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INTRODUCTION TO COUNT DE MONTALEMBERT'S LIFE OF ST. ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY.

(Continued from our last.)

With regard to painting, although it was only in its infancy, it already gave tokens of its future glory. The large windows, which just then came into general use, opened a new field for its operations by shedding on all the ceremonies of religion a new and mysterious light. The surprising *Mass-book* miniatures of St. Louis and of the *Miracles of the Blessed Virgin*, by Gauthier de Coigny, which are seen in the royal Library, show what Christian inspiration could already produce. In Germany began already to dawn that school of the Lower Rhine so pure, so mystical, which was, in a peculiar manner, to unite the charm and purity of expression with the splendor of coloring. The popularity of this rising art was already so great, that the ideal of beauty was no longer sought in fallen nature, but in those deep and mysterious types the secret of which had been found by humble artists in their pious meditations.

Italy we have not yet named, because she merits a separate place in this rapid enumeration. In fact, that eternal inheritance of beauty preceded and surpassed all the rest of the world in the culture of Christian art; Pisa and Sienna, even now so lovely in their sadness and desolation, served as the cradle of that art and prepared the way for Florence, which was to become its first capital. Though adorned within the previous century by many admirable buildings, Pisa was preparing the exquisite gem of Santa-Maria della Spina (1230), and also the Campo-Santo, the distinctive monument of the faith, the glory and the genius of a Christian city; Sienna would build a new cathedral (1225) which would have surpassed all others if it could have been completed. In these two cities, Nicholas Pisan and his illustrious family founded that sculpture so lively and so pure which gave heart and soul to stone, and was only to end with the pulpit of Santa-Croce in Florence. Giunta, of Pisa and Guido, of Sienna commenced, at the same time, the grave and inspired school of painting which was so soon to wax great under Cimabue and Giotto, till it reached the heavens with the blessed monk of Fiesole. Florence hailed a work of Cimabue as a triumph, and imagined that an angel had come from heaven to paint that truly angelic head of Mary, in the Annunciation, which is still venerated there. Orvieto beheld a cathedral arise worthy of figuring amid those of the North (1206-1214). Naples had, under Frederick II., her first painter and her first sculptor. Finally, Assisium erected, in her triple and pyramidal Church, over the tomb of St. Francis, the sanctuary of the arts and of fervent faith. More than one Franciscan was already distinguished in painting; but the influence of St. Francis over lay-artists was henceforward immense; they seemed to have found the secret of all their inspiration in his prodigious development of the element of love; his life and that of St. Clare were henceforward chosen for subjects as well as the life of Christ and His Mother; and all the celebrated painters of that and the succeeding age hastened to offer a tribute to his memory by adorning with their paintings the basilic of Assisium. In that neighborhood was also to spring up the mystic school of the Umbria, which, in Perugin and Raphael (before his fall) attained the highest perfection of Christian art. One would have said that, in his sweet and marvellous justice, God would confer the crown of art, the fairest ornament of the world, on that place whence he had received the most fervent prayers and the noblest sacrifices.

If art were already so rich at the time of which we speak, and answered so well to the movement of Christian souls, what shall we not say of poetry, its sister? Never, certainly, has she played a part so popular and universal as she then did. Europe seemed then one vast manufactory of poetry, sending out every day some finished work, some new cycle. It is that, setting aside the abundance of inspirations, the nations began to wield an instrument which was to lend an immense force to the development of their imagination. In fact, this first half of the thirteenth

century, which we have already seen so productive, was also the period of the growth and expansion of all the living tongues of Europe, when they began all at once to produce those monuments which have come down to us. Translations of the Bible, codes of laws, framed for the first time in modern idioms, prove their growing importance. Each nation found thus at its disposal a sphere of activity all fresh for its thought, wherein the national genius might redeem itself at will. Prose was formed for history, and there were soon seen chronicles made for the people, and often by themselves, taking their place beside those Latin chronicles, so long despised, and yet containing so much eloquence, so many beauties quite unknown to classic Latin. Yet still poetry long maintained the supremacy arising from its right of primogeniture. It was then seen to assume, in almost every country of Europe, those forms which pagan or modern civilisation attribute to themselves. The Epic, the Ode, the Elegy, the Satire, nay, the drama itself, were all as familiar to the poets of that age as to those of the time of Augustus and of Louis XIV. And when their works are read with the sympathy arising from a religious faith identical with theirs, with an impartial estimate of a society wherein soul prevails so far over matter, with a very natural indifference for the rules of modern versification, we ask ourselves what, then, has been invented by the writers of succeeding ages? We seek to ascertain what thought and imagination have gained in exchange for the pure treasures they have lost. For be it known that every subject worthy of literary attention, was sung by those unknown poets, and by them brought under the notice of their contemporaries; God and heaven, nature, love, glory, country, great men—nothing escaped them. There is not a recess of the soul which they did not disclose, not a vein of feeling which they did not explore, not a fibre of the human heart which they did not stir—not a cord of that immortal lyre from which they drew not forth delicious harmony.

To begin with France, not only had its language, formed by the bards of the preceding century, and perhaps by the sermons of St. Bernard, become a national treasure, but it gained under St. Louis, that European ascendancy which it has never since lost. Whilst Dante's master, Brunetto Latini, wrote his *Tesoro*, a species of encyclopaedia, in French, because it was, according to him, the most common language of the West, St. Francis sung hymns in French along the streets. French prose, which was to be the weapon of St. Bernard and of Bossuet, opened with Villehardouin and Joinville, the series of those great models whom no nation has ever surpassed; but in France, as in all other countries, poetry was then much more prolific, and more highly relished. We shall say nothing of the Provençal literature of the Troubadours, although it has withstood the test of modern criticism, and although it was still in all its splendor in the thirteenth century. We pass it over because we think it contains no Catholic element, because it rarely, if ever, soars higher than the worship of material beauty, and represents, with some exceptions, the materialistic and immoral tendency of the southern heresies of those times. In the north of France, on the contrary, together with some fables and certain metrical works which approached too near the licentious character of the Troubadours, the national and Catholic epic appeared in all its lustre. The two great cycles wherein is concentrated the highest poetry of the Catholic ages—that of the Carolingian epics, and that of the Round Table and St. Graal, initiated in the preceding century by Chrestien of Troyes, with those *Romans* (Romances), whose popularity was immense. The *Roman de Renouart*, as we now possess it, those of *Gerard de Nevers*, of *Partenope de Blois*, of *Bertha with the long foot*, of *Renard de Montauban*, of the *four sons of Aymon*, those transfigurations of French traditions are all of that period; as also those of *Renart* and of *la Rose*, which have longer maintained a certain repute. More than two hundred poets, whose works have come down to us, flourished in that age; one day perhaps, Catholics will take it into their heads to go seek in their works some of the most charming productions of the Christian muse, instead of believing, on the word of the sycophant Boileau, that poetry only came into France with Malherbe. We must also

name amongst these poets Thibaut, King of Navarre, who sang the Crusade and the Blessed Virgin with such pure enthusiasm, who won the praises of Dante, and when dying left his heart to the poor Clares whom he had founded at Provins; his friend, Auboin de Sezanne, Raoul de Coucy, whose name at least is still popular, killed at Massoura, under the eyes of St. Louis; the prior Gauthier de Coigny, who raised so fair a monument to Mary in his *Miracles*; then that woman of unknown origin, but whose talents and national success have won for her the honorable title of Mary of France; finally Rutebeuf, who thought he could find no heroine more illustrious to celebrate than our Elizabeth. At the same time Stephen Langton, whom we have already mentioned as Primate of England and author of the *Magna Charta*, intermingled his sermons with verse, and wrote the first drama known by the moderns, the scene of which is in heaven, where truth, justice, mercy and peace discuss the fate of Adam after his fall, and are reconciled by Jesus Christ. We hear only glance over a period when poetry was so popular amongst the French, that St. Louis disdained not to admit to his royal table minstrels, or itinerant poets, and that those very men could free themselves from all toll by means of a song.

In Germany, the thirteenth century is the most lustrous period of this admirable mediæval poetry. Such is the unanimous opinion of the numerous literati who have succeeded for a time in rendering it once more popular in that country. For ourselves, we are deeply convinced that no poetry is finer, none impressed with so much freshness of heart and thought—with enthusiasm so ardent, with purity so sincere: nowhere, in fact, did the new elements planted by Christianity in the human imagination obtain a more noble triumph. Would that we could depict in their true colors the exquisite emotions we enjoyed when, in studying the age of Elizabeth under every aspect, we opened the volumes where this marvellous beauty sleeps unnoticed! With what surprise and admiration did we behold all that grace, refinement, melancholy, which would seem reserved for the world's maturity, united to the artless simplicity, the ardent and grave piety of the primitive ages! Whilst the epic of purely Germanic and Scandinavian origin develops itself there in the train of the *Niebelungen*, that magnificent liad of the Germanic tribes, the double French and Breton cycle of which we have spoken above, finds sublime interpreters there in poets who well knew how, while preserving the subject matter of foreign traditions, to stamp their works with incontestible nationality. Their names are still almost unknown in France, as were those of Schiller and Goethe thirty years ago; but, perchance, they may not always remain so. The greatest of these, Wolfram d'Eschenbach, gave to his country an admirable version of the *Parceval*, and the only one that is now extant of the *Titurel*, that masterpiece of Catholic genius which we may not fear to place, in the enumeration of its glories, immediately after the *Divine Comedy*. Contemporaneously with it, God-froi of Strasburg published the *Tristan*, wherein are summed up the ideas of the chivalric ages on love, together with the fairest legends of the Round Table; and Hartmann de l'Aue, the *Ivain*, at the same time as the exquisite legend of *paovre Henri*, wherein that knightly poet takes for his heroine a poor peasant girl, and delights to reunite in her all the noblest inspirations of devotion and sacrifice that the faith and the habits of his time could give—the contempt of life and its fleeting goods, the love of heaven and heavenly things. How many other religious and national epics were then composed which it would now be superfluous even to name! Nor was the lyric genius less prolific than the epic on that rich German soil. The ignorant and pedantic criticism of the unbelieving ages has not been able to efface the national remembrance of that brilliant and numerous phalanx of love-singers (*Minne-sænger*) which came forth between 1180 and 1250, from the ranks of German chivalry, having at its head, in rank, the Emperor Henry VI, but in genius, Walter de Vogelweide, whose writings are, as it were, the transcript of all the emotions of his time, and the

most complete summary of that delightful poetry. None of his rivals and contemporaries united in a higher degree earthly affections, zealous and watchful patriotism, enthusiastic love for holy things—for the Crusade, in which he had himself fought—and, above all, for the Virgin-Mother, whose mercy and whose mortal dolours he sang with unequalled tenderness. We clearly see that, in him, it was not only human love, but also celestial love with all its treasures which won for him, and his *confrères*, their title of *love-singers*. Mary—every where the Queen of Christian poetry, was especially so in Germany; and we cannot help naming amongst those who have offered her the purest incense of song, Conrad de Wurtzburg, who, in his *Gilded forge*, seems to have concentrated all the rays of tenderness and beauty wherewith she had been invested by the veneration of the Christian world. And, as though to remind us that everything in that age was to be more or less connected with St. Elizabeth, we see the seven chiefs of those epic poets and love-singers assemble by solemn appointment at the court of Thuringia, under their special protector, the Landgrave Hermann, father-in-law of our Saint, at the very time of her birth; the songs which were the produce of the meeting of this brilliant constellation, form, under the name of the *War of Wurtzburg*, one of the most splendid manifestations of the German genius, and one of the most abundant treasures of the legendary mysticism of the middle ages, as well as a poetic wreath for the cradle of Elizabeth.

Crowned heads are every where seen amongst the poets of that age; but in the Iberian peninsula it is kings who guide the first steps of poetry. Peter of Arragon is the most ancient Troubadour of Spain. Alphonsus the Learned, son of St. Ferdinand, who merited, long before Francis I, the title of *father of letters*—a historian and a philosopher—was also a poet; there are but few Spanish verses more ancient than his hymns to the Virgin, and his touching account of his father's miraculous cure, written in the Gallician language. Denis I, King of Portugal, is the first known poet of his kingdom. In Spain began, with the most lively energy that admirable effusion of Christian splendor, which was there kept up much longer than in any other country, nor began to wane till after Calderon. Whilst legendary poetry shed its mild radiance in the works of the Benedictine Gonzalo de Berceo, a poet who was truly inspired by Mary and the Saints of his nation, we see the Spanish epic making its appearance in those famous *Romances* which are the peculiar glory of Spain, and one which no other nation could ever dispute with her; wherein are chronicled all the struggles and all the beauties of her history; which have endowed the people with immortal remembrances, and have reflected all the proud *prestige* of Moorish pomp and elegance, without ever losing that severe Catholic character which consecrated in Spain, more than any where else, the dignity of man, the loyalty of the subject, and the faith of the Christian.

• Those of the *Chid*, regarded as the most ancient, could not have been composed before the thirteenth century, according to the best judges.

(To be continued.)

DR. CAHILL'S LETTER.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE REV. DR. CAHILL AND FIVE PROTESTANT CLERGYMEN, WITH THE PROTESTANT ARCHDEACON OF RAPHOE.

Letterkenny, May 30th, 1853.

"Rev. dear Sir—We, the undersigned, having heard you deliver a controversial lecture this evening in the chapel of Letterkenny, feel it our solemn duty, as ministers of God and ambassadors of Christ, to protest against the doctrines propounded and set forth by you as unscriptural, and contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church. We would, therefore, take the liberty of inviting you to a public discussion, to be carried on in a kind and Christian spirit, in which we call upon you to prove that the doctrines contained in the twelve supplementary articles of the creed of Pope Pius IV. were ever propounded and set forth in the Christian Church as a creed before the year 1564.

"2ndly—We invite you to bring on the platform your rule of Faith, and give us your church's authorized interpretation of the 7th, 9th, and 10th chapters of St. Paul to the Hebrews—or, if you prefer it, your Church's authorized exposition of one of the simplest portions of Holy Writ—the Lord's Prayer.

"3rdly—We invite you and any number of your brother Priests to meet an equal number of the clergy of the Church of England to prove the assertions you used in endeavoring to establish the unscriptural doctrine of the Sacrifice of the Mass. Trusting you will receive this invitation in the same spirit in which it is dictated, we remain, yours faithfully in Christ,

FREDERICK GOULD, Archdeacon of Raphoe.
JOHN IRWIN, Rector of Aghannishin.
RICHARD SMITH, Curate of Cornwall.
J. W. IRWIN, Curate of Raymohy.
JAMES LINSERA, Glenalla.
To Rev. Dr. Cahill."

* Wolfram d'Eschenbach, one of the most celebrated poets of Germany at that period (1220), in order to give an idea of the beauty of one of his heroes, says that the painters of Cologne or of Maestricht could not have made him fairer.—*Pas-savant, Kunstreise*,—p. 403.

† The plan was conceived in 1200, by the Archbishop Ubaldo, but was not put into execution till 1278.

‡ Flourished from 1107 till 1230; his master-pieces are the pulpit of the baptistry of Pisa, that of the dome of Sienna, and the tomb of St. Dominick in Bologna.

§ In the Church of the *Servites*; it was painted, according to the inscription, in 1252.

¶ Tommaso de Stefani and Nicolas Massuccio.

‡ All that we bring forward on painting and general art, and especially on the influence of St. Francis, is established and eloquently developed in M. Rio's book, entitled, *De la peinture Chrétienne en Italie* (Christian painting in Italy). That work has already effected a salutary revolution in the study and appreciation of art, both in France and Italy.

• We could cite no better example than the life of St. Elizabeth by Theodoric of Thuringia; the frequent quotations which we shall make from it in the course of our narrative will give the reader some idea of what it is. Amongst the principal Latin historians of that time we must cite Saxo Grammaticus, for the Scandinavian kingdoms. Further Vincent Kadlubek, for Poland, and Cardinal Jacques de Vitry, for the Crusades.

† It is even said that his name of Francis (*Francois*), was given him, instead of his father's name, because of his great command of the French language.

‡ See their enumeration in the *Itinerary History of France*, t. xvi and xvii; Roquefort, *State of French Poetry*; P. Paris, *le Romanero Français*.

* Delarue, *Archæologia*, t. xiii. Jean Bodel of Arras is regarded as the most distinguished dramatic poet of that period: his fine drama entitled *Jeu de Saint Nicolas*, has been made known to us by M. Onesime Leroy, in his work on the mysteries.

† This celebrated poem, as we now possess it, dates from the first years of the thirteenth century.

‡ Such are the *Wigalois*, by Wirnt de Gravenberg, a vassal of Elizabeth's grandfather, and who accompanied her husband to the Crusades; *Guillaume d'Orange*, which was asked of Wolfram d'Eschenbach by Elizabeth's father-in-law; *Floires et Blanchefleur*, by Conrad de Flecke; the *Chant de Roland*, by the priest Courad; *Barlaam et Josephat*, by Rodolph de Hohenems, &c.

§ The principal collection of their works is in the Royal Library in Paris, in the manuscript called *de Mauze*. It contains the poems of one hundred and thirty-six poets—Professor Hagen, of Berlin, has just published an excellent edition of it with some most valuable additions.