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## REVIEW.

### A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE CISTERCIAN ORDER.

(From the Catholic Standard.)

After three centuries of bleak, wintry desolation, had enveloped this unhappy land of apostasy, there arose, in the wilds of Charnwood Forest, the dawning spring of hopeful times, in the resuscitation of the Cistercian Order. It had been, save for a little while at Lullworth, for many a long age dead on English ground, and the only records of its former greatness, its former beauty, and holiness, were the ivied ruin, the mouldering buttress, and the fragmentary skeletons of its once glorious abbeys. The sequestrations of the commissioners of the brutal Harry, the pillaging of Elizabeth's apostate nobility, and the cannon of Cromwell's ironside soldiery, had wrought what time could never have effected, for they were built as if for eternity. High and stately, and broad and pleasant, and rich and beautiful in every artistic grace, where those sacred mansions of prayer and penance, of hospitality and peace. The spirit of God had sanctified them, and the soul of the pure St. Bernard rejoiced in them, and the souls of countless hosts of weary pilgrims to eternity were saved in them, and the famished bodies of Christ's poor were daily fed in them, and the conscious stricken worldling fled to them for refuge, and obtained peace; but the spirit of hell finally laid them in ruins. Ruined shrines, desecrated altars, the dishonored, foully treated bones of the Saints, and gibbeted Abbots and Friars were henceforth the focausts offered up at the new shrine of Protestantism. The asceticism, the continence, the poverty of these old warriors of Christ were too much for their well-filled stomachs to bear. Their pampered dainty flesh repelled against it; the gorge of the new gospel rose violently against it; and with axe and crowbar and lever, and pointed culverin, they battered down, with much psalm-singing, new-light rejoicing, all that they could, and left the rest to the cold and wintry mercy of the elements, to be hereafter garnered up in their heart of hearts by antiquarians, and tourists, and Camden Cambridge under graduates. Spirits of the saintly dead! ye who once knelt and prayed, and fasted, and mourned, and wept so many tears of charity for the sins of your countrymen—ye, who were once the contrite, God-fearing, God-loving worshippers of Netley, of Fountains, and Glastonbury, of Peterborough, and Faversham, of Colchester, and that of Reading—why staid ye the arm of the Omnipotent, when these, your much loved retreats were levelled in the dust by the rude hands of sacrilegious men, when the sanctuaries which ye had adorned with so much care were shivered and rifled; when the images of Him who died for you, and of her, for whose honor ye would have died a thousand deaths, were ruthlessly demolished, or most indecently mutilated? But charity and forgiveness reigns in heaven, and long suffering also appertains to God, or England would, generations ago, have been blotted out of the list of nations. Sodom and Gomorrah scarcely compassed the crimes of England to her terrible apostasy, and yet she still lives. Fire has not yet descended from heaven to consume her, but a fire, a living fire, has descended from the mercy-seat of God to reclaim her. "I came," said Christ, "to cast fire upon the earth, and what do I desire but that it be enkindled?" That holy fire of divine love has been enkindled by him in Charnwood Forest, in the marvellous restoration of the Cistercian Order of Mount St. Bernard. Corrupt, sensual, self-denying, all-believing England, is there shamed by the beautiful, heavenly contrast of the good monks of Mount St. Bernard. Before the pleasure-jaded Anglican is rolling home in his well-stuffed, well-lunged carriage from the heated halls of dissipation to his costly furnished bed, to take the heavy sleep produced by India's soporific drug, these hardy Trappists are up and stirring from their straw beds, and with one heart and voice are chanting the praises of their Creator. Long before he lazily rings his bell for his valet to assist him to rise, they have dined on their poor dinner of bread and herbs, seasoned only with salt, and cheered their humble hearts with a cup of cold water, or on gaudy days a modicum of the smallest beer, brewed on the homopathic principle, as to malt and hops. But this Trappist banquet is not to be taken with gusto, but with indifference, as to relish, with hearts fixed on God, and ears not inattentive to holy things, read from the lecture. He of silk stockings and lacquered pumps has got his dinner to get; but it will be when the Monks of St. Bernard, after seventeen hours hard toil, are asleep with God and His holy angels on their humble pallet of straw. He, of silk stockings, sits down to his humble fair of well-spiced soup, his dainty fish, his cut of venison; his trifle of pastry, his morsel of cheese and salad, his pint of sherry, his bottle of claret, sipped

slowly while he cools his heated palate with pines and nectarines, and other creature comforts which no sound churchman and State Protestant ever thinks of dining without. The cloth is cleared, and instead of saying prayers, he slumbers and snores away his indigestion. The Trappist, after his dinner of herbs, returns to his church to bless God, and to pray for his Sybarite countrymen. Which has the better chance of getting to heaven?

But the Anglican says, while picking his teeth after his humble banquet, "what fools these Trappists are, what horrid disgusting lives they lead; lives so unnatural; why on earth cannot they lead lives like other men, and take their meals like other men, and dress like other men? What's the use of all their fasting and praying? It's all a humbug. I never fast, and I am a good sound Protestant; I like a good dinner; a good dinner is a very good thing; and we are taught from our childhood to like what is good. I go to church and always say my prayers, except when I am too sleepy, or when I have a headache in the morning from taking Maderia after Claret—I pay all my debts and give to five charities; I take the chair at them, and often speak at Exeter Hall, and damn the Pope—shouldn't I get to heaven as well, or even sooner than these Trappists? Depend upon it they are all humbugs." And the rich man lives on in this comfortable opinion, and dies. While living he was clothed in purple, and fine linen, and sared sumptuously every day. He dies, and is hurried with pomp and state, and a splendid monument is erected with a lying inscription of his virtues—but his soul is thrust into hell, where, with Dives, he may vainly shriek, and cry to the poor Trappist in Paradise to cool with a little water his burning, agonised tongue. And the Trappist dines on his dinner of herbs; is content and praises his God; and he arises often at midnight to praise his God; and he works hard in the fields and praiseth his God; and he prays and sings for long hours in the Abbey Church, and glorifies God, and he meditates in the cloister, and sheds tears of happiness that God has given him grace to choose so holy a life, so sure a life, to do penance in and get to heaven. In his cloister, in his little fields, in his dormitory, in his church, in his refectory, in his chapter room, he is everywhere united to God, and God is always lovingly united to him. He thinks, and thinks truly, he can never suffer too much for the love of Him who died, martyred on the cross, for his salvation.—He has died to the world; what a victory for him! He has died to himself: what a noble conquest realised in him by divine grace! He is dead to his appetites; he is no longer a slave to them, as, perchance, he was of old. Does he fear the grave? What harm can the poor grave that awaits him do unto him? He longs for its embrace as that of a most dear friend. Death comes to him as well as to the rich pampered Anglican; but how different their ends! The one, despairing, reckless, miserable in mind and body, without hope, without comfort: Hell is to him a swiftly approaching reality. He has lived but for this world, but for the indulgence of his appetites and desires, and he feels the torture of the damned in his agony, in his dissolution. The Trappist dies, but it is on straw, sprinkled with the ashes of penitence. If he has been faithful to his vocation, if he has been faithful to his vows, he dies the death of the saintly just. He dies surrounded by his brethren. Every eye is riveted on him with tenderest affection and most brotherly love, or turned in supplicatory prayer to heaven for his happy transit to eternity. The last Holy Sacraments are given him by his father, his friend, his much-loved superior. The abbot kneels by the straw bed of his dying brother; and gives him the bread of angels. It is indeed a viaticum to him. Can we conceive what ineffable, ravishing comfort Christ pours into that dying heart when He comes in person to comfort, to sustain him? What glimpses of Paradise are now his! what visions of angels and saints, and of blessed St. Bernard now coming in triumph to receive his parting soul! He dies, and is buried in his narrow grave; but his soul rejoices for ever in the clear sight and possession of God. Who, therefore, has led the most rational life? who has made the most profitable end? the rich wordling or the poor Trappist? Happy are those who are called, and obey that call, and are found faithful to the end.

How many an anxious soul holds with himself this stern colloquy—I wish earnestly to be saved, but can I be saved in the world in which I now live? Every day that I live in society adds to my sins; my weakness is so great, my temptations are so strong. I know that I may die at any moment, and when I least expect it, and if I die in my sins I am lost for ever. I know that others may be saved by living in the world, but they are stronger than I. If I go into society I commit sin; if I stay in retirement I am restless, and am ill at ease; I have no holy rule to live by, I have no superior to obey. I long to live

among brethren living in unity, living in holy rule and obedience, which, if they obey to the end, they are saved. My natural inclinations shrink from its austerities, but God's grace will enable me to overcome them, and then they will be sweet and easy. If I live in the world I fear that I am lost,—help me, Oh, God; to discover Thy blessed will." He prays, receives light from heaven to discover his vocation, and becomes a Trappist. His friends in the world deride his choice; call him a madman, a fool; but he has chosen the better part, the one thing necessary for his salvation, and is content. Nay more; he has obtained the precious pearl for which he sacrificed all he possessed; he has found peace with God, a holy life, and a saintly end. "In the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, and their departure was taken for misery; and they going away from us, for utter destruction; but they are in peace. And tho' in the sight of men they suffered torments, their hope is full of immortality. Afflicted in a few things, in many they shall be well rewarded, because God hath tried them, and found them worthy of Himself" (Wisdom, iii.) And in the day of judgment those who crushed and despoiled the order, those who have blasphemed it, what will they say? "Then, the just shall stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labors.—These, seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation. Saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, these are they whom we had sometimes in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints" (Wisdom, v.)

We have been led, into this train of thought from a diligent perusal of "The Concise History of the Cistercian Order," which has just been issued from the press. We have read it with profound interest and great edification. It supplies a want long felt in the English Catholic community, of knowing more about this illustrious order, that for many centuries, shed the bright light of sanctity over England, prior to the hateful apostasy, and which, thanks be to God, is now happily restored with something of its former lustre and efficiency. A glorious beginning has been made, and in the right, strict, and holy path which St. Bernard marked out. Mount St. Bernard's Abbey, in the depth of Charnwood Forest, is a very beautiful fac-simile of what a Cistercian abbey was four or five centuries ago, before their own industry and the piety of the faithful had enlarged their means or developed their resources.—A century hence, and, with God's blessing, Mount St. Bernard will have thrown off many healthy and vigorous offshoots, will have established many filiations in quiet, shady nooks of English ground; peradventure, also, in Scotland. The long trial of sufferings and persecutions which this time-honored order has gone through, now, through God's mercy, seems at an end. It has passed through the crucible through the fiery furnace of affliction, and has come out like pure gold, purer and brighter than before.—It is precisely in that state most favorable for developing the spirit of the order; it is very, very poor. It attracts no rich man's envy; it presents no glittering object for a spoiler's rapacity to wrench away. It is now steadfastly pursuing the exact rule of St. Bernard, and is an order exactly wanted in England to arouse the tepid, the sensual, and the faint-hearted to a more fervent practice of holy penance and mortification. If ever prayers from the pure, the straggling Catholic Church of England, they are now.—From the Abbey Church of Mount St. Bernard, by night and by day, when a cold and forgetful world lies buried in lethargic repose, the pure hands of these good monks are raised up to heaven for their sinful, forgetful brethren in the world. And who can tell but God, and His Blessed Mother, what graces are conferred, what conversions take place, what sins are abandoned, what holy and vigorous virtues practised, through the fervent prayer of these good religious? We find from history that many popes, many sovereigns, many princes, were earnestly anxious to have the prayers of the poor Cistercian monks; for who have a better right to be heard before the throne of the Most High? Who, amongst God's children on earth, are more mortified? Who use more self-denial? Who fast more severely? Who are more silent? St. James says he is a perfect man who offends not in his speech. The poor Trappist is perpetually silent among men; his only speech is to praise God. Who labors harder, and eats his coarse brown bread with more sweat of his brow? Who, in fine, prays more and watches more, lest he enter into temptation; or who casts behind him more heroically the joys, the pleasures, the necessary comforts of society; who more steadfastly

leads a life of living death, so that he may get to Paradise, and be for ever united to God! Verily, they stand alone, and are unapproachable, unless that habit be taken and those vows be made. Then you are of them and in them. You are dead to the world and to yourself, that you may live eternally to God, and may daily view the narrow grave that has been opened for the next departing brother without a sigh of regret for the happy change you have made.

The "History of the Cistercian Order" has been compiled with great care. It does not pretend to much original matter, nor to an extended account of the rise and progress of the Order; but what is attempted is done well. It is prefaced by a masterly introduction, in which the destruction of religious houses in England is powerfully handled. It would seem, in the commencement of the work, that great abuses and relaxations had crept in among Benedictine monks, and that great laxity prevailed about the end of the eleventh century. St. Robert, the Abbot of Molesme, was the instrument chosen by Almighty God to reform these abuses, and to lead his brethren to a more perfect life. He obeyed the call, and sought another asylum where he and they could live in strict rule. With twenty-three brethren, in the year 1098, he issued from the Abbey gateway of Molesme, in the diocese of Langres, in France, with no other provision for their travels than the vestments and sacred vessels for the celebration of the most holy mysteries, and a large breviary for the due performance of the divine office. They proceeded on in their march in bold and solemn procession, deaf to the entreaty of those from whom they parted. Through wild and rugged paths they journeyed on, chanting the divine praises until they arrived at the forest of Citeaux, in the diocese of Chalons, in the province of Burgundy. Here they beheld a vast solitude chiefly inhabited by wild beasts. A small silvery stream ran through it, and in this lonely spot they resolved to settle. They hastily put together the trunks of the trees they had felled, and in this simple and rude manner they constructed their monastery.

Time rolled on. They were very fervent, and very exact, and very poor.

The monastery at times suffered from actual want; from the loneliness of the spot and the fewness of visitors, they were quite forgotten by the world, and the alms of the faithful were turned into other channels. They continued, however, in cheerful faith, winning their livelihood out of the hard ground, and feeling sure that God would not desert them; and, indeed, they found their faith was not misplaced. One day, as they were about to sit down to a scanty meal, after the hard labor of the day, the Bishop of Troyes arrived at the monastery with a considerable retinue. The poor monks felt ashamed that they could so miserably supply the needs of the illustrious visitor, but cheerfully divided with him their hard won meal. The bishop went away from the monastery, wondering at the fervent piety of its inmates. For a long time nothing came of this visit, and the monks had probably forgotten it. Meanwhile the resources of the community became daily more straightened, till at last there was hardly provisions enough to serve them for a few days. The brethren applied to St. Robert, and informed him of the state of the case. He bade them quietly trust in God, who would not leave his servants to perish in the solitude to which they had retired to serve him. He ordered some of them to go to Troyes, which was much nearer to them than their own episcopal city of Langres, and bade them buy food, tho' he knew well that he had no money to give them.—The exact conformity of their lives to the very letter of scripture, made them look upon it as a solace and a counsel in the minutest points, in a way of which we have no conception; thus the words of Isaiah rose to St. Robert's mind, "Ye who have no money, hasten, come and buy.—(Isai. lv.) Encouraged by the faith of their abbot, the monks set out on their apparently hopeless journey. So long had the good brethren kept away from the world; that they forgot the singularity of their appearance. They were therefore surprised on entering the city, that their naked feet, coarse habits, and features, so worn with toil and watching, that the fervent spirit seemed to shine through the flesh, attracted general attention. The news flew hastily round, till it reached the Bishop's palace. He ordered them to be brought to his presence, and as soon as they entered, recognised his hosts of Molesme. He received them with joy, and took off their tattered habits, and sent them back with his blessing, and a wagon laden with clothes and bread for their poor brethren at home.—We may fancy the joy of the community when they saw their messengers return, not empty handed as they went, but laden with the blessings which God had given as it were with His own hand, to reward