

THE DEATH OF BEDE.

BY MISS C. CAMERON.

Vordant Spring her mantle spreading
 O'er the landscape far and wide
 Heralded the fast approaching
 Season of Ascensiontide.
 Through the forest's leafy stillness
 Rang the birds' sweet harmony
 Mixed with sounds of murmuring waters
 Rolling to the distant sea.

Round the convent's sculptured portal
 Underneath the jutting eaves,
 'Mong the clinging briar roses
 And the wilderness of leaves,
 Bright the Maytide sun was glancing
 On the swallows' snowy breasts,
 Round the Gothic casement sitting
 As they built and lined their nests.

In a vaulted Gothic chamber
 Day by day a feeble monk
 At his carven desk was leaning,
 While the tonsured head was sunk
 O'er the time-worn vellum pages
 Of a massive volume, where
 Glorious illuminations
 He was setting down with care.

From the sunrise to the sunset
 Still he labored on and on,
 Toiling with unwearied patience
 At the Gospel of St. John ;
 Fast and faster life was sinking,
 Feebler grew its dying flame,
 Yet this work must be accomplished
 Ere the last great summons came.

Often as with heavy eyelids,
 Weary limbs and aching brow,
 Through the long bright hours he labored
 To fulfil that sacred vow,
 His disciples gathered round him,
 And with anxious hearts would say
 " Rest awhile, beloved master ;
 Wait until the coming day."

" Brethren," he would answer simply,
 " Night is falling dark and fast,
 Soon the lamp will be extinguished,
 Every hour may be its last.
 Very brief the time remaining
 To complete this labor blast,
 But as soon as it is finished
 Verily I hope to rest.

" Meantime, let us work together,
 Heart to heart, and man to man,
 Ere my seat is vacant ever,
 Learn and labor all we can.

Chelsea, London, England.

Perfect I will leave this copy
 Of the Gospel of St. John,
 Error shall not mar its beauty
 After I am dead and gone."

So the pupils with their master
 Wrought and labored side by side
 Through the days that lengthened slowly
 Toward the bright Ascensiontide.
 And the monk of Jarrow whispered,
 Oft as though the twilight gloom
 Rang the solemn chimes of vesper,
 " Pilot ! pilot ! lead me home !"

From the hours of early morning
 On Ascension eve were they
 Gathered in that vaulted chamber
 Toiling through the livelong day ;
 And the placid summer twilight
 Found the master in his chair
 To the patient scribe dictating,
 Who the text put down with care.

Tears those faithful eyes were blinding
 And upon the vellum fell,
 But, at length, through evening stillness
 Rang the deep-toned chapel-bell.
 " Master ! my beloved master !
 One brief passage yet remains ;
 Surely thou canst scarce repeat it,
 Worn with toil and racked with pains."

" Take thy pen," the monk said quickly,
 " Set it down without delay !
 In my ear the summons soundeth
 And I must that voice obey.
 Quick ! for on the glorious threshold
 Of immortal life I stand,
 Inspiration comes upon me
 Wafted from the Better Land."

Clear and full his voice resound'd
 Through the vaulted Gothic room,
 One by one the words were painted
 By the fading summer gloom.
 " Dearest master, it is finished !"
 Said the patient scribe at last.
 " It is finished !" said the master,
 " Toil is ended : Jordan passed !

" Glory to the Heavenly Father,
 Glory to the Risen One,
 Glory to the Holy Spirit
 While unending ages run !"
 Then upon the pavement sinking
 As the final words he said,
 Lifting up his face to heaven,
 Bede's noble spirit fled.