

A RETREAT AT LA TRAPPE.

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(CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK.)

For the benefit of those of my readers who may be unfamiliar with the history of monastic institutions, I may perhaps be here permitted a short historical digression. The monastic life, as is well known, is at least as old as Christianity, but for the first five centuries of the Church such congregations of cenobites as existed were without fixed rules, were practically more voluntary segregations of pious laymen, and were subject to very great fluctuations both in numbers and fervor. Saint Benedict, through the instrumentality of his famous "rule," drafted at Monte Casino, in Italy, in 529, wrought so radical a change in monastic institutions, and placed them on so firm and satisfactory a basis, as to deserve to be considered the founder of monasticism. But time too often dulls the first fervor of a religious community. Saint Robert, when, in 1098, he became Abbot of Melesme, found the Benedictines, excellent men it is true, but interpreting their rule in a milder sense and living a life much less mortified and austere than that of the companions and immediate followers of Saint Benedict. He accordingly resolved to exert himself to renew the rigor and fervor of the rule as followed in the early days of the order, and with that end in view retired to the village of Citeaux, and there founded the Cistercians, an Order of Citeaux. With this order the rule of Saint Benedict was retained without alteration or addition, but was interpreted in its original and strict sense. As, however, the decadence of the Benedictines had been largely due to the complete independence of each monastery, a new system of government was adopted by which all their monasteries were united under one head, the Abbot of Citeaux, and were submitted to a system of mutual visitation. The dress also was changed from black to white, and devotion to the Mother of God was made a special feature of the new order, it being adopted as an invariable practice to dedicate every monastery to her honor. Under St. Robert and his immediate successors, St. Alberic and St. Stephen Harding, and especially under the great St. Bernard, the new order developed with such prodigious rapidity that at the death of the latter saint it numbered some five hundred monasteries, scattered over the whole of Europe. So great was the influence of St. Bernard on this development that he may justly be looked upon as one of the founders of the order.

But all things human are subject to decay, and a day came when the austere and saintly Cistercians had need of a reformer to recall them to their first fervor. The cause, however, which operated most powerfully in bringing about this decadence was one beyond the control of the monks—the system, namely, of the appointment of "abbots commendatory" by the temporal rulers of the state. Under the rules of the order an abbot is elected by the monks of the order over which he is to rule, and the election must then be confirmed by the Pope; but with the increase in wealth of some of the monasteries the right of appointing the abbot was frequently usurped by the king, and the title conferred on some court favorite without any regard to his fitness for the office. The result may easily be imagined. Men were appointed who were priests only in name, and frequently not even that. Disorder reigned supreme, and the enforcement of the rule became impossible. Strange to say, the reformer came at length in the person of one of these very abbots commendatory. Armond-Jean le Bouthillier de Rance, created in 1688,

while yet in his fourteenth year, titular abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Notre Dame de la Maison Dieu de la Trappe, after a youth spent in pleasure and debauchery, was at length converted, and in 1684 instituted a vigorous reform of the order. He restored the greater part of the primitive austerities in all their original rigor, and demonstrated by personal practice that the penitential life of the monks of the middle ages was no less suitable to and possible in modern times.

No summary, however brief, of the history of the Cistercians—or Trappists, as they are now more commonly called—would be complete without at least a passing reference to the preserver of the order during the trying times immediately following the French Revolution—Louis Henry de Lestrange, known in religion as Dom Augustin, Abbot of La Trappe. Expelled from France, the wanderings over Europe of the little band of Trappists, with Dom Augustin at their head, reads like a romance. But the sun at length came out from behind the clouds, and he lived to lead them back to France and La Trappe, lived to see the order spread in a way that, considering the austerity of the life, is almost phenomenal.

De Rance had departed somewhat from the Cistercian constitutions, and had introduced some slight changes in government. Dom Augustin abandoned these and restored the constitutions in their entirety. The difference gave rise to two, or rather three, branches of the order, two of which followed the form of government laid down by De Rance, and the third that of the Cistercian constitutions pure and simple. Happily, our Holy Father, Leo XIII., now gloriously reigning, has brought about the fusion of these branches into one harmonious and powerful whole.

The growth of the order during the present century has been, as I have said, phenomenal. The nineteenth century is not usually considered an age of severe mortification, nor might it be thought that any rule of life could survive fourteen centuries and still retain its popularity. Yet, while at the fall of Napoleon the order was almost extinct, it has in the seventy succeeding years grown to a membership (including Trappist nuns) of over three thousand, living in some fifty-five abbeys and priories. The greater number of these are in France and Germany, but there are two in Ireland, two in England, two in Italy, one in Turkey, one in Algiers, two in the United States (Gethsemane, in Kentucky, and New Melleray, in Iowa), and two in Canada. These last are Little Clairvaux, at Tracadie in Nova Scotia, founded in 1814, and that at Oka. To these are shortly to be added two new foundations: that at Lake St. John already referred to, and one at St. Norbert in Manitoba, an offshoot from the Abbey of Bellefontaine in France.

But what is this "rule" so often referred to? Time will not permit of a lengthy description of it, but a short summary cannot prove otherwise than interesting. Probably the most striking feature of the life is the silence, which is absolute and perpetual. The idea of this is very beautiful. The voices of the monks are put to one use, and one only, that of prayer! How little need they fear that terrible account of "every idle word" that we shall all one day be called on to render.

There are, of course, some necessary exceptions to the rule of silence, but they are strictly limited. The abbot, prior, and sub-prior are allowed to speak and may be spoken to by all, but none of the monks may speak to each other when some such communication becomes absolutely necessary, the two monks who require to speak go before one of the superiors and communicate the desired message through him. It might be thought

that while at work in the fields or in the outbuildings the exchange of words connected with the work on hand would be a matter of constant necessity, but such is not the case. While engaged in their labors the monks are grouped in parties of five or six, and one of their number is placed in temporary authority. He indeed may speak to the others whenever the nature of the work imperatively requires his doing so, but they cannot under any circumstances speak to him, even to ask him for directions. The officers of the monastery are permitted to speak to strangers in the course of their ordinary dealings with the outer world, and the guest-master is not only allowed to speak to the guests of the monastery, but is even obliged by the rule to make himself as entertaining to them as possible. But there are five places in the monastery—the dormitory, the refectory, the chapel, the cloister, and the chapter,—where even the few exceptions I have enumerated do not prevail, and where the silence may not be broken even by those in authority, unless, of course, in a case of urgent necessity.

The time of the Trappist is divided between prayer, manual labor, study and sleep. An hour, or even a moment, devoted to recreation is a thing entirely unknown to his calendar. I might add eating to the list, but he devotes so little time to that very necessary occupation as to make it hardly worth mentioning. His meals vary in number and time with the various seasons of the year. In summer, when his out-of-door work is of course the hardest, rising at two in the morning (as he does all the year round), he takes his first meal, which you may call as you please either breakfast or dinner, at half-past eleven; partaking at four of a light collation, consisting as a rule of a little dry bread and water, though other articles of diet, such as fruit or vegetables, may occasionally be added, at the option of the abbot. From September 14 until Ash Wednesday he takes his first and only meal of the day at half-past two in the afternoon, when he has been up for twelve hours and a half. During Lent his fast is still more rigorous, his one meal being postponed until half-past four, when he has been up singing his office, working, studying, and praying for fourteen hours and a half. And yet we are in the world, when indeed we fast all and do not find a pretext for exemption, grumble at having to wait for our breakfast from seven or eight until twelve! I used particularly to pity the monk who was cook for the hospice, and was obliged to prepare breakfast for the guests at six, and dinner for them at half-past eleven, and had still several hours to wait before tasting food himself.

Nor is the fare of the Trappist, when his meal hour does come, calculated to tempt the palate of the fastidious. It is composed on alternate days of a thick soup or broth made of vegetables of various kinds boiled in water, eked out with coarse dry bread, a little salt, and cup of water; or of boiled rice and milk. Occasionally home-made cider is substituted for the water. Meat he never tastes, unless while in the infirmary; nor fish, butter, cheese, or eggs, although the last three are produced in plenty at the monastery. I can easily imagine the thoughts of some of my readers, who perhaps were beginning to think of a visit to Oka, at this recital; but let it not be imagined that the Trappists restrict their guests to their own meagre bill of fare. Meat they do not serve to any one in the monastery, unless he be an invalid; but amid the abundance of the menu I, for one, never missed it. Milk, butter, and eggs, such as one gets only in the country; excellent bread; vegetables of every variety and in every form; soup; stewed, fried, boiled, etc., etc., and really most tastily done. Most delicious boiled rice, cheese, fruit, both preserved and fresh, tea, cider—

all find a place on the hospitable board which the Trappist lays for his guests. While in the monks' kitchen the sole aim seems to be to provide what will sustain life, the cook of the hospice has, on the other hand, apparently studied cooking as a fine art, and brought his studies to considerable perfection. I can therefore promise that visitors to Oka, whatever else they may do, will certainly not starve.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Woman's Greatest Enemy.

When a woman is troubled with headaches the cause should be discovered, if possible, the overwork stopped, the mental anxiety or distress removed, the errors in diet corrected, or the late hours exchanged for early ones, writes Elisabeth R. Scovil in the *May Ladies' Home Journal*. Then a simple laxative may be needed to prepare the system to benefit by a tonic; cod-liver oil, iron, gentian, quassia, or whatever the doctor recommends as best suited to the particular case. The diet should be abundant and nourishing, avoiding rich, made dishes, pastry or anything liable to disorder the digestion. Exercise in the open air, stopped before there is any feeling of fatigue, is important. When the first unpleasant symptoms are felt lie down with the head low, and take a teaspoonful of aromatic spirits of ammonia in a little water. If there is chilliness put a hot-water bag to the feet and cover warmly with a blanket. If there is nervousness and depression take half a teaspoonful of tincture of valerianate of ammonia, instead of the aromatic spirits of ammonia, and repeat the dose in fifteen minutes. Have the room darkened and endeavor to sleep.

Should these remedies not avert the attack, and the pain and nausea begin to manifest themselves, take a tablespoonful of strong tea or coffee, without milk if possible, very hot, or very cold, and repeat every fifteen minutes for four doses. If the nausea continued the sufferer usually imagines that it will be relieved by the act of vomiting, and is anxious to have an emetic. This may be the case if the headache has come on immediately after eating, when the stomach contains a mass of undigested food, otherwise it is better to try to soothe the gastric disturbance and check the desire to vomit. Effervescent citrate of magnesia, iced vichy or soda water will often produce this result.

When the pain is severe a piece of linen may be dipped in alcohol and water, and a single fold bound on the forehead, wetting it as soon as it becomes dry. Sometimes a flannel wrung out of boiling water and applied as hot as it can be borne will give relief.

Do but your duty and do not trouble yourself whether it is in the cold or by a good fire.

Rest your case on its merits, and be content when you have faithfully done your utmost.

In spite of his 80 years, Verdi takes a ride of nearly two hours' duration after dinner every day, and on his return plays a game of cards with some member of the family. All the musical work that he does is accomplished during the morning, and he talks as confidently of his next opera as if he was a half century younger than he is. His leisure time, apart from the occupations mentioned above, is devoted to the reading of poetry and philosophy.

There is danger in neglecting a cold. Many who have died of consumption dated their troubles from exposure followed by a cold which settled on their lungs, and in a short time they were beyond the best physician. Had they used Bickel's Anti-Consumptive Syrup before it was too late, their lives would have been spared. This medicine has no equal for curing coughs, colds and all affections of the throat and lungs.

He who gives advice to a self-conceited man stands himself in need of council from another.—Saadi.