

A THOUSAND YEARS

OR

THE MISSIONARY CENTRES OF THE MIDDLE AGES

CHAPTER XI.

GLASTONBURY AND NORMANDY.

THE conquests to Christendom of Russia and Poland, Spain and Portugal, the island of Sicily and the shores of the Levant, have not been assigned a place in the foregoing pages, either because the traditional accounts of those conquests are too vague and legendary to be closely followed, or because in none of those countries does early Mission-work appear to have tended to the establishment of any Missionary Centre of signal importance. The same may be said, with respect to the countries inhabited by the Scandinavian race, or by the remaining Teutonic and Slavonic nations.

Spain, perhaps, forms some exception. It is believed, that, when Lerins first flourished, monasteries or more probably hermitages existed in the north of Spain. And, doubtless, the Benedictine Rule and its civilizing spirit was introduced, soon after St. Benedict's time, into the southern districts, which, during the latter half of the Middle Ages, became the kingdom of Castille. Monasticism, however, made no impression in the Iberian peninsula, until the conversion of the Visigoth kings began to help on Christianity. In the sixth century, under the auspices of St. Gregory, Bishop of Rome, the brothers St. Leander and St. Isidore successively Bishops of Seville, founded several smaller monastic houses in and about their episcopal city, and contributed to the institution of a model abbey at Agalia, close to Toledo. The labours, stated to have been undergone by these two bishops, would seem to bear a family resemblance to the labours of St. Austin of Canterbury amongst the Saxons. But, widely differing in exactness from Anglo-Saxon history, the contemporary chronicles of Spain do not furnish much insight into the working of its Centres, either at that era or at later periods of Spanish civilization. St. Isidore left, besides other discursive writings, a treatise *On the Duties of Monks*, in which he says:—"Our (monastic) army recruits its ranks not only with freemen, but particularly with men of servile condition, who come to seek freedom in the cloister. It would be a grave fault, not to admit them." The crude condition of Isidore's Mission-houses is thus exhibited. But, the general tone of his treatise leads also to the legitimate conclusion, that Missionary operations were primarily conducted in Spain, upon a system analogous to the methods employed elsewhere. Indeed, since Austin and Leander came forth as branches from one common