

THE CENTURY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XXXVI.

AUGUST, 1888.

No. 4

A HOME OF THE SILENT BROTHERHOOD.

THE ABBEY OF LA TRAPPE IN KENTUCKY.



MORE than two hundred and fifty years have passed away since the Cardinal de Richelieu stood at the baptismal font as sponsor to a name that within the pale of the Church was destined to become more famous than his own. But the world has well-nigh forgotten Richelieu's godson. Perhaps only the tireless student of biography now turns the pages that record his extraordinary career, ponders the strange unfolding of his moral nature, is moved by the deep pathos of his dying hours. The demands of historic clearness and perspective which enforce some mention of him here may not, therefore, appear unfortunate. Dominique Armand-Jean le Bouthillier de Rancé! How cleverly, while scarcely out of short-clothes, did he puzzle the king's confessor with questions on Homer, and at the age of thirteen publish an edition of Anacreon! Of ancient, illustrious birth, and heir to an almost ducal house, how tenderly favored was he by Marie de Médicis; happy-hearted, kindly, suave, how idolized by a gorgeous court! In what affluence of rich laces did he dress; in what irresistible violet-colored close coats, with emeralds at his wristbands, a diamond on his finger, red heels on his shoes! How nimbly he capered through the dance with a sword on his hip! How bravely he planned quests after the manner of knights of the Round Table, meaning to take for himself, doubtless, the part of Lancelot! How exquisitely, and ardently, and ah! how fatally he flirted with the incomparable ladies in the circle of Madame de Rambouillet!

And with a zest for sport as great as hisunction for the priestly office, how wittily—laying one hand on his heart and waving the other through the air—could he bow and say, "This morning I preached like an angel; I'll hunt like the devil this afternoon!"

All at once his life broke in two when half spent. He ceased to hunt like the devil, to adore the flesh, to scandalize the world; and retiring to the ancient Abbey of La Trappe in Normandy,—the sponsorial gift of his Eminence and favored by many popes,—there undertook the difficult task of reforming the relaxed Benedictines. The old abbey—situated in a great fog-covered basin encompassed by dense woods of beech, oak, and linden, and therefore always gloomy, unhealthy, and forbidding—was in ruins. One ascended by means of a ladder from floor to rotting floor. The refectory had become a place where the monks assembled to play at bowls with worldlings. The dormitory, exposed to wind, rain, and snow, had been given up to owls. Each monk slept where he could and would. In the church the stones were scattered, the walls unsteady, the pavement was broken, the bell ready to fall. As a single solemn reminder of the vanished spirit of the place, which had been founded by St. Stephen and St. Bernard in the twelfth century, with the intention of reviving in the Western Church the bright examples of primitive sanctity furnished by Eastern solitaries of the third and fourth, one read over the door of the cloister the words of Jeremiah: *Sedebit solitarius et tacebit*. The few monks who remained in the convent were, as Chateaubriand says, also in a state of ruins. They preferred sipping ratafia to reading their breviaries; and when De Rancé

undertook to enforce a reform, they threatened to whip him well for his pains. He, in turn, threatened them with the royal interference, and they submitted. There, accordingly, he introduced a system of rules that a sybarite might have wept over even to hear recited; carried into practice cenobitical austerities that recalled the models of pious anchorites in Syria and Thebais; and gave its peculiar meaning to the word "Trappist," a name which has since been taken by all Cistercian communities embracing the reform of the first monastery.

In the retirement of this mass of woods and sky De Rancé passed the rest of his long life, doing nothing more worldly, perhaps, than quoting Aristophanes and Horace to Bossuet, and allowing himself to be entertained by Pellisson, carefully exhibiting the accomplishments of his educated spider. There, in acute agony of body and perfect meekness of spirit, a worn and weary old man, with time enough to remember his youthful ardors and emeralds and illusions, he watched his mortal end draw slowly near. And there, asking to be buried in some desolate spot,—some old battle-field,—he died at last, extending his poor macerated body on the cross of blessed cinders and straw, and commending his poor penitent soul to the pure mercy of Heaven.

A wonderful spectacle to the less fervid Benedictines of the closing seventeenth century must have seemed the work of De Rancé in that old Norman abbey. A strange com-

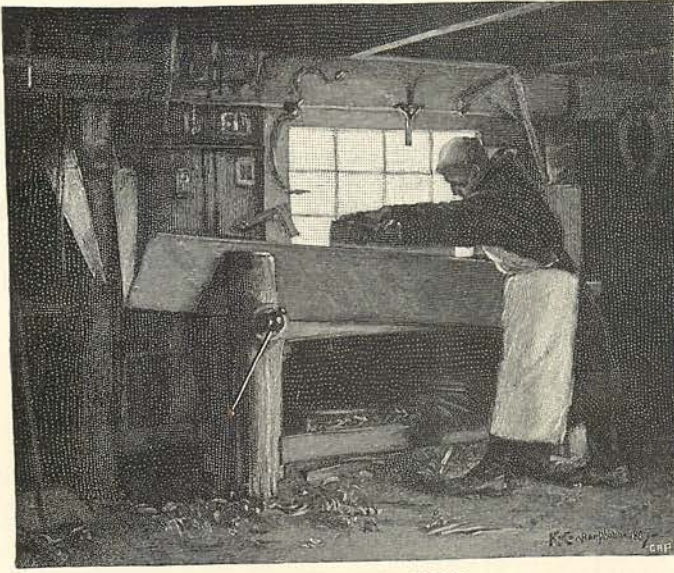
pany of human souls, attracted by the former distinction of the great abbot as well as by the peculiar vows of the institute, must have come together in its silent halls! One hears many stories, in the lighter vein, regarding some of its inmates. Thus, there was a certain furious ex-trooper, lately reeking with blood, it seems, who got himself much commended by living on baked apples, and a young nobleman who devoted himself to the work of washing daily the monastery spittoons. One brother, the story runs, having one day said there was too much salt in his scalding-hot broth, immediately burst into tears of contrition for his wickedness in complaining; and another went for so many years without raising his eyes that he knew not a new chapel had been built, and so quite cracked his skull one day against the wall.

The abbey was an asylum for the poor and helpless, the shipwrecked, the conscience-stricken, and the broken-hearted—for that meditative type of fervid piety which for ages has looked upon the cloister as the true earthly paradise wherein to rear the difficult edifice of the soul's salvation. Much noble blood sought De Rancé's retreat, to wash out, if might be, its terrifying stains; and more than one reckless spirit went thither to take upon itself the yoke of purer, sweeter usages.

De Rancé's work remains an influence in the world. His monastery and his reform constitute the true background of material and spiritual fact against which to outline the



BROTHERS.



A FOLLOWER OF ST. JOSEPH.

present Abbey of La Trappe in Kentucky. Even when thus clearly viewed, it seems placed where it is only by some freak of history. An abbey of La Trappe in Kentucky! How utterly inharmonious with every element of its environment appears this fragment of old French monastic life! It is the twelfth century touching the last of the nineteenth — the Old World reappearing in the New. Here are French faces — here is the French tongue. Here is the identical white cowl presented to blessed St. Alberick in the forests of Burgundy nine hundred years ago. Here is the rule of St. Benedict, patriarch of the Western monks in the sixth century. When one is put out at the wayside station, amidst woodlands and fields of Indian-corn, and, leaving all the world behind him, turns his footsteps across the country towards the abbey more than a mile away, the seclusion of the region, its ineffable quietude, the infinite spiritual isolation of the life passed by the silent brotherhood — all bring vividly before the mind the image of that ancient distant abbey with which this one holds connection so sacred and so close. Is it not the veritable spot in Normandy? Here too is the broad basin of retired country; here are the densely wooded hills, shutting it in from all the world; here the orchards and vineyards and gardens of the ascetic devotees; and as the night falls from the low blurred sky of ashen-gray, and cuts short a silent contemplation of the scene, here too one finds one's self, like some belated traveler in the dangerous forests of old, hurrying on to reach the porter's lodge and ask admission within the sacred walls to enjoy the

hospitality of the venerable abbot. It is interesting to inquire how this religious exotic from another clime and another age ever came to be planted in such a spot.

II.

FOR nearly a century after the death of De Rancé it is known that his followers faithfully maintained his reform at La Trappe. Then the French Revolution drove the Trappists as wanderers into various countries, and the abbey was made a foundry for cannon. A small branch of the order came in 1804 to the United States and established itself for a while in Pennsylvania, but soon turned its eyes towards the greater wilds and solitudes of Kentucky. For this there was sufficient reason. It must be remembered that Kentucky was early a great pioneer of the Catholic Church in the United States. Here the first episcopal see of the West was erected, and Bardstown held spiritual jurisdiction, within certain parallels of latitude, over all States and Territories between the two oceans. Here too were the first Catholic missionaries of the West, except those who were to be found in the French stations along the Wabash and the Mississippi. Indeed, the Catholic population of Kentucky, which was principally descended from the colonists of Lord Baltimore, had begun to enter the State as early as 1775, the nucleus of their settlements soon becoming Nelson County, the locality of the present abbey. Likewise it should be remembered that the Catholic Church in the United States, especially that portion of it in Kentucky, owes a great debt to the zeal of the exiled French clergy of those early days. That buoyancy and elasticity of the French character which naturally adapts it to every circumstance and emergency was then most demanded and most efficacious. From these exiles the infant missions of the State were supplied with their most devoted laborers.

Hither, accordingly, the Trappists removed from Pennsyl-





OFFICE OF THE FATHER PRIOR.

vania, establishing themselves on Pottinger's Creek, near Rohan's Knob, several miles from the present site. But they remained only a few years. The climate of Kentucky was deemed ill suited to their life of unrelaxed asceticism, and, moreover, their restless superior had conceived a desire to Christianize Indian children, and so removed the languishing settlement to Missouri. There is not space for following the solemn march of those austere exiles through the wildernesses of the New World. From Missouri they went to an ancient Indian burying-ground in Illinois and there built up a sort of village in the heart of the prairie; but the great mortality from which they suffered and the subsidence of the fury of the French Revolution recalled them in 1813 to France, to reoccupy the establishments from which they had been banished.

It was of this body that Dickens, in his "American Notes," wrote as follows:

Looming up in the distance, as we rode along, was another of the ancient Indian burial-places, called Monk's Mound, in memory of a body of fanatics of the order of La Trappe, who founded a desolate convent there many years ago, when there were no settlements within a thousand miles, and were all swept off by the pernicious climate; in which lamentable fatality few rational people will suppose, perhaps, that society experienced any very severe deprivation.

But it is almost too late to say that in these "Notes" Dickens was not always either kindly or correct.

This is a better place in which to state a miracle than to discuss it; and the following account of a heavenly portent, which is related to have been vouchsafed the Trappists while sojourning in Kentucky, may be given without comment:

In the year 1808 the moon, being then about two-thirds full, presented a most remarkable appearance. A bright, luminous cross, clearly defined, was seen in the heavens, with its arms intersecting the center of

the moon. On each side two smaller crosses were also distinctly visible, though the portions of them most distant from the moon were faintly marked. This strange phenomenon continued for several hours and was witnessed by the Trappists on their arising, as usual, at midnight, to sing the Divine praise.

The present monastery, which is called the Abbey of Gethsemane, owes its origin immediately to the Abbey of La Meilleraye, of the department of the Loire-Inférieure, France. The abbot of the latter had concluded arrangements with the French Government to found a house in the island of Martinique on an estate granted by Louis Philippe; but this monarch's rule having been overturned, the plan was abandoned in favor of a colony in the United States. Two fathers, with the view of selecting a site, came to New York in the summer of 1848, and naturally turned their eyes to the Catholic settlements in Kentucky and to the domain of the pioneer Trappists. In the autumn of that year, accordingly, about forty-five "religious" left the mother-abbey of La Meilleraye, set sail from Havre de Grace for New Orleans, went thence by boat to Louisville, and from this point walked to Gethsemane, a distance of some sixty miles. Although scattered among various countries of Europe, the Trappists have but two convents in the United States—this, the oldest, and one near Dubuque, Iowa, a colony from the abbey in Ireland.



BY THE WALL.

III.

THE domain of the abbey comprises some seventeen hundred acres of land, part of which is tillable, while the rest consists of a range of wooded knobs that furnish timber to the monastery steam saw-mill. Around this domain lie the homesteads of Kentucky farmers, who make, alas! indifferent monks. One leaves the public road that winds across the open country and approaches the monastery through a long level avenue, inclosed on each side by a hedge-row of cedars and shaded by nearly a hundred beautiful English elms, all the offspring of a single parent stem. Traversing this dim, sweet spot, where no sound is heard but the waving of boughs and the softened notes of birds, one reaches the porter's lodge, a low brick building, on each side of which extends the high brick wall that separates the inner from the outer world. Passing beneath the archway of the lodge, one discovers a graceful bit of landscape gardening—walks fringed with cedars, elaborately designed beds for flowers, pathways so thickly strewn with sawdust that the heaviest footfall is unheard, a soft turf of green traversed only by the gentle shadows of the pious-looking Benedictine trees: a fit spot for recreation and meditation. It is with a sort of worldly start that you come upon an inclosure at one end of these grounds wherein a populous family of white-cowled rabbits tip around in the most noiseless fashion.



Architecturally there is little to please the æsthetic sense in the monastery building, along the whole front of which these grounds extend. It is a great quadrangular pile of brick, three stories high, heated by furnaces and lighted by gas—modern appliances which heighten the contrast with the ancient life whose needs they subserve. Within the quadrangle is a green inner court, also beautifully laid off. One side of it consists of two chapels, the one appropriated to the ordinary services of the Church and entered from without the abbey-wall by all who desire; the other, consecrated to the offices of the Trappist order, entered only from within, and accessible exclusively to males. It is here that one finds occasion to remember the Trappist's vow of poverty. The vestments are far from rich, the decorations of the altar far from splen-



WITHIN THE GATES.

did. The crucifixion scene behind the altar consists of wooden figures carved by one of the monks now dead and painted with little art. No tender light of many hues here streams through long windows rich with holy reminiscence and artistic fancy. The church has, albeit, a certain beauty of its own—that charm which is inseparable from fine proportion in stone and from gracefully disposed columns growing into the arches of the lofty roof. But the cold gray of the interior, severe and unrelieved, bespeaks a place where the soul comes to lay itself in simplicity before the Eternal as it would upon a naked, solitary rock of the desert. Elsewhere in the abbey, of course, greater evidences of votive poverty occur—in the various statues and shrines of the Virgin, in the pictures and prints that hang in the main front corridor—in all that appertains to the material life of the community.

Just outside the church, beneath the perpetual benediction of the cross on its spire, is the quiet cemetery garth where the dead are side by side, their graves covered with myrtle, and each having for



THE COOK.

its headstone a plain wooden crucifix bearing the religious name and the station of him who lies below — Father Honorius, Father Timotheus, Brother Hilarius, Brother Eutropius. Who are they? And whence? And by what familiar names were they greeted on the old play-grounds and battle-fields of the world?

The Trappists do not, as it is commonly understood, daily dig a portion of their own

Nor do they sleep in the dark, abject kennel, which the imagination, in the light of medieval history, constructs as the true monk's cell. By the rule of St. Benedict, they sleep apart but in the same place, and the dormitory is a great upper room, well lighted and clean, in the body of which a general framework several feet high is divided into partitions that look like narrow berths.

It is while going from place to place in the abbey and considering the other buildings connected with it that one grows deeply interested in a subject but little understood — the daily life of the monks.

IV.

WE have all acquired poetical and pictorial conceptions of monks — praying with wan faces and upturned eyes half darkened by the shadowing cowl, the coarse serge falling away from the emaciated neck, the hands pressing the crucifix close to the heart; and along with this type has always been associated a certain idea of cloistral life — that it was an existence of vacancy and idleness, or at best of deep meditation of the soul broken only by express spiritual devotions. There is another kind of monk, of course, with all the marks of which we seem traditionally familiar; the monk with the rubicund face, sleek poll, good epigastric development, and slightly unsteady gait, with whom, in turn, we have connected a different phase of conventual discipline — fat capon and stubble goose, and midnight convivial chantings growing ever more fast and furious, but finally dying away in a heavy stertorous calm. Poetry, art, the drama, the novel, have each portrayed human nature in orders; the saint-like monk, the intellectual monk, the bibulous, the felonious, the fighting monk (who loves not the hermit of Copmanhurst?), until the memory is stored and the imagination preoccupied.

Living for a while in a Trappist monastery in modern America, one gets a pleasant infusion of actual experience, and is disposed to insist upon the existence of other types no less picturesque and on the whole much more acceptable. He finds himself, for one thing, brought face to face with the working monk. Idleness to the Trappist is the enemy of the soul, and one of his vows is manual labor. Whatever a monk's previous station may have been, he must perform, according to abbatial direction, the most menial services. None are exempt from work; there is no place among them for the sluggard. When it is borne in mind that the abbey is a self-dependent institution, where the healthy must be maintained, the sick cared for, the dead buried, the necessity



BEFORE THE MADONNA.

graves. When one of them dies and has been buried, a new grave is begun beside the one just filled, as a reminder to all the survivors that one of them must surely take his place therein. So, too, when each seeks the cemetery inclosure, in hours of holy meditation, and, standing bare-headed among the graves, prays softly for the souls of his departed brethren, he may come for a time to this unfinished grave, and, kneeling on the rude board placed at the head, pray Heaven, if he be next, to dismiss his soul in peace.



AMONG THE GRAVES.

for much work becomes manifest. In fact, the occupations are about as various as those of a modern factory. There is scope for intellects of all degrees and talents of well-nigh every order. Daily life, unremittingly from year to year, is an exact system of duties and hours. The building, covering about an acre of ground and penetrated by corridors, must be kept faultlessly clean. There are three kitchens,—one for the guests, one for the community, and one for the infirmary,—that require each a *coquinarius* and separate assistants. There is a tinker's shop and a pharmacy; a saddlery, where the broken gear used in cultivating the monastery lands is mended; a tailor's shop, where the worn garments are patched; a shoemaker's shop, where the coarse, heavy shoes of the monks are made and cobbled; and a barber's shop, where the Trappist beard is shaved twice a month and the Trappist head is monthly shorn.

Outdoors the occupations are even more varied. The community do not till the farm. The greater part of their land is occupied by tenant farmers, and what they reserve for their own use is cultivated by the so-called "family brothers," who, it is due to say, have no families, but live as celibates on the abbey domain, subject to the abbot's authority, without being members of the order. The monks, however, do labor in the ample gardens, orchards, and vineyard from which they derive their sustenance, in the steam saw-mill and grain-mill, in the dairy and the cheese factory. Thus picturesquely engaged one may find them in autumn: monks gathering apples

and making barrel after barrel of pungent cider, which is stored away in the vast cellar as their only beverage except water; monks repairing the shingle roof of a stable; monks feeding the huge swine which they fatten for the board of their carnal guests, or the fluttering multitude of chickens from the eggs and young of which they derive a slender revenue; monks grouped in the garden around a green and purple heap of turnips, to be stored up as a winter relish of no mean distinction.

Amidst such scenes one forgets all else while enjoying the wealth and freshness of artistic effects. What a picture is this young Belgian cheese-maker, his sleeves rolled up above the elbows of his brawny arms, his great pinkish hands buried in the golden curds, the cap of his serge cloak falling back and showing his closely clipped golden-brown hair, blue eyes, and clear delicate skin! Or this Australian ex-farmer, as he stands by the hopper of grist or lays on his shoulder a bag of flour for the coarse brown bread of the monks. Or this



GOING TO WORK.



Kenyon Cyl. 1887.

After photograph.

THE FORTNIGHTLY SHAVE.

dark old French opera-singer, who strutted his brief hour on many a European stage, but now hobbles around, all hoary in his cowl and blanched with age, to pick up a handful of garlic. Or this athletic, superbly formed young Irishman, thrusting a great iron prod into the glowing coals of the saw-mill furnace. Or this slender Switzer, your attendant in the refectory, with great keys dangling from his leathern cincture, who stands by with folded hands and bowed head while you are eating the pagan meal he has pre-

pared, and prays that you may be forgiven for enjoying it.

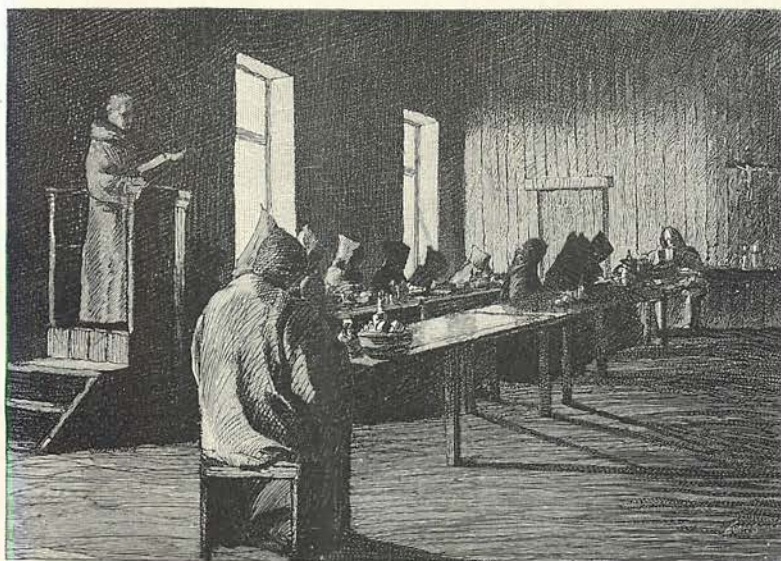
From various countries of the Old World men find their way into the Abbey of Gethsemane, but among them are no Americans. Repeatedly the latter have made the experiment, and have always failed to persevere up to the final consecration of the white cowl. The fairest warning is given to the postulant. He is made to understand the entire extent of the obligation he has assumed; and only after passing through a novitiate, prolonged

at the discretion of the abbot, is he admitted to the vows that must be kept unbroken till death.

v.

FROM the striking material aspects of their daily life, however, one is soon recalled to a sense of their subordination to spiritual aims

and half of cream. The guest-master, whose business it is to act as your guide through the abbey and the grounds, is warily mindful of his special functions and requests you to address none but him. Only the abbot is free to speak when and as his judgment may approve. It is silence, says the Trappist, that shuts out new ideas, worldly topics, controversy. It is

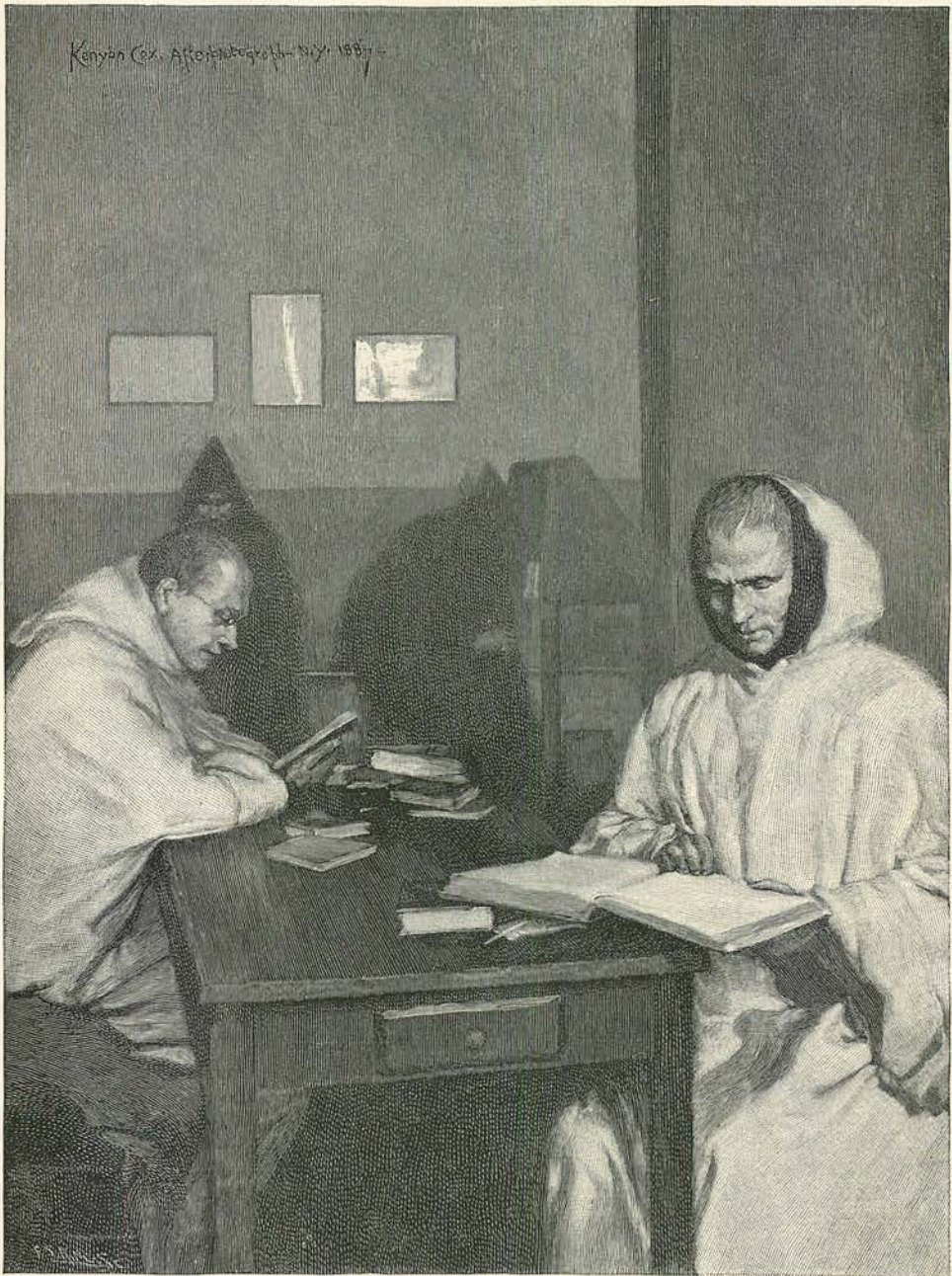


THE REFECTORY.

and pledges; for upon them all, like a spell of enchantment, lies the sacred silence. The honey has been taken from the bees with solemnity; the grapes have been gathered without song and mirth. The vow of life-long silence taken by the Trappist must of course not be construed literally; but after all there are only two occasions during which it is completely set aside—when confessing his sins and when singing the offices of the Church. At all other times his tongue becomes, as far as possible, a superfluous member; he speaks only by permission of his superior, and always simply and to the point. The monk at work with another exchanges with him only the few low, necessary words, and those that provoke no laughter. Of the three so-called monastic graces, *Simplicitas*, *Benignitas*, *Hilaritas*, the last is not his. Even for necessary speech he is taught to substitute a language of signs, as fully systematized as the speech of the deaf and dumb. Should he, while at work, wound his fellow-workman, sorrow may be expressed by striking his breast. A desire to confess is shown by lifting one hand to the mouth and striking the breast with the other. The maker of cheese crosses two fingers at the middle point to let you know that it is made half of milk

silence that enables the soul to contemplate with singleness and mortification the infinite perfections of the Eternal.

In the abbey it is this all-pervasive hush that falls like a leaden pall upon the stranger who has rushed in from the talking universe and this country of free speech. Are these priests modern survivals of the rapt solitaries of India? The days pass, and the world, which seemed in hailing distance to you at first, has receded to dim remoteness. You stand at the window of your room looking out, and hear in the autumn trees only the flute-like note of some migratory bird, passing slowly on towards the south with all its kind. You listen within, and hear but a key turning in distant locks and the slow-retreating footsteps of some dusky figure returning to its lonely self-communings. The utmost precaution is taken to avoid noise; in the dormitory not even your guide will speak to you, but explains by gesture and signs. During the short siesta the Trappists allow themselves, if one of them, not wishing to sleep, gets permission to read in his so-called cell, he must turn the pages of his book inaudibly. In the refectory, while the meal is eaten and the appointed reader in the tribune goes through a service, if one through carelessness



READING IN THE CHAPTER ROOM.

makes a noise by so much as dropping a fork or a spoon, he leaves his seat and prostrates himself on the floor until bidden by the superior to arise. The same penance is undergone in the church by any one who should distract attention with the clasp of his book.

A hard life, to purely human seeming, does the Trappist make for the body. He thinks nothing of it. It is his evil tenement of flesh,

whose humors are an impediment to sanctification, whose propensities are to be kept down by the practice of all austerities. To it in part all his monastic vows are addressed—perpetual and utter poverty, chastity, manual labor, silence, seclusion, penance, obedience. The perfections and glories of his monastic state culminate in the complete abnegation and destruction of animal nature, and in the



AT WORK.

correspondence of his earthly life with the holiness of divine instruction. The war of the Jesuit is with the world; the war of the Trappist is with himself. From his narrow bed, on which are simply a coarse thin mattress, pillow, sheet, and coverlet, he rises at 2 o'clock, on certain days at 1, on others yet at 12. He has not undressed, but has slept in his daily garb, with the cincture around his waist.

This dress consists, if he be a brother, of the roughest dark-brown serge-like stuff, the over-garment of which is a long robe; if a father, of a similar material, but white in color, the over-garment being the cowl, beneath which is the black scapular. He changes it only once in two weeks. The frequent use of the bath, as tending to luxuriousness, is forbidden him, especially if he be young. His diet is vegetables, fruit, honey, cider, cheese, and brown bread. Only when sick or infirm may he take even fish or eggs. His table-service is pewter, plain earthenware, a heavy wooden spoon and fork of his own making, and the bottom of a broken bottle for a salt-cellar. If he wears the white cowl, he eats but one such frugal repast a day during part of the year; if the brown robe, and therefore required to do more work, he has besides this meal an early morning luncheon called "mixt." He renounces all claim to his own person, all right

over his own powers. "I am as wax," he exclaims; "mold me as you will." By the law of his patron saint, if commanded to do things too hard, or even impossible, he must still undertake them.

For the least violations of the rules of his order; for committing a mistake while reciting a psalm, responsory, antiphon, or lesson; for giving out one note instead of another, or saying *dominus* instead of *domino*; for breaking or losing anything, or committing any fault while engaged in any kind of work in kitchen, pantry, bakery, garden, trade, or business — he must humble himself and make public satisfaction forthwith. Nay, more: each by his vows is forced to become his brother's keeper, and to proclaim him publicly in the community chapter for the slightest overt transgression. For charity's sake, however, he may not judge motives nor make vague general charges.

The Trappist does not walk beyond the inclosures except by permission. He must repress all those ineffably tender yearnings that visit and vex the human heart in this life. The death of the nearest kindred is not announced to him. Forgotten by the world, by him it is forgotten. Yet not wholly. When he lays the lashes of the scourge on his flesh — it may be on his carious bones — he does it

not for his own sins alone, but for the sins of the whole world; and in his searching, self-imposed humiliations, there is a silent, broad out-reaching of sympathetic effort in behalf of all his kind. Sorrow may not depict itself freely on his face. If a suffering invalid, he must manifest no interest in the progress of his malady, feel no concern regarding the result. In his last hour, he sees ashes strewn upon the

been the realization of the infinite loveliness and beauty of personal purity; and the saint in the desert was the apotheosis of the spiritual man." However this may be, here at Gethsemane you see one of the severest expressions of its faith that the soul has ever given, either in ancient or in modern times; and you cease to think of these men as members of a religious order, in the study of them as exponents



IN THE SMITHY.

floor in the form of a cross, a thin scattering of straw made over them, and his body extended thereon to die; and from this hard bed of death he knows it will be borne on a bier by his brethren and laid in the grave without coffin or shroud.

VII.

BUT who can judge such a life save him who has lived it? Who can say what undreamt-of spiritual compensations may not come even in this present time as a reward for all bodily austerities? What fine realities may not body themselves forth to the eye of the soul, strained of grossness, steadied from worldly agitation, and taught to gaze year after year into the awfulness and mystery of its own being and deep destiny? "Monasticism," says Mr. Froude, "we believe to have

of a common humanity struggling with the problem of its relation to the Infinite. One would wish to lay hold upon the latent elements of power and truth and beauty in their system which enables them to say with quiet cheerfulness, "We are happy, perfectly happy." To them there is no gloom.

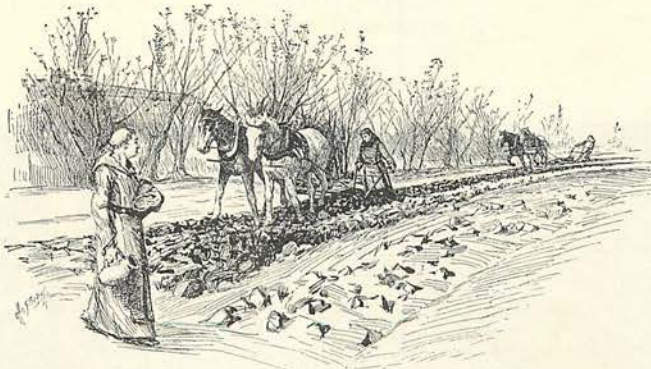
Excepting this ceaseless war between flesh and spirit, the abbey seems a peaceful place. Its relations with the outside world have always been kindly. During the civil war it was undisturbed by the forces of each party. Food and shelter it has never denied even to the poorest, and it asks no compensation, accepting such as the stranger may give. The savor of good deeds extends beyond its walls, and near by is a free school under its control, where for more than a quarter of a century boys of all creeds have been educated.



THE GARDEN.

There comes some late autumnal afternoon when you are to leave the place. With a strange feeling of farewell, you grasp the hands of those whom you have been given the privilege of knowing, and walk slowly out past the meek sacristan, past the noiseless garden, past the porter's lodge and the misplaced rabbits, past the dim avenue of elms, past the great iron gateway, and, walking along the sequestered road until you have reached the summit of a wooded knoll half a mile away, turn and look back. Half a mile! The distance is infinite! The last rays of the sun seem hardly able to reach the pale cross on the spire which anon fades into the sky; and the monastery bell, that sends its mellow tones across the shadowy landscape, is rung from an immemorial past.

It is the hour of the *Compline*, the *Salve*, and the *Angelus*—the last of the seven services that the Trappist holds between 2 o'clock in the morning and this hour of early nightfall. Standing alone in the silent darkness you allow imagination to carry you once more into the church. You sit in one of the galleries and look down upon the stalls of the monks ranged along the walls of the nave. There is no light except the feeble gleam of a single low red cresset that swings ever-burning before the altar. You can just discern a long line of nameless dusky figures creep forth from the deeper gloom and glide noiselessly into their seats. You listen to the *cantus plenus gravitate*—those long, level notes with sorrowful cadences and measured pauses, sung by a full, unflinching chorus of voices, old and young.



It is the song that smote the heart of Bossuet with such sadness in the desert of Normandy two and a half centuries ago.

Anon by some unseen hand two tall candles are lighted on the altar. The singing is hushed. From the ghostly line of white-robed fathers a shadowy figure suddenly moves towards the spot in the middle of the church where the bell-rope hangs, and with slow, weird movements rings the solemn bell until it fills the cold, gray arches with quivering sound. One will not in a lifetime forget the impressiveness

of the scene—the long tapering shadows that stretch out over the dimly lighted, polished floor from this figure silhouetted against the brighter light from the altar beyond; the bowed, moveless forms of the monks in brown almost indiscernible in the gloom; the spectral glamour reflected from the robes of the bowed fathers in white; the ghostly, suffering scene of the Saviour, strangely luminous in the glare of the tall candles. It is the daily climax in the devotions of the Old World monks at Gethsemane.

James Lane Allen.



A MAN'S REPROACH.

WHEN into my life you came
You gave me no promise, yet still
Dare I charge on you the shame
Of a pledge you have failed to fulfil.

Said not each tone of your voice,
Said not each look of your eye,
"Measure my truth at your choice;
No means of proof I deny."

Was it for nothing your glance
Held itself, flame pure, to mine?
Needed there speech to enhance
The strength of its promise divine?

Was there no pledge in that smile,
Dazzling beyond all eclipse?
Only God measures your guile
When you could lie with those lips!

You fail me, in spite of it all,
And smile that no promise you break.
No word you have need to recall;
Your self is the vow you forsake!

Arlo Bates.

