend, his patron, the confidant of his heart-thoughts, the depository of his timid hopes, the protector of his happiness, the consoler of his sadness!

Associated with the eternal duration of the Church, you are, like her, impassable and unchangeable in your glory. At least once, every year, the sun rises under your invocation, and thousands of Christians are congratulated, because they have the happiness to bear your name, and this blessed name is commemorated, chanted, proclaimed aloud in every sanctuary of Faith by thousands of innocent and pure souls; by the voices of spotless virgins, by those of the heroines of divine charity, by those of Levites and priests, by the whole sacerdotal hierarchy, from the Sovereign Pontiff to the lowest recluse in his cell, who together thus reply to and re-echo the concerts of the angels in Heaven.

Once again, O Saints of God! what glory is comparable to your glory during time and eternity?

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

WHAT BECAME OF THE CHILDREN AND RELATIVES OF THE DEAR ST.  
ELIZABETH AFTER HER DEATH, AND OF THE GREAT SAINTS  
SPRUNG FROM HER RACE.

O quam pulchra est casta generatio eum claritate: immortalis est enim memoria illius; quoniam et apud Deum nota est et apud homines . . . in perpetuum coronata triumphat incoinquinatorum certaminum præmium vincens. — *Sap.* iv. 1, 2.

**W**E will doubtless be forgiven for inserting here an abridged account of the destinies of the children of the dear St. Elizabeth, as well as those of the principal personages who figured in the history of her blessed life. Following, then, the order in which they departed out of this world, we must first notice her father, king Andrew. From the time he heard of his daughter's death, he fell into a deep melancholy, principally produced by the ideas that he had not sufficiently known or appreciated her virtues, and that he had too soon become resigned to leave her in misery and abjection; but he had the consolation of seeing her sanctity recognized by the Church, and proclaimed throughout the Christian world, and he died in a short time after her canonization. The Duchess Sophia, her mother-in-law, died in 1238, two years after having assisted at the solemn translation of the remains of her whose high destiny she had so long misunderstood: she was, by her own desire, interred at the convent of St. Catherine, at Eisenach, which her husband, Duke Hermann, had founded.

The most fervent of the admirers and champions of the Saint, her brother-in-law, Conrad, did not long survive the ample reparation he made for the wrongs he had done her. His piety, courage, and great humility made him be chosen as Grand Master of the Teutonic Order

which he had embraced in the spirit of penance. He consecrated a great part of his wealth to the erection of the church which bears the name of Elizabeth at Marburg, of which he had the glory of being the founder. It was doubtless to be enabled to watch over and expedite this great undertaking, or, perhaps, through affection for the places sanctified by his blessed sister, that he chose Marburg as the center and residence of the Order of which he was the head, and built there the palace called the Commandery, the ruins of which are still to be seen. His prolonged visits to Hesse did not hinder him from presiding over the new development which the Teutonic knights exhibited in Prussia, when the Duke of Masovia called upon them to succor the Christians against the Pagans. Conrad fought with bravery and skill; he extended the possessions of his Order — he obtained from the Pope the investiture of the province that was to be the theater of its greatest glory. But before the close of his life, he was anxious to revisit Rome. After arriving there he fell seriously ill. During his malady, he attained to such a degree of interior purity, that he could not, without great pain even of body, endure the presence of anyone who was in the state of mortal sin, so that those who were in his service were obliged to abstain from all evil. He had, for confessor, the venerable abbot of Hagen, of the Order of Citeaux.

One day, when this holy Religious came to the Landgrave's bedside, he perceived him absorbed in a state of ecstasy. When he was restored, the abbot asked him what he had seen in the vision. Conrad replied: "I was before the throne of the eternal Judge, and my destiny was severely examined. Justice ordained that I should be condemned to the pains of purgatory for five years; but my good sister Elizabeth approached the tribunal, and obtained the remission of this suffering. Know then that I shall die of this illness, and that I shall enjoy eternal glory."

He died soon after, having previously given directions that his body should be brought to Marburg to repose near that of the Saint in the church he had commenced in her honor. His tomb is still to be seen there, and on it he is represented as piously sleeping in the Lord,

holding in his hand the discipline, as he had presented it to the people to strike him on the ruins of Fritzlar.

If Conrad so completely atoned for his sins against God and St. Elizabeth, his brother, Henry Raspon, acted in a very different manner, and his name is painfully intermingled with the lives of the children of the Saint. These children seem to us, from all the memorials which remain of them, to have been penetrated with gratitude to God for having deigned to will that they should receive being from a Saint, and also to have been justly proud in the sight of men of so glorious an origin; in the Charters and other official documents, they always inscribed themselves, Son or Daughter of St. Elizabeth, before all their titles of sovereignty or nobility

Two of them, the younger children, Sophia and Gertrude, accomplished their days in peace in the asylums she had chosen for them amongst the virgins consecrated to the Lord — one at Kitzingen, the other at Aldenberg near Wetzlar. Each became abbess of her community. Gertrude was elected in 1249, and governed her monastery during forty-nine years. She walked worthily in the footsteps of her holy mother by her piety and generosity to the poor; miracles have been attributed to her, and she has always borne the title of the “Blessed.” On the petition of the Emperor Louis of Bavaria, Clement VI granted indulgences to all who should celebrate her feast. Her tomb is still to be seen at Aldenberg, as well many several precious relics of her blessed mother which she had placed there with pious care. Amongst these are a chasuble, made of red velvet from a robe of St. Elizabeth; a silver gilt cup, in which she served the poor in her hospital with drink; her wedding ring; and some other memorials, most of which are now in the castle of Braunfels and in the possession of the prince of Solms.

The other two children of Elizabeth, her son Hermann, and her daughter Sophia, experienced a very different fate, and were, like their mother, sufferers from the injustice of men.

Hermann, when arrived at the age of 16 years, in 1239, took possession of his father’s dominions, which his uncle had governed during his minority. He soon after traveled to France to visit the holy

King Louis IX and was present, as we have already seen, at the great court held at Saumur, where his quality as son of St. Elizabeth attracted to him universal attention, and where Queen Blanche, of Castile, bestowed on him marks of the most tender affection. He espoused Helen, daughter of Duke Otho of Brunswick; all seemed to promise him a brilliant and happy future, when he died at the age of eighteen years in 1241, at Kreutzburg, where he was born; his early death is usually attributed to poison, administered to him by a woman named Bertha de Seebach, at the instigation of his unworthy uncle, Henry. Before breathing his last sigh, the unfortunate young man expressed his desire of being interred near his blessed mother; but Henry, who immediately resumed the reins of government, would not allow him even this consolation, fearing the Saint would restore him to life, as she had resuscitated so many dead persons. So he had his body conveyed to Reinhartsbrunn, where his sepulchral monument is still to be seen near that of his father.

Henry *Raspon*, now sole master of and lawful heir to the vast possessions of the house of Thuringia, soon became the chief of the opposition party, which increased every day in Germany, and which was excited by the attacks made by the Emperor Frederic II against the independence of the lesser princes and the rights of the Church. Pope Innocent IV, having fulminated the sentence of deposition against Frederic at the Council of Lyons, the Duke of Thuringia was naturally put forward in the ranks to supply his place. Though it was thought that the imperial crown was the object of his ambition, yet he always alleged unfitness for that great dignity. The Pope exhorted him to devote himself to the welfare of Christianity and sent him considerable subsidies. He allowed himself to be elected King of the Romans in 1246, and was anointed in the following year. He made war with tolerable success against Frederic and his son Conrad, but he did not long enjoy his new dignity. In 1248 death carried him off, and though he had been married three times, he left no children. The Christian people saw in the extinction of his race the just chastisement of his perfidy to Elizabeth, and of the crime imputed to him in regard to his nephew. He requested that his heart should be carried to the

convent of Dominicans which he had founded at Eisenach, in expiation of his misdeeds towards his sister-in-law.

After his death Thuringia was exposed to all the horrors of a war of succession. The male heirs of the ancient Dukes of Thuringia were extinct in the person of Henry; so the possessions descended to the female line. Sophia, eldest daughter of St. Elizabeth and Duke Louis, married, as we have seen, to the Duke of Brabant, presented herself to take possession of the inheritance of her father, in her own name and in that of her son Henry, surnamed the *Infant* from being then but three years old.

She was immediately acknowledged in Hesse, which province she governed with great wisdom and courage during the long minority of her son.

But in Thuringia she found a formidable rival in the person of her cousin-german, Henry the *Illustrious*, Margrave of Misnia, son of Guta, sister of Duke Louis and King Henry. This prince, profiting of the dissensions which had arisen in Thuringia after the death of Henry, as well as of those by which the whole empire was convulsed, succeeded in obtaining possession of a great part of Thuringia, and above all, of the castle of Wartburg. There was no longer an emperor recognized to do justice in the holy Roman empire since the decline of the House of Swabia. Sophia obtained the assistance of a valiant and devoted prince, Albert Duke of Brunswick, whose daughter was affianced to the young Henry of Brabant. But in despite of the efforts of this ally, and of the courage with which Sophia always took part in his warlike expeditions, the Margrave Henry retained possession of his usurped power. We shall not enter into the details of this fearful struggle, but shall confine ourselves to the narration of a few particulars which serve to depict Sophia's character, and to show how the faithful people surrounded the remembrance of the dear Saint's descendants with the halo of poesy in their traditions. Thus, it is said, that in the first conference which took place between Sophia and the Margrave, the latter was disposed to listen to his cousin; whilst he spoke to her, his marshal, the Lord de Schlottheim, took him aside and said: "My Lord, what are you about to do? If it were possible that you

could have one foot in Heaven and the other in Wartburg, you should withdraw that which was in Heaven the better to retain Wartburg.” Henry allowed himself to be influenced by this, and said to the Duchess, “Dear cousin, I must reflect on these matters, and consult my peers.” Then Sophia burst into tears, and throwing her glove from off her right hand, she said, “O enemy of all justice, I say to thee, Satan, that I throw thee my gauntlet, take it, and with it all crafty and perfidious counselors.” The glove arose in the air and disappeared, and very soon after the evil counsellor fell ill and died.

Later still, in 1264, in another conference, Sophia, despairing of being able to convince her rival by reason, or of subduing him by force, sought to appeal to his sense of religion; she brought with her a relic of her holy mother, and exacted that he should swear on this sacred memorial of her who had so much honored Thuringia, that he thought her claims to the country just and well-founded.

The noble and touching faith of the daughter in the influence of her mother’s remembrance over the conscience of her worldly adversary was deceived. Henry swore falsely, and twenty of his knights supported his oath.

The inhabitants of Eisenach became energetic partisans of Sophia, as if they wished to expiate their former ingratitude to Elizabeth by devotion to her child. They even besieged Wartburg, where the Margrave’s forces were garrisoned, and erected two forts the better to attack the castle. But Henry surprised the town by night and got possession of it by treachery. He put to death the principal friends of the daughter and grandson of Elizabeth. To terrify the inhabitants, he fastened Welspeche, the most earnest supporter of their cause, to a war-machine, and had the barbarity to order that he should be thus flung from the summit of Wartburg into the town of Eisenach; but the brave man, while cleaving the air, cried out, “Thuringia belongs by right to the Infant of Brabant.” Tradition alleges that he suffered this punishment three times, and that he again and again repeated, “Thuringia belongs to the Infant of Brabant,” and that it was only after the third fall the patriot martyr expired. Sophia arrived soon after from Hesse and came to Eisenach; she presented herself at the gate of St.

George, which she found closed, and demanded admittance; and as the inhabitants did not reply, she seized a hatchet, and struck the oaken gate with such violence that she left in it a cleft which was visible for two centuries after.

In 1265, Duke Albert of Brunswick, having been completely defeated and taken prisoner by the son of the Margrave, it became necessary to enter into a definite arrangement. Sophia was obliged to renounce all her pretensions to Thuringia, which remained thenceforth in the possession of the House of Misnia; in satisfaction, however, the sovereignty of Hesse was guaranteed to her son, Henry the *Infant*, and his posterity. This division of the provinces has continued to our own time, and the existing families of Hesse and Saxony are descended from the two princes whose rights were fixed in this treaty.

Sophia died in 1284, at the age of sixty years, after having during her life carefully maintained the prosperity of her country and of her family.

She reposes at Marburg, in the same tomb with her son, and in the church dedicated to her holy mother. Her recumbent statue, wearing an expression as if engaged in prayer, as was the custom of Catholic ages, is still to be seen there; and by her side, that son over whom she had watched with so much courage and maternal solicitude. The face of the statue is a good deal worn away by the kisses of the pilgrims, who transferred to her a portion of their love for her mother.

Henry I, surnamed the *Infant*, son of Sophia and grandson of St. Elizabeth, and first sovereign of Hesse as an isolated and independent state, reigned until 1308, rich in glory and the affection of his people, whom he preserved from all rapine and invasion. He was sixty-five years old at the time of his death, though he is represented but as a little child upon the tomb shared by him and his mother. From him sprung two different branches of the House of Hesse, with whom most of the royal families of Europe are allied, and share by this means in the glory of reckoning Saint Elizabeth amongst their ancestors.

Having given these details concerning the descendants of St. Elizabeth, we may be permitted to speak of the family from which she sprung, in which were numbered many holy personages, upon whom



the example of our dear Saint must have had considerable influence. In the maternal line, her aunt, St. Hedwige, Duchess of Poland and Silesia, survived her; we have already seen that the pious example of this renowned princess had affected Elizabeth in her tender age, and we may be permitted to think that the Duchess Hedwige was strengthened in her fervor and austerity, by what she was enabled to learn of the life of her young niece, and by the solemn proclamation of her blessed immortality in Heaven and on Earth. It appears as if Hedwige sought more rapidly to follow the youthful pilot to the happy port where both were to land so gloriously. At the death of Elizabeth she had been lent a veil worn by our Saint; Hedwige entertained for this relic the greatest veneration, and would never leave it off until she had breathed her last sigh, and certainly no one merited better this symbolic gift.

Married at the age of twelve years to Duke Henry the *Bearded*, after having borne him six children, when still very young, she with her husband made a vow to live thenceforth as brother and sister. She resolved to found a great monastery for Cistercian nuns near a place where her husband had fallen into a marsh, whence he was delivered by an angel. This monastery was called Trebnitz, because when the Duke inquired of the new religious, whether they were well supplied, they replied that they wanted not for anything — in Polish, *Trzebanic*. Hedwige had her daughter Gertrude appointed abbess of this house, whither she soon retired herself and with her husband's permission took the religious habit, but neither the vow of obedience, nor of poverty, that she might not be restricted in alms-giving.

During her entire life she rivaled her holy niece by her humility and extraordinary mortifications: in reading of the almost incredible austerities she inflicted on her frail body, we know not which to admire most, the indomitable strength of her will, or the succor granted by the Lord to nature when it strives to rise above its own abasement to ascend to Him. Everywhere she sought the lowest place, being penetrated with the spirit that saved the Canaanite woman, when she begged from Jesus the crumbs that fell from the tables of the children of God; thus Hedwige sought no other food than that left at

the tables of nuns and monks whom she delighted to serve. But it was particularly by her charity and compassion that she rivaled our dear Elizabeth.

“She had,” says a pious writer, “so tender a heart that she could not see any one weep without shedding tears in abundance, nor take repose when she knew that others endured anguish or weariness.

“She had always poor people at her table, whom she served on her knees before she would sit down; and often when unobserved she would kiss their foot-prints, honoring in them Jesus Christ, who being the King of glory became poor for our sakes. So tenderly did she love the poor that she often bought from them pieces of bread which the religious gave them as alms, and these she kissed and ate as if they were the bread of angels, and a sacred food. Amongst the poor there were thirteen of those who suffered most whom she selected to remind her of Christ and His apostles; these she brought with her wherever she went; had them well lodged and clothed, and always wished that they should dine before her, that she might serve them herself. She always sent them some of the best food set before her, for she was so charitable, that she would not eat the least thing, even if it were but a pear, with any satisfaction if the poor had not previously tasted of it.”

She would never permit her vassals and serfs to be treated harshly when unable to pay their farm-rents and dues; she incessantly visited the tribunals where the law-suits of the poor were decided, and when she found the judges inclined to treat them with severity, she would empower the chaplain, by whom she was always accompanied in these visits, to reverse the sentence. Her husband entertained for her the utmost love and respect, and frequently gave proofs of how much he sympathized in her compassion for the poor; for instance, through affection for her, he ordered that whenever Hedwige passed the public prisons, the gates should be thrown open, and all the captives set at liberty.

All her exercises of piety were marked by extreme fervor; every day she heard as many masses as there were priests to offer them, and each time she shed an abundance of tears. She was pre-eminently

devoted to the holy Virgin, and always retained a little picture of that benign mother, to which in her simplicity she spoke, which she carried with her when visiting the sick, who frequently recovered when she had, when using it, given them her blessing. Her husband having been wounded and taken prisoner by Duke Conrad, his rival, she went alone and on foot to seek this prince, who was then glowing and exulting in his victory: when he perceived her he thought it was an angel, and without the least resistance, he agreed to terms of peace, and gave her husband freedom.

In a short time she lost this beloved spouse, and soon after her son Henry, on whom she had lavished the most intense affection, and who was killed when fighting for the defense of Faith and European independence, against the Tartar hordes. She endured these afflictions with holy resignation to God's divine will. But her own death speedily ensued. On the feast of the nativity of the Blessed Virgin, in the year 1243, the nun in attendance on her saw a number of fair young maidens, surrounded with supernatural light, approaching Hedwige, who said to them with ineffable joy: "Welcome, dear Saints, and good friends, Magdalene, Catherine, Thecla, Ursula, and all you who have come to me." Then they spoke in Latin, but the lay sister did not understand what they said. On the 15th of October following, she breathed her last sigh in blessing God.

Numerous miracles having attested her sanctity, she was canonized by Pope Clement IV in 1267. When the solemn translation of her relics took place in the following year, the officiants found her hand clasped on the little image of the Blessed Virgin which she had so dearly loved.

Whilst St. Hedwige shed such brilliant luster on the maternal line of Elizabeth, the example of our dear Saint produced effects, if not more precious, at least more numerous, on the members of her father's family, in the illustrious house of Hungary, which alone, of all the royal races of Europe, reckoned already three canonized Saints amongst its kings, St. Stephen, St. Emeric, and St. Ladislaus.

Bela IV, brother of our dear Elizabeth, and successor to his father, showed himself worthy of being the brother of such a sister, and the

father of two other saints, by the piety, courage, and resignation he manifested during a reign of thirty-five years, almost all of which was a struggle against the victorious Tartars. Induced by the example of his sister, he joined the Third Order of St. Francis, and ordered that he should be interred in the church which the Franciscans had erected at Strigonia, under the invocation of St. Elizabeth, notwithstanding the opposition of those who entreated him not to abandon the ancient burial-place of the kings.

The second brother of our Saint, Coloman, seems to have been still more charmed by the odor of perfection, which was, as it were, exhaled by the holy life of his sister. Having espoused a Polish princess of surpassing beauty, Salome, daughter of the duke of Cracovia, who had been affianced and brought up with him from the age of three years, he made with her, on their marriage day, a vow of perpetual chastity, which they preserved with the utmost fidelity. Elected king of Galicia, he defended that part of Poland against the Tartars, and died gloriously combatting against them, for his country and his God. His widow founded a convent of Franciscan Friars, and another of Poor Clares, in the latter of which she took the veil, where she exercised the most heroic virtues, and was honored by the most particular favors of the divine mercy.

On the day of her death in 1268, the attendants heard in the air a sweet chorus of harmonious voices chanting these words: *Fronduit, floruit virgula Aaron*. A nun, remarking that her countenance wore a most joyful expression, and that she smiled frequently, said to her, "Madam, do you see anything so pleasing as to make you smile in the midst of suffering?" "Oh, yes," replied the blessed one, "I see our Lady, the Blessed Virgin, mother of our Lord, which affords me the greatest happiness." At the moment that she breathed her last sigh, the attendants saw, as it were, a little star coming from her lips and ascending towards Heaven.

But the daughters of Bela IV, and consequently nieces of Elizabeth, so closely related by their sex to her who was the honor of their family, strove also to imitate her by the austerity and sanctity of their lives.

One of them, known to the Church under the name of the Blessed Margaret of Hungary, was incessantly occupied in considering the example left her by her glorious aunt, and her whole life showed how much she profited by it. Devoted to the Lord, even before her birth, by her mother Mary, daughter of the emperor of Constantinople, as a propitiatory offering to obtain from Heaven some alleviation of the miseries inflicted by the Tartars on the Hungarians, her birth was signalized by a brilliant victory over the infidels, as if God had thus wished to testify His acceptance of the sacrifice. Her pious parents, faithful to their promise, sent her at the age of three years and a half to a convent of Dominicans. Gifted with a vast intelligence and a soul most ardent, she took the veil at the age of twelve years, though her angelic beauty and royal birth caused her to be sought after in marriage by several powerful princes; she remained, however, in her convent for the rest of her life, which was for about twenty-four years. This time, apparently so short, was entirely employed by her in works of charity, of fervent piety, of extreme austerity, in a word, of all that could develop, in her heart, and even in her exterior, the pure love of God. Mary and the cross were the means by which she aspired to this love and towards Him who was its object. She could never mention the name of the holy Virgin without adding, *Mother of God and my hope* At the age of four years she, for the first time, saw a cross, whereupon she asked the nuns, "What is this tree?" "It was upon such a one," they replied, "that the Son of God shed His blood for our salvation and that of the world." At these words the child ran towards the Crucifix and kissed it with ardor. From that time forward she never saw a cross without kneeling to venerate it, and when lying down to sleep she used to place a crucifix on her eyelids, that it might be the first object on which her sight would rest when awaking.

God granted to her the gift of miracles and of prophecy, and the grace to reign over the hearts of her people, without ever leaving her convent; she attended to the sick and poor who came to seek her, with so much grace, with a manner so charmingly kind, that for a long time after her death, when anything was awkwardly or disagreeably done, the Hungarian people used to say, as a kind of proverb, "It is easily

seen that this was not done after the manner of sister Margaret." She was but twenty-eight years old when God called her from her family, her country, and the Order which was so justly proud of her, to take her place by the aide of the glorious Elizabeth in Heaven.

Her sister Cunegunda, or Kingea, married in 1239 to Boleslaus the *Bashful*, Duke of Poland, engaged her husband to make with her a solemn vow of chastity, which they observed during forty years of married life. When she became a widow in 1279, at the same time with her sister Yolande, who was married also to a Boleslaus, Duke of Kalitz in Poland, both resolved to take the veil, and to that effect entered, as did their aunt Salome, into the Order of Poor Clares, which appears to have offered such irresistible attractions to the princesses of that age. Cunegunda died in 1292, after having given an example of the greatest austerity, and having received from Heaven the gift of miracles. She has always been regarded in Poland as a Saint and the Patroness of the country. Her tomb has been an object of the veneration of all the Slavonian races. Many pilgrimages were made to it, and Monday in each week specially consecrated to her honor. The prayer used by the pious pilgrims has been preserved. They invoked the blessed Cunegunda at the same time with the glorious Virgin Mary and St. Clare. More than three centuries after her death the devotion towards her was so far from having declined or chilled, that Sigismund, king of Poland in 1628, addressed a most urgent letter to Pope Urban VIII to obtain the official canonization of her whom the Poles had for so long a time proclaimed as their tutelary Saint. In 1690, Alexander VIII approved of the public veneration paid to her, and later still, Clement IX recognized her solemnly as Patroness of Poland and Lithuania.

It seemed as if the House of Hungary had been, in a manner, destined to rear up for Heaven saintly princesses of this blessed race, married, as was our Elizabeth, to the Sovereigns of distant countries, and some of whom, if they themselves did not shine with special glory, were at least worthy of being the mothers of Saints.

Thus Yolande, sister of Elizabeth, was married to the king of Aragon, James the *Conqueror*, and was grandmother to St. Elizabeth

of Portugal; and Constance, sister of King Andrew, was mother of that Agnes of Bohemia whose magnificent eulogium by the Sovereign Pontiff we have already read. After having refused the hand of the King of England, the King of the Romans, and the Emperor Frederic II, even at the risk of exposing her country to the scourge of war, after having passed forty-six years in her monastery, cinctured with the cord of St. Francis, and after having walked barefooted in the paths of St. Clare and St. Elizabeth, in the most exemplary practice of humility, of poverty, and of charity, Agnes died in 1283, and has ever since been venerated in Bohemia and Germany as a Saint, even though the Holy See did not accede to the petition made for her canonization by the Emperor Charles IV, whose life was twice saved by her invocation.

As to St. Elizabeth of Portugal, it would take a volume to relate the many most interesting and moving anecdotes of her glorious life; and we can dedicate to it but a few pages. Born in 1271, of Peter, king of Aragon and Constance of Sicily, she seemed as if predestined for heavenly glory by the name which was given her, for contrary to the then existing custom in Spain of calling princesses after their mothers or grandmothers, she was named Elizabeth after the dear Saint who was her father's maternal aunt. She was married at the age of fifteen years to Denis, king of Portugal; but far from finding as did her holy patroness a spouse worthy of her, she was for a long time afflicted by his bad treatment and grieved by his infidelity.

Yet this made her but more earnest in fulfilling her duties as a wife; she sought to reform the king by increased affection and unalterable patience.

When her ladies reproached her with treating his faults too leniently, she would reply: "If the king sins, am I to lose patience, and thus add my transgressions to his? I love better to confide my sorrows to God and His holy Saints, and to strive to win back my husband by gentleness." She carried indulgence and resignation to such a degree, as even to smile upon the king's mistresses, and to bring up his natural children with her own, with great solicitude for their present and future welfare.

The eldest of the king's legitimate children, indignant at his father's conduct, revolted against him. Denis persisted in accusing Elizabeth of being an accomplice in this proceeding; he deprived her of her dower and all her wealth, and confined her in a fortress. No sooner was she delivered from this unjust captivity, than she directed all her energies to effect a reconciliation between her husband and her son; finding her efforts useless, she selected the moment when the army of the king and that of the Infant were ranged in battle array, and just about to engage in the strife, to mount her horse, and to ride alone between the two lines, amid a shower of arrows; she entreated the combatants to suspend hostilities. The soldiers, less inexorable than their masters, were affected by so much devotion; they laid down their arms, and thus forced the father and son to make terms of peace. Some time after she restored union between two of her sons who were engaged in a sanguinary war; then between her brother, the king of Aragon, and her son-in-law, the king of Castile, for at the solicitation of the Spanish people she became mediatrix between their sovereigns. Thus she merited the noble title decreed to her by the universal Church, "Mother of peace and of the country. *Elisabeth pacis et patriæ mater.*"

Her husband having fallen dangerously ill, she tended him with the most affectionate care and received his last sigh. Immediately after she assumed the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, which for many years she had kept enclosed in a casket, and which from the first day of her widowhood became her only costume. She made a pilgrimage to Compostella for the eternal repose of the soul of her husband, and offered for that intention the crown of precious stones which she had worn on her wedding-day.

She passed the remainder of her life in the practice of all virtues, rivaling her holy Patroness in charity, austerity, and in the faithful observance of all the ceremonies of the Church. She loved to listen to the solemn offices and the ecclesiastical chant, and every day assisted at two Masses with music. A year before her death she wished to revisit the shrine of St. James of Compostella, but on foot, disguised as a peasant, and begging her bread as she went along, that she might



not be recognized by the people, nor exposed to their veneration. In 1386, her son, the king of Portugal, having declared war against her son-in-law, the king of Castile, she resolved, despite of her great age, to employ her remaining strength in walking for seven days to effect a reconciliation between them. She achieved this last victory, but the fatigue of the journey, thus accomplished during the great heat of summer, brought her to the verge of the tomb. "Behold," said she on the eve of her death, "behold the blessed Virgin in her snow-white robe, who comes to announce my happiness."

She died on the 8th of July. Three centuries after her demise she was canonized by Pope Urban VIII with great solemnity, and that holy Pontiff composed in her honor one of the most beautiful offices in the Roman liturgy. Thus was twice blessed and consecrated in Heaven and on Earth this dear name of Elizabeth which we have so often repeated, but which we have written each time with new and sweet emotion.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

OF THE NOBLE CHURCH THAT WAS ERECTED AT MARBURG IN HONOR  
OF THE DEAR ST. ELIZABETH; AND HOW HER PRECIOUS RELICS  
WERE PROFANED; AND ALSO THE CONCLUSION OF THIS HISTORY.

Ave gemma speciosa  
Mulierum sidus, rosa,  
Ex regali stirpe nata  
Nunc in cœlis coronata  
Salve rosa pietatis,  
Salve flos Hungariæ,  
Salve fulgens margarita,  
In cœlesti sede sita;  
Roga regem Majestatis  
Ut nos salvet hodie  
Lumen mittens caritatis  
Ac cœlestis gratiæ.

*Ancient Office of St. Elizabeth.*

**I**N the bosom of a valley watered by the silvery Lahn, one eminence stands detached from the surrounding heights. The ancient Gothic castle of Marburg erected by the grandson of Elizabeth crowns its summit; the houses and gardens of the city and the University are grouped, terrace-like, around its sides and at its foot; the two tapering towers and the high roof of the church of St. Elizabeth arise between it and the banks of the river, which here winds around as if to encircle the city. Outside the gates green meadows, charming gardens, long and beautiful avenues, attract the attention of the traveler, and induce him to seek the shade of the venerable trees that cover the surrounding hills, whence he may enjoy at his leisure the rare beauty of the landscape.

We know not if it be our affection for all that was sanctified by the memory of Elizabeth that influences us, but it seems to us that out of

Italy we have never seen a site more picturesque, more attractive, more in accordance with the traditions attached to it.

Wheresoever we turn in the neighborhood of Marburg we find the same beauties under aspects infinitely varied.

The Lahn flowing on, calm and pure, between its verdant banks, the admirable proportions of the Cathedral, its majestic elevation over all that surrounds it, the graceful and picture-like arrangement of the old-fashioned houses, with the towers of the ancient castle, all tend to fix the attention; we imagine we see realized some of the exquisite scenery which the illuminations of old missals and the paintings of the ancient Catholic Schools still depict to us in the background of the views which they represent.

It seems to us, then, almost impossible not to love and admire the noble city of Marburg, even when visiting it without any idea of the treasures it contains, but how much more when we seek there the traces of the dear St. Elizabeth; when we find memorials of her on every side; when we learn that her name is enshrined in every heart, on every lip, and connected with every monument. There still remain some portions of the convent and the hospital founded by her; these buildings, now so dilapidated, were for a long time the residence of the Commander of the Teutonic Order in Hesse; they are situated between the church and the river, and present an antique, picturesque appearance. Amongst them, one is most remarkable from its pointed gables; it is called the *Firmaney* (Infirmary), and tradition, supported by the opinions of several historians, points this out as the place where Elizabeth died. The city gate nearest the church is called St. Elizabeth's gate; at a little distance outside it, on the road leading to Wehrda, the passenger perceives a fountain with a triple jet, which is named *Elisabethsbrunn*. It was there she was accustomed to wash the garments of the poor. A large blue stone on which she used to kneel when engaged in this laborious occupation was removed to the Church, and is still to be seen there. Further on he arrives at *Elizabeth's bridge*, at a little distance from it he sees *Elizabeth's mill*, buildings which were erected, most probably, during the lifetime of the Saint. At the other side of the city, the pathway of the road from

Cassel crosses a bridge, passes the hill whereon the castle was built, and winding under the shady groves of the botanic garden, leads to the front of the church; this path is still called the pilgrim's stone, (Pilgrimstein.) It is a memorial of the long files of pilgrims who, during three centuries, used to come from all parts of Germany, and even from the most distant lands of Christendom, to visit the holy shrine; and whose confluence there contributed so much to the prosperity of Marburg, which was, before that time, but an unwallled town.

Even the severe Conrad has here his place in the popular memory; a fountain called *Münchsbrunn*, is surmounted by his statue draped in a monk's habit, with a large open book resting on his heart; the people say that each night at twelve o'clock he turns a page of this volume.

But it is time to speak of the celebrated church which is here, the great monument of Elizabeth's glory. It is erected, as we have already said, upon the banks of the Lahn, at the foot of the mountain whereon stands the castle, and in front of a rocky eminence which serves to connect this kind of promontory with the neighboring hills. The ground about it is marshy, and must have presented immense difficulties to the architect; but it would be impossible to point out a better site, or one more calculated to display the beauties of the edifice, or in which the building could tend more to embellish the appearance of the city and surrounding scenery. The traveler should walk in the neighborhood, and successively study the different points of view, to appreciate how much the situation contributes to the exquisite appearance of its noble monument; and the result of his examination would be the thought that it would be almost impossible to discover a more appropriate site. This discrimination in choosing a suitable foundation was a distinctive feature in the erection of all the gorgeous piles left us by our Catholic forefathers. The beauty of the church and the extraordinary advantages of its position have given rise to many popular traditions respecting its origin; according to these it was Elizabeth who first entertained the idea of erecting a church; she wished that it should be built on the height of a rock, still called *Kirchspitze*, which overtops the actual edifice; she wished also to

erect there a gigantic tower, with a bell that might be heard in Hungary. But all her efforts were vain; the ground was examined in different directions, but it was found impossible even to lay the foundations, and the old story says that the work performed during the day was destroyed every night. At length, one day, she lifted a stone, almost impatiently, and threw it from the rock, declaring at the same time, that wherever that should fall she would erect the church. The stone rested on the spot where the magnificent building is to be seen at this day; her laborers commenced immediately and their work proceeded prosperously. This tradition receives some confirmation from the marshy nature of the soil in which the foundations were laid, which would have been quite sufficient to deter anyone from building there without being actuated by some supernatural motive.

The people also relate that, during the long period occupied in erecting this vast edifice, the funds contributed to defray all the expenses for the building were kept in an unlocked chest, from which every man could take what was justly due to him; and if cupidity induced any one to commit fraud by taking more than his right, the money would vanish from him and return to the coffer. An expressive symbol of the feelings of faith and disinterestedness, which the modern generations seem to have lost, and with them the power of rivaling these wonders of Christian architecture.

Let us now approach the church, through a garden of roses — flowers which here, as well as at Wartburg, seem specially consecrated to Elizabeth. Let us first mention that the foundation stone of the noble pile was laid by the good Landgrave Conrad on the vigil of the Assumption in the year 1235, some months after the canonization of the Saint, and that this date makes the church of Saint Elizabeth the first that was erected in Germany entirely in the purely pointed style. It required twenty years to lay the foundations, and twenty-eight more to build the essential parts, which were not finished until 1283. The interior, the spires, and the magnificent whole, which we admire at the present day, were not completed until during the fourteenth century. The church is 230 feet long, 83 wide; the

foundations are 40 feet in depth; the height of the interior vaulted roof is 70 feet, and that of the two towers with their spires 303 feet.

What particularly strikes the eye on entering this building is the admirable harmony of all its parts, as well interiorly as exteriorly; in this respect it is unrivaled. Though a century and a half elapsed before it was completed, one might imagine that it sprung in a single day from the mold of the holy and vigorous mind that conceived it. It is the monument, not alone the most ancient, but also the most pure and perfect of pointed architecture in Germany, and we think that throughout Europe there is not another edifice so utterly free from the influence of new styles foreign to its spirit, as well as from all admixture of the forms that preceded or followed it.

We find here no trace of the arch called Roman or Byzantine, except in a little lateral door of the nave, and it is there but the effect of a superabundance of flower-shaped ornaments, which have in a very slight degree altered the character of the beautiful, simply-pointed arch.

From this rare and wonderful unity in the excellent proportions of the edifice there results an admirable whole, which tends to create emotions of piety and interior recollection, from which even, the souls of men who are too frequently utter strangers to the religious inspirations of art, can with difficulty escape.

When straying under these arches, at once so light and simple, yet so solid, in the silence and desolation which pervades the vast enclosure, when tasting, as it were, the calm and freshness which reigns throughout it, we can almost imagine that we are breathing the same atmosphere with Elizabeth; and we can well recognize in this monument erected to commemorate her glory, the most faithful representation of her personal character. The incidents of her holy life seem all reflected in it. We find there, as in herself, something humble, yet at the same time aspiring — something at once graceful and austere, which charms us, whilst it also excites some feelings of awe. The stones, all consecrated and marked with the pontifical cross, resemble so many acts of her life all elevated to God in Heaven, whilst she strove to detach her heart from everything that could

enchain it to the Earth. All in this holy place tends to inspire fervor and a love of simplicity, the marked features of Elizabeth's character. Indeed, we feel almost tempted to believe with the people, despite of the testimony of historic dates, that to her we may attribute the idea, the plan, and even the erection of this glorious edifice; and more particularly, when there exists not the record of the name of any architect, mason, or workman of any kind whatsoever, who was engaged during a period of more than fifty years, on this immense undertaking. They seem to have taken the same pains to hide themselves from the praise of posterity, that vain men do to render their insignificant work eternal.

How sublimely nameless! they sought but to merge their glory in that of the dear Saint, the beloved of Christ and of the poor; and when their laborious task was completed, they died as they had lived, unknowing, unknown; in the simplicity of their hearts forgetting all but God and Elizabeth, and unremembered by all save Him and her.

When seeking their names, and finding our researches useless, we become aware that higher feelings than those derivable from the success of material efforts, or from the genius of cultivated minds governed by purely human motives, animated the builders of these houses of God (truly worthy of that name), which were erected before the miserable degradation of ecclesiastical architecture, during and since the 16th century. We discover the unspeakable effects of the mysterious and superior life, produced in these fruits of the ancient power of our faith, and we find ourselves repeating the words of Saint Augustine: "No one could enter here if these beams and these stones did not adhere to each other in a certain order — if they were not cemented by a pacific cohesion — if, so to speak, they did not love each other."

If we might define in a few words what appears to us to be the distinctive character of this church of Saint Elizabeth, we would say that it is a virginal simplicity and purity. The true Christian architecture is to be seen there in all its primitive beauty, in all its youthful grace, newly blooming in the sunlight of faith. In comparing it with the gorgeous and more recently built Cathedrals of Strasburg,

Cologne, Amiens, Salisbury, &c., with all these varied types of the immortal spouse of Christ, we imagine a difference, such as that which exists between the modest garments of a gentle maiden, who for the first time approaches the holy table, and the brilliant vesture of a beauteous bride.

We must be excused for inserting a few particulars respecting this church. The exterior, which has the advantage of being totally separated from all other buildings, offers to us the peculiarity of two ranges of windows, one above the other, whilst the height of the lateral walls of the interior is not detracted from by any gallery or division. These windows are simply two points united, surmounted by a circle, and enclosed in a greater ogive; an arrangement which exactly reminds the traveler of the semicircular arched windows of the Cathedrals of Pisa and Siena, of Or-San-Michele, and the Palazzo Strozzi, and those of most of the edifices of the Middle Ages in Italy. We find here neither pinnacles nor abutments, nor any of the ornaments of the later Gothic styles. The principal or western front is of the most exquisite simplicity; it is composed of a spacious portal, surmounted by a large window and a triangular gable, flanked by two towers with their lofty spires of admirably pure style and symmetrical form.

The niche over the portal is occupied by a beautiful statue of the Blessed Virgin, the special Protectress of the Teutonic Order. She is represented as crushing under foot the vices and sins under the forms of little monsters; from her feet, at the right side, proceeds a vine laden with an abundance of grapes, and at the left, a rose-tree covered with blossoms, wherein are little birds; on either side a kneeling angel venerates this Queen, victorious over sin, and the unfailing source of the fruits of truth and the flowers of beauty. The execution equals the touching grace and mystic meaning of this figure. The foliage of the capitals, and the tracery wreathing the arch of this portal, are exquisitely delicate. The two towers contain seven bells, the smallest of which is silver, and these form the most harmonious chimes.

On entering the church, we are surprised to find it divided into a nave and aisles of equal height. This peculiarity, which is rarely



discernible in the vast basilicas of the Middle Ages, appears to have been a distinctive feature of the churches of the Teutonic Order, and to have been introduced into all their foundations in Prussia.

We are also pleased to find here the natural color of the stone, which no vile plaster has ever tarnished, either within the building or on its exterior.

We everywhere perceive the joining of the cut stone; we admire the marvelous union of solidity and lightness which permitted the architect to leave the lateral walls, in some places of two feet, in others of eighteen inches only, in thickness. A double row of columns marks the division of the three parts; each is simply composed of four colonettes. Their capitals are carved wreaths of vine, ivy, roses, and trefoils, and these are the only ornaments the sculptor has admitted. A little wooden statue, representing the dear Saint holding the model of a church in her hands, rests against one of the pillars in the nave.

The church is, as it ought to be, in the form of a cross; the choir and the transept, or the two arms of the cross, are terminated by polygonal niches. The choir is closed by a tribune in wood-work, with statuettes of great beauty. The principal altar, consecrated on the 1st of May, 1290, is perfectly in keeping with the rest of the building, and is surmounted by a Coronation of the Blessed Virgin in relievo.

The windows of the choir are filled with superb stained glass — not representing, as would be the case in a church of later construction, historic scenes, or holy personages — but simply flowers and foliage, which, in the judgment of some persons, are the most suitable subjects for painted glass. The remainder of the stained windows were destroyed by the army of his *most Christian* majesty Louis XV, who, in the seven years' war, converted this church into a store for forage.

On the four deserted altars in the transept, we remark subjects in painting and sculpture, representing the principal events of the Saint's life, as well as the legends of St. John the Baptist, and St. George, parts of which are attributed to Albert Dürer, but which are, in our opinion, the work of some artist previous to his time, and of a taste more purely religious than his was. These are gilt in *alto-relievo*, and covered by screens of wood painted on both sides with simple but

most impressive subjects, some of which, however, have been too frequently retouched. We discover amongst them the miracle of the mantle given by Elizabeth to the beggarman when she was going to the banquet hall; the miracle of the leper laid on her husband's bed; the last embrace of Elizabeth and Louis when he was departing for the Crusade; her expulsion from Wartburg; her fall in the muddy stream at Eisenach; the visit of Count Banfi; her taking of the religious habit &c. The reliefs represent her death, her obsequies, and the translation of her relics in the presence of the Emperor. These three are evidently the work of an artist worthy of such subjects.

In the southern arm of the cross, we perceive the tombs of the princes of the houses of Thuringia and Hesse, who had sought the honor of being interred near their illustrious ancestress. "In this palace of the Supreme King," says an historian, "Elizabeth, His royal spouse, was the first buried; and afterwards there were admitted there several other fellow-citizens of the Saints, and faithful servants of God, destined to rise with her from their tombs at the last day, to rejoice with her in eternal glory." Her director, Conrad of Marburg; Adelaide, daughter of Count Albert of Brunswick, a very holy woman and renowned even for miracles; Brother Gerard, provincial of the Franciscans, who had led a remarkably austere life, — here also reposed near Elizabeth. There now remains no trace of their burial places, but we find in great preservation the beautiful monuments of the good Landgrave Conrad, brother-in-law of the Saint, with his discipline in his hand; that of the Duchess Sophia, daughter of Elizabeth, the face of which is almost worn away from the kisses of the pilgrims; and the tombs of fifteen other princes and princesses of Hesse from the 13th to the 16th centuries — and amongst them we cannot but admire that of the Landgrave Henry III, styled the Bully, who died in 1376, whose statue is sculptured upon the same stone with the truly beautiful one of his wife Elizabeth; three little angels sustain and smooth the pillow on which their heads repose, while monks and nuns, kneeling at their feet, read prayers for their souls' weal.

In one of the angles at the other extremity of the Cross towards the north, is the Chapel where the relics of the blessed Saint herself were deposited; this chapel forms a kind of long square portico with four arches, two of which rest against the wall of the niche, and the other two are exposed. The interior vaulting of the beautiful roof is pointed, but the summit of the entire square is flat and terminated by a high balustrade, and from this, the relics were, doubtless, exposed to the people, or else it served as a place for the musicians on great festivals. Clustering foliage, sculptured and gilt on an azure ground, wreathes around the rising of the arches, conceals the sharpness of the angles, and thus contrasts with the plainness of the other portions of the church. In a space between the arches and the square there may be seen a fresco representing the coronation of Elizabeth in Heaven; it is partly effaced, and of the inscription it is now impossible to decipher more than the words: GLORIA THEUTONIE. On the lateral base of the chapel is a bas-relief which merits particular attention, as well for its antiquity, for it is probably the work of an artist coeval with our Saint, as for the character of exquisite simplicity by which it is distinguished. Elizabeth is represented as dead, and laid in her coffin, with her hands gently crossed upon her bosom. Our Lord, with the holy Virgin by his side, is standing near the bier; the soul of Elizabeth, under the form of a child, newly born, but already crowned with glory, is presented by her guardian angel to Christ, who lifts His hand to bless her; another angel scatters incense around; our Lady looks lovingly on her docile and humble pupil; by her side is a bearded man, with a lance in hand, and wearing the badge of a Crusader, representing either the good Duke Louis, or the penitent Conrad. At the right stands St. John the Evangelist, special friend and patron of the Saint; St. Catherine, and St. Peter with the keys of Paradise. On the left, St. John the Baptist, St. Mary Magdalene, and a Bishop, supposed to be Sigefrid of Mayence. It was before this bas-relief that the Pilgrims used to kneel, and the stone is still to be seen, hollowed and worn from their knees.

The shrine in which the relics of the Saint were preserved was placed above this bas-relief, and protected by a grating, which still

exists. It is now removed to the sacristy, which is between the choir and the northern transept. The shrine is one of the most wonderful productions of the goldsmith's skill in the Middle Ages. We know not the name of its maker, any more than that of the architect of the church. It is in the form of a Gothic house, with a double-gabled roof, a parallelogram, six feet long, two feet wide, and three feet and a half high. It is of oak wood, covered with silver gilt; the two narrow sides form portals, under one of which is a statue of the Blessed Virgin, crowned with a diadem of precious stones, and holding the infant Jesus; under the other is the figure of St. Elizabeth, wearing the religious habit. On one of the long sides, Jesus Christ is represented, seated and teaching, with three of His apostles at His right hand and three at His left. On the other, Our Lord is seen upon the cross, which is in the form of a tree, with its branches. Saint John and St. Magdalene are at His feet, and two angels crown His bending head. On the right and left are the other six apostles. All these figures are surmounted by richly-carved canopies. On the inclined planes of the roof are eight bassi-relievi, representing as many scenes in the life of the Saint: — the farewell between her and her husband, when he set out for the Crusade — the unexpected discovery of the cross in his alms-purse — the gift of the ring — their last kiss. These sculptures and bassi-relievi are of excellent workmanship, and are wrought in massive silver gilt. An immense quantity of onyxes, sapphires, emeralds, engraved stones, pearls, and other precious ornaments of great value, were incrusting in the shrine and in the drapery of the statues. The greater number were antiques, and added considerably to the almost inestimable value of a monument, to which the piety and affection of the people for Elizabeth had contributed so many treasures. A great many engraved gems were brought from the East by pilgrims and crusaders; some of these were regarded as spontaneous productions of nature. In the Middle Ages, innumerable supernatural qualities were attributed to precious stones; they were at once the ornaments most significative and suitable for the tomb of a saint. There was there an onyx so beautiful, that, according to a very popular tradition, an Elector of Mayence had offered as its price the whole

township of Amüneburg. Notwithstanding the wars and changes of religion, there remained eight hundred and twenty-four gems, without including pearls, when in 1810 they were counted before the removal ordered by the Franco-Westphalian government, under which the shrine was brought to Cassel, where the most valuable were removed, to the number of nine hundred and seventeen. This shrine, in its form and beauty, resembles that famous one of St. Sebald at Nurnberg, ornamented with the figures of the twelve Apostles, by Peter Fischer; but it has the advantage of being two centuries older, and we know not if there be elsewhere so wonderful a work of Christian art of so remote a period.

The relics of the Saint reposed in the shrine which the faith and love of the Christian people had endeavored to render worthy of her, until the miscalled Reformation. We take the account of what then occurred from two Lutheran historians, deeming them unprejudiced witnesses of the victories gained by what has since been styled the cause of progress and of light.

On *Exaudi* Sunday, in the year 1539, the Landgrave, Philip of Hesse, a descendant in a direct line from St. Elizabeth, came to the church dedicated to his ancestress, and had the new form of worship performed there for the first time. He was accompanied by Duke Albert of Brunswick; Count Isenburg; a famous poet, imitator of Ovid, named Eobanus Hesus; Professor Crato, and a great number of teachers and learned men, amongst whom the Reformation found many partisans. The service having been concluded, he sent for the Commander of the Teutonic Order, who resided at Marburg; this was the Sire de Milchling, who was afterwards elected Grand Master; he went with him to the sacristy, where the shrine had been deposited. An immense multitude of people followed them. The Prince and his friends having entered the sacristy, the Commander closed the door, to keep out the crowd. The iron grating, inside which the shrine was kept, was shut; the Commander refused to open it, and flung away the key; the sacristan likewise would not dare to touch it. The Landgrave sent for blacksmiths to bring their tools, that they might destroy the grating; it was then discovered that the door which the Commander

had shut could be opened only from the outside. It became necessary to throw out the key, that someone in the crowd might apply it to the lock. While waiting, his highness was good enough to say, "If we are destined to die in this sacristy, we will first appease our hunger by eating the Commander." "That is to say," replied the latter, "if I am in a humor to allow myself to be eaten." The necessary tools were soon brought, and when the workmen had made a breach, the Prince cried out, "On, on, thank God! Here, then, are the relics of St. Elizabeth! Behold my bones and her bones! Come hither, old Mother Lisette! Behold my grandame!" Then this worthy descendant of a Saint, turning to the Commander, said, "It is very heavy, my Lord Commander; I would be glad if it were full of crown-pieces; but there will be, I hope, some good old Hungarian florins." "I know not what is in it," said the Commander; "in my life I was never so near it, and would to Heaven that I were not here to witness this scene today!" The shrine was opened; the Landgrave put in his hand, and drew forth a casket lined with red satin, which contained the relics of the Saint: these he handed to an officer of his household, who threw them into a forage-bag carried by a servant, who brought them to the castle. The Landgrave himself cut away a piece off the shrine, which he thought was of massive gold; he had it tried by a goldsmith; finding that it was of copper gilt, he cried out, "How these priests deceive people! They have made this shrine of copper, and kept all the gold for themselves." Then he perceived that he wanted the head of the saint; and, after long insisting, he forced the Commander to show him a secret press in the sacristy, where the head was kept, together with the crown and golden chalice that the Emperor Frederic had offered, on the day of the solemn translation, three hundred and three years before. Philip carried these treasures to the Castle, and never since have they been seen. And this was the man whom the Protestants named *Philip the Generous*.

In the same year, 1539, he obtained a dispensation, signed by Dr. Martin Luther, and seven other evangetic theologians assembled at Wittemberg, to marry two wives at the same time. Worthy was he to be the father of that race of princes, who during a century lived upon

the price obtained from England for their subjects, whom they sold to be employed by her in the American and other wars.

The remains of the Saint were interred soon after, under a plain stone in the church, in a place unknown to all but the Landgrave and two of his confidants. In 1546, under the pretext of saving it from the dangers of war, he had the precious shrine carried to the Castle of Ziegenhayn. But in two years after, yielding to the pressing demands of the Commander, John de Rehen, Philip returned this sacred property to Marburg; at the same time, he thought fit to obey an order sent to him, in the very year of the sacrilege, by the Emperor Charles V, to restore to the church the relics of Saint Elizabeth.

They were disinterred and given to the Commander, but were never more replaced in the shrine. On the receipt of them by John de Rehen, on the 12th of July, 1548, there were a great many parts wanting; and, dating from that time, they were soon completely dispersed.

Towards the close of the sixteenth century, Spain made great exertions and incurred vast expense, to collect and preserve the relics of saints which remained in the countries invaded by heresy; the pious Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia, then governing the Low Countries, whose memory is still so popular in Belgium, obtained the skull and a considerable portion of the bones of her holy patroness, and had them conveyed to Brussels, where she entrusted them to the care of the Carmelites. The skull was afterwards sent to the Castle de la Roche Guyon, in France, whence it has been recently transferred to Besançon, by the Cardinal Duke de Rohan, and where it is now venerated in the Hospital of St. James, in that city.

One of the arms was sent to Hungary; other portions of the relics are preserved at Hanover, Vienna, Cologne, and at Breslau, in the rich chapel dedicated to her in 1680, by the Cardinal Frederic of Hesse, one of her descendants. In this chapel is also the staff which she used to assist her trembling limbs, when driven from Wartburg.

We have already mentioned her glass cup, which is at Erfurth; her wedding-robe at Andechs; her wedding-ring at Braunfels, where are also her Book of Hours, her table, and her straw chair; her veil is shown at Tongres.

In 1833, the Count de Boos-Waldeck possessed one of her arms, which he offered for sale to several sovereigns, who reckoned her amongst their ancestors, but without being able to find a purchaser!

At Marburg there are none of her relics; but a tradition asserts that her bones were interred under the grand altar, whence they were stolen in 1634. At the present time, only a piece of tapestry, which it is said that she worked, is shown; it represents the parable of the prodigal child, and is used at the Communion Table, according to the Lutheran rite. Her shrine was conveyed to Cassel in the reign of King Jerome; it was brought back to Marburg in 1814, and replaced in the sacristy. The magnificent church consecrated to God's honor under her invocation, has been used since 1539 by the professors of a belief which regards the veneration of the saints as an idolatry, and never since has her sweet name been re-echoed by the voice of public praise.

The body of this saint, so dear to Heaven and Earth, has not had the same fate which the remains of other holy ones have experienced. In many instances they have reposed, guarded by the love and veneration of successive generations, near the altars where the daily oblation of the Spotless Sacrifice is made. On the contrary, all the countries in which this sister of the Angels sojourned, have lost the Faith; the children of the people whom she so tenderly loved and so frequently succored, have denied and renounced her powerful protection. Thuringia, where she lived a maiden and a wife; Hesse, where rolled on the years of her widowhood; each has abandoned Catholicity.

The traces of the proud Luther at Wartburg have succeeded to the remembrance of her pious and humble childhood, of the trials of her youth, of her conjugal life, unrivaled in its tenderness and sanctity. From the height of the old towers of the Castle, the eye of the Catholic traveler wanders over the wide-spreading country, on whose people she lavished untiring love, and seeks in vain a cottage or a church belonging to his co-religionists. At Eisenach, where she truly followed Christ by her charity and her sufferings, there is not a Catholic to invoke her — not an altar to honor her sweet name — not a consecrated stone whereon to kneel and demand her blessing. Even in



the city where she died, — where so many thousand pilgrims came to venerate her relics — where even the marble is worn away from the multitudes of the Faithful who knelt before her shrine — her life is now but an historic fact, and the few Catholics who are tolerated there have not even a special Mass on her festival day! Her tomb was not respected, and the person who violated the sanctity of her grave was one of her own descendants. Is it not, then, a duty for Catholics to repair these insults, to restore her glory, and by every means to offer to her the tribute of their praise and love?

These were the feelings of the poor Capuchin, whom we quote for the last time with regret, when he said in the 17th century — “When I visited the noble church and rich tomb of the saint, my heart was pierced with grief on finding them in possession of the Lutherans, and now so shamefully despoiled of their former splendor. Oh! how I lamented before God and entreated the dear Saint Elizabeth, with all my might, to restore order there. But, inasmuch as the heretics neglect to revere thee, so should we render to thee all honor — so should we invoke thee with redoubled fervor, O glorious servant of God! and so should we rejoice forever that God called thee in thine infancy from far-off Hungary, to give thee to our Germany as a most rare and precious jewel.”

But yet, even in the countries which have forgotten her glory and renounced her faith, there is devoted to the Saint a mark of homage — perhaps the sweetest and most suitable ever decreed. The people have given to a little flower, as humble and modest as herself; the name of *the dear Saint Elizabeth's Floweret*; this is the *Cystus Helianthemum*. It closes its corolla at sunset, as Elizabeth used to banish from her soul all that was not a ray of light and of grace from On High. How happy should we be, if this small tribute which we wish to render to her glorious memory was as acceptable to her, as must have been the feeling of pious and confiding affection which formerly induced some Catholic peasants to confer on the flower they admired, her beloved name.

And it will be permitted to us, before concluding these pages, to lift up our heart and voice to you, O glorious Saint — to you whom we

have, in humble imitation of so many fervent souls, dared to name also *our dear Elizabeth!* Oh, beloved of Christ! deign to become the celestial protectress of our soul, and aid us to become the friend of your Friend. Turn towards us from your place in heavenly bliss, one of those gentle looks which on Earth were sufficient to heal the worst infirmities of mankind. We have come, in a dark and faithless age, to be enlightened by the holy radiance of your virtues — to seek fervor at the furnace of your love; and you have welcomed us, and your sweet memory has often given us peace. Be you blessed forever, the many precious tears we have shed over the history of your sorrows and your patience, your charity and your angelic simplicity; for the labors and wanderings you have watched over; for the many solitary days when you alone were present to our minds; for the many sad hours that your dear image alone could solace! Blessed be you for ever for all these *favours*, and do you deign to bless the last and most unworthy of your historians!

Respondens Jesus dixit: Confiteor tibi, Pater Domino, cœli et terræ, quia abscondisti hæc a sapientibus et prudentibus et revelasti ea parvulis.

FEAST OF SAINT ELIZABETH,  
NOVEMBER 19, 1847.

A TABLE SHOWING THE NAMES OF THE AUTHORS WHOSE WORKS, EITHER IN MSS. OR IN A PRINTED FORM, WERE CONSULTED BY THE COUNT MONTALEMBERT PREVIOUS TO WRITING THIS HISTORY.

IN offering this humble work of ours, with the hope of extending the glory of the *Dear Saint Elizabeth*, we renounce all the merit of invention or originality. The only honor we have sought is that of being regarded as a faithful compiler and a correct translator of the works left us by our forefathers in the Faith. A pious exactness is the only quality to which we lay claim; and, to confirm this, we insert a list of all the historic sources from which, during researches and travels for the space of three years, undertaken solely for this purpose, we derived the materials for the history which we now offer to our readers. To those who imagine they will find in our pages the marks of exaggerated erudition, we feel happy in being able to give some faint idea of the zeal, patience, and scrupulous care, with which the German historians of the present day, without distinction of religious belief, labor in the fruitful but yet unexplored field of the history of the Middle Ages. Other readers, from the romantic and poetic character of some passages, may be disposed to question our veracity; we can but refer them to the authors whose names follow, and to all the authentic records of the Saints' lives, before the epoch of mutilation and alteration. We imposed on ourselves as a rule, when transcribing the annals of the life of Elizabeth, to add nothing, but also *not to suppress the most minute particular*. This we have observed with the utmost fidelity, and we can affirm that there is not a single detail related, nor a word attributed to any personage in this history, that has not been copied exactly from works either printed or in manuscript, which were invested with all due authority in our eyes. On this subject we may apply to ourselves the expressions of the first biographer of the Saint; and happy are we, after the lapse of five centuries, to speak with the same firm and simple faith — "I take God and His holy angels to witness, that in this little book I have not inserted anything but what I gathered from correct manuscripts, or heard from religious persons of unquestionable veracity. I confess, also, that I am unworthy to write of these sublime and wonderful

operations of Divine grace; I hope and pray, that someone, after reading this history, will have pity on it, and consecrate to the Saint whose life it relates an erudition and an eloquence more worthy of her than are mine.”

PRINTED.

AUTHORS CONTEMPORARIES OF THE SAINT OR LIVING PREVIOUS TO THE REFORMATION.

1. Epistola magistri Conradi de Marburg ad Papam, de vita B. Elisabeth.

2. Libellus de dictis quatuor Ancillarum S. Elisabethæ sive examen miraculorum et vitæ eius.

3. *Hæc est forma de statu mortis Lantgraviæ de Thuringiâ, ex MS. Liesbornensi*, apud Martene et Durand, *Collectio amplissima &c.* Pars 1.

4. S. Bonaventuræ, sermo de sancta Elisabeth.

5. Theodorici Turingi, ordinis prædicatorum, libri octo de St. Elisabeth, Andreæ regis Hungarorum filia.

6. *De sancta Helisabeth* — a legend from the famous collection entitled: *Aurea legenda sanctorum quæ lombardica hystoria nominator*, compilata per fratrum Jacobum de Voragine.

7. *Auctor Rhythmicus de vita S. Elisabethæ Landgraviæ Thuringiæ* è codice bibl. Ducalis Saxo Gothan.

8. *Monachi Isenacensis vulgò*, Johannis Rothe, *Chronicon Thuringiæ vernaculum*.

9. *Legende von Sant Elsebeten* — in the great legend called *Passional*.

10. “Sermo de S. Elisabeth,” in the *Thesaurus novus de Sanctis*.

11. *Vita illustris ac divæ Elisabeth, regis Hungarorum filicæ conscripta stilo elegantissimo opera Christi, Sacerdotis Jacobi Montani Spirensis* — inserted in the large edition of Surius, entitled, *De Probatis Sanctorum historiis*.

12. *Annales de Hainaut*, par Jean Lefevre — published also after the *Histoire de Hainaut*, par Jacques de Guyse.

We omit the names of several authors, such as Vincent de Beauvais &c., who have only spoken in a cursory manner of St. Elizabeth in their works.

CATHOLIC WRITERS AFTER THE REFORMATION.

13. Antonii Bonfinii, *Rerum Ungaricum decade quatuor eum dimidio*, 1581.

14. *Annales minorum seu trium ordinem a S. Francisco institutorum*, a R. P. Luca Wadding hiberno. Rome, 1732.

15. Justus Lipsius, *Diva Virgo Hallensis opera*, Tome II. page 808.

16. *Bavaria sancta*, descripta a Mattheo Radero, de Soc. Jesus Monaci, 1615.

17. *La vie de S. Elisabeth, fille du Roi de Hongrie, Duchesse de Thuringe, première religieuse du tiers ordre de St. François*, recueillie par le R. P. Apollinaire, revue, corrigée, et augmentée, par le R. P. Jean Marie, du même ordre. Paris, 1660.

18. *La Vie de S. Elisabeth, &c.*, par le P. Archange, religieux penitent dii troisième ordre de St. François. Paris, 1692.

19. *Auserlesenes history Buch. von den lieben Gottes heiligen, &c.*, by P. Martin de Kochem, Capuchin. Augsburg, 1732.

20. *Histoire des Ordres Monastiques*, le P. Helyot. Paris, 1718.

21. *Die Legende der H. Elisabeth*, von Johann. Graf Mailath. 1822.

PROTESTANT AUTHORS.

22. Adami Ursini, *Molybergensis Chronicon Thuringiæ vernaculum*, apud Menckenii Script. Rer. Sax. 1547

23. *Diva Elisabetha magnifice coronata; Christliche Ehrengedächtniss der H. Elisabeth, in zwei Predigten*, von J. B. Happel, Lutheran Minister of the Teutonic Order. 1645.

24. Georg. Michel Pfefferkorn, *Auserlesene Geschichte von der berühmten Landgrafschaft Thüringen*, 1684.

25. J. J. Winkelman, *Beschreibnng der Fürstenthümer, Hessen, &c.* Bremen, 1698.

26. *Chr. Fron. Paullini historia Eisenacensis, &c.* Frankfort, 1698.

27. Andreas Toppius, *Historia der Stadt Eisenach*, verfasst, 1660.

28. Joh. Mich. Koch., *Historische Erzælung von dem Schloss Wartburg ob Eisenach*, 1710.

29. *Das im Jahr, 1708, lebende und schwebende Eisenach*, von Johann Limperg, 1109.

30. *Bina Sanctarum, Elisabetharum* — (her of Schængen, who died in 1056, and ours) — *veluti illustrissimarum Sæc. xi. and xiii., testium veritatis evangelicæ in Hassia, memoria monumentis et nummis declarata*, à J. A.. Liebknecht, 1729.

31. J. H. Von Falckenstein, *Thuringische Chronik*, 2 v. Erfurt, 1738.

32. J. G. A. Galletti, *Geschichte Thüringens*, Gotha, 1783.

33. *Thüringische geschichte* AUS SAGITTARIUS *hinterlassen en Papieren, &c.* 1787.

34. *Elisabeth die heilige, Landgræfin von Thüringen und Hessen, &c.*, von Dr. Karl Wilhelm Justi, 1797. 1835.

35. J. C. S. Thou, *Schloss Wartburg*, Eisenach, 1826.

36. *Histoire Généalogique de la Maison de Hesse*. By Baron Turkheim. Strasburg, 1819.

37. *Geschichte von Hessen*, von Christophe Rommel, 1820.

38. *Geschichte der Hohenstaufen, und ihrer Zeit*. by Frederic de Raumer.

#### MANUSCRIPTS.

1. *Das Leben des edeln tuginthafin lantgraven Ludewigis de was elich gemahel unde wert der heiligen hochgeborenen Frouwin Elysabeth* (Life of the noble and virtuous Landgrave Louis, husband and liege lord of the holy and most noble lady Elizabeth), written by the Sire Berthold, his chaplain. Library at Gotha, another at Cassel.

2. *Vita S. Elisabethæ Landgraviæ* a fratre Cæsario, sacerdoti in monasterio vallis S. Petri, better known as Cæsar of Heisterbach, 1237.
3. *Der lieben frowen sant Elysabeten de landgrefin leben.*
4. *Cy en commence la vie de Ste. Elysabel fille au roy de Hongrie.* Rutebeuf MS. 7633. Bibli. Roy. Paris.
5. *Chi commenche de Ste. Yzabiel.* Le moine Robert MS. 13th century. Bib. du roy. Paris, No. 1862.
6. *Sente Elsebet Leben.* Darmstadt.
7. *Von Sente Elysabethen.* Strasburg.
8. *Von Sente Elsebethen.* Heidelberg, 1345, 1349.
9. *Vita S. Elysabethæ Hungariæ Reginae.* Florence.
10. *Legende der H. Elisabet und S. Gertraud ir mutter.*
11. *Historia ecclesiastica Isenacensis per Munich.* M. Nicholaum Rebhahn, 1621. Eisenach.
12. Joh. Whil. Waldschmidt. *Commentatio succincta de vita et fatis M. Conradi de Marburg, Confessoris divæ Elisabethæ.* Cassel Library.
13. *Leben Mag. Conradi Von Marburg.* J. N Schminckius, Bibli. de Cassel.

And thirteen other documents in Manuscript collected by the Bollandists, and now in the Burgundian Library, Brussels.

