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# THE LIFE OF SAINT WALBURGA

By

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*With an Introduction*

BY

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In these and all other respects, therefore, the work is unreservedly submitted to the correction of the Holy See.

FRANCESCA MARIA STEELE.  
(Darley Dale).

Stroud, 1921.

# LIFE OF SAINT WALBURGA

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# THE LIFE OF SAINT WALBURGA

## INTRODUCTION

*By the Right Rev. Columba Marmion, O.S.B.,  
Abbot of Maredsons.*

RELIGIOUS life is a state wherein man endeavours to attain to the perfection of that sublime ideal, the example of which Jesus Christ gives us in His adorable person, and for the realisation of which He offers us adequate means in His counsels.

As the whole perfection of the Christian life is contained in germ in the grace of our baptism, the highest level of sanctity that man can reach is but the perfect evolution of this divine germ, which Christ deposited as it were, in our souls on the day we were born children of God.

Hence St. Peter teaches that this divine seed is composed of two elements—first, a putting off of that purely natural life, that we have received from Adam, or as St. Peter expresses himself, “a dying to sin”; and,

second, a "putting on the new man whereby we live for God alone and His justice"—"*peccatis mortui justitiæ vivamus.*"\* Hence religious life is a *state* in which man tries to carry this principle through to its ultimate conclusion, by abandoning all that this world can give, in order to live for God alone. St. Peter, too, gives us the formula of this double tendency, "Behold, Lord, we have left all things, and have followed Thee."

This abandoning of every worldly attraction, riches, pleasure, independence, and this following of Christ alone, stablished as they are by the vows of religion, permanently fix man in a *special state* called the religious state. These two elements are found under one form or another in every religious Order, and constitute their very essence.

The various degrees of renunciation, the different ways of following Christ, are the sources whence arise that beautiful variety of religious life with which the Holy Ghost has adorned the Church.

As St. Walburga was a nun of the Order of St. Benedict, the key to the whole of her spiritual life, the real explanation of that peculiar form of holiness which we venerate in her person, are to be found in the principles

\* I Pet. 11, 24.

of monastic life set forth by St. Benedict in his rule and exemplified in his life. Every religious abandons the things of this world, they all propose to follow Christ, but this renunciation is more complete and radical in some Orders than in others, and the manner of following it differs according to the special aspects under which Christ presents Himself to the love of His followers. Thus some consecrate themselves to Christ in the person of His suffering members, others in the person of His poor, others again devote themselves to the instruction of the ignorant; in fact, those words of Christ, "Amen, amen, I say to you, as often as you did it to one of these My brethren, you did it to Me," have been the source of those many religious Orders and congregations, which consecrate themselves to Christ in His members.

Coming down to particular Orders, the Benedictines must not only abandon the goods of this world, but following the example of the holy Patriarch of the Monks of the west, must leave also the world itself, for he is a Monk, a Solitary; and this renunciation, according to St. Benedict, must be so thorough that he must avoid as far as possible quitting his solitude, and must find all that he needs within the enclosure of the monastery. "For

it by no means behoves him to wander outside the bounds of his cloister." (Rule CLXVI.)

Having left all things for Christ, the Benedictine monk does not propose to devote himself to any special work for God. He offers himself to God for Himself alone. The various works of zeal or apostolate which obedience may enjoin are but the expression of his love for God. With Christ he says, "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me a commandment so do I." St. Benedict requires but one thing of the monk, "*Si revera Deum querit*"—"If he really seeks God." In St. Walburga we find these two elements of monastic perfection exemplified in a remarkable degree. Despite a most tender love for her parents, she left all at the age of ten years, and most probably never returned to her home, nor left her cloister till God called her to the Apostolate in Germany. Like many Benedictine Saints, a most tender affection united her to her saintly brothers, SS. Willibald and Winnibald, but at God's call she left all "*reliquimus omnia*" and had no will of her own save that of living far from the world as did her holy Father St. Benedict, "*Sub Summi inspectoris oculo*"—"under the gaze of the Most High." She was a contemplative



soul, and in the midst of a very numerous community—500 nuns—she lived as one dead to the world and buried with Christ in God. She therefore possessed in the highest degree this first essential of the monastic vocation, the leaving all things for God.

All St. Walburga's biographers pay tribute to her great attraction for solitude and contemplation. We are told that when she read the Holy Scripture her faith was so lively that it seemed to her as if "God was speaking to her face to face." This was doubtless the source of the wonderful gift of prayer which all her sisters remarked in her. Like St. Cecily, of whom the Church sings in the divine office, "*Virgo gloriosa semper Evangelium Christi gerebat in pectore suo et non diebus neque noctibus a colloquiis divinis et oratione cessabat*"—“This glorious virgin always bore in her bosom the gospel of Christ, and ceased not day and night her prayers and colloquies with God.” In fact, one of the duties of the Nuns of Wimborne was to commit to memory a considerable portion of the Holy Scripture, and this accounts for the great spirit of recollection and prayer that reigned in that numerous community. How, then, explain the departure of such a hidden contemplative soul from her cloister for a life of active apostolic labour

in a distant and semi-barbarous country? The first reason of this vocation is to be sought in the eternal and inscrutable designs of God. Its manifestation in accordance with her vocation was effected by the interior attraction of the Holy Spirit, confirmed by the call of obedience.

We have seen that the Benedictine monk or nun enters the monastery, not for the exercise of any special form of zeal or charity, but solely to seek God for Himself and in Himself, but once consecrated to God by the monastic vows, love places him or her at the absolute disposal of God's will as manifested by His inspiration and confirmed by obedience.

Thus it was with Walburga. In the silence of prayer she heard God's call, "*Audi filia et vide, et inclina aurem tuam, et obliviscere populum tuum et domum patris tui*"—"Hearken, O daughter and see, and incline thy ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house," Ps. XLIV. She felt God inviting her to leave the silence of the cloister, her Abbess, her sisters, and consecrate herself to the evangelisation of those who were "seated in darkness and in the shadow of death," and her love answered, "*Ecce venio ut faciam Deus voluntatem tuam*"—"Behold, I come O God to accomplish Thy will." Yet, like Mary after

the Annunciation, she knew that it was good to conceal the secret of the King, and she spoke not of this interior invitation, till the voice of obedience came to confirm the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Her two brothers, Willibald and Winnibald, after numerous pilgrimages and many vicissitudes most minutely described in the life, had associated themselves with St. Boniface in the evangelisation of Germany. They understood at once that for the conversion of those nations, the co-operation of their sisters in religion would be at least invaluable if not absolutely necessary. St. Boniface, who remained in constant and most affectionate relations with his saintly sister Lioba—Walburga's novice-mistress, sent messages to Tetta Abbess of Wimborne begging her to allow Walburga, Lioba, Thecla, with some other companions, to help them in their arduous task. The Abbess having taken counsel with her community, and having recognised in this invitation the confirmation of the interior call of Walburga, consented. The rest of the life is taken up with the most interesting and edifying details of the apostolic labours of the great Archbishop and Martyr St. Boniface, of St. Willibald, and Winnibald, as well as of the devoted companions of St. Walburga, now Abbess of Heidenheim, and

of her community. For all these details we would refer the reader to the life itself. In St. Walburga's life and apostolate two characteristics stand out boldly. First, that as a Benedictine nun the apostolate was not the motive of her entry into religion. It was the consequence of her love and spirit of obedience. Hence the wonderful fecundity of her apostolic labours, and their compatibility with her life of prayer and contemplation.

Secondly, that amongst the numerous miracles set forth in detail in her life, two seem to point clearly to the very fountain of her sanctity; I mean the mysterious halo of light which at times enveloped and protected her, and the miraculous oil which has never since her death ceased to flow from her relics. The light denotes the radiance of her contemplation, whilst the oil is a figure of the divine love which flowed from this source.

In conclusion, I cannot too earnestly recommend this life, especially to those who wish to acquire a notion of the real principles underlying Benedictine Asceticism and the Benedictine Apostolate.

COLUMBA MARMION, O.S.B.

*Maredsons,*

1921.

## CHAPTER I

### ENGLAND IN THE VIII CENTURY

ONE of the greatest British Saints was St. Walburga, but, except in the Benedictine Order, she is not so well known in her native land as she is on the continent, where she may be said to have a European reputation. She is also well known in America. One reason for her comparative obscurity here is that this is no longer a Catholic country; another cause is the numerous variations of her name in foreign lands, so that many English people would not recognise her as their countrywoman, and consequently do not realise how widespread her fame is, and how great her popularity in France, Germany, Belgium, Bavaria and the Low Countries.

In Normandy and Champagne she is known as St. Vaubourg, in other parts of France as St. Gauberge, in Poitou as St. Avougong, in Lucca in Italy as St. Falbourg, in Germany she is known as St. Walburge, St. Waltpurde,

St. Walpourg and St. Warpurg, and St. Walpurgis.\* The German name for the first of May is Walpurgisnacht or St. Walpurga's night, her feast being kept in some places on the second of May. Her name is said by some writers to be derived from the Greek *Eucharia* meaning gracious, but this seems rather far-fetched. All these variations of her name, together with the remoteness of the age in which she lived, are sufficient to account for the oblivion into which she has fallen in a land which no longer honours the saints as they were honoured in pre-Reformation days.

In Westphalia there is a St. Walburga who is much honoured, but it is not clear that she is the same as the English Saint Walburga. It is only natural that our St. Walburga should be very popular in Bavaria, since the greater part of her life was spent there, and in Belgium where she once stayed for a few weeks and left a reputation for great sanctity behind her, which has never been forgotten.

Her relics are dispersed throughout the world, and innumerable cells, churches, altars and convents have been erected in her honour ; of these we shall endeavour to give as com-

\* Alban Butler, "Lives of the Saints."

plete a list as possible later on, though some have fallen into decay, and many of her relics have, of course, been lost and destroyed, in the course of the ages, and especially during the Reformation. We mention them here to assure our readers that it is the life of a great and well-known saint whose life we have endeavoured to record from the scanty materials available.

She belonged to the group of saints who, in the seventh and eighth centuries, went from England to Germany, to evangelise that country, which owes its Christianity to the labours of English missionaries both men and women.

She was a niece of St. Boniface, another Englishman, and the Apostle of Germany and sister to Saints Willibald and Wunibald or Winibald, who laboured with St. Boniface to convert Germany from Paganism to Christianity. St. Lioba was another of these evangelising saints, who worked under St. Boniface, and of her we shall have more to say presently.

It is extremely difficult to visualise the life which was lived under such different conditions in the eighth century as those which prevail in ours, in this highly civilised twentieth century.

It may help us a little to do so if for a

moment we recall the rudeness of the age, the brutality of the uncivilised peoples of Europe, the insecurity of life and property, the lack of the commonest conveniences of existence, the dangers of travel, the horrors of war, the prevalence of disease, the want of sanitation, all of which evils were common enough in France, more so in England, and most so in Belgium and Germany.

Little of the ancient Roman civilisation remained in Britain in the eighth century, or on the continent : it was an age of violence, and the only hope was in the Church and the monasteries ; there was no commerce and few if any industries. England was mostly forests, fens, moors and waste-land ; there were few towns ; London was the greatest city. There were three classes of society : the nobles, who were very powerful ; the freemen, who were mostly farmers and herdsmen, and nearly all of this class owned a little land ; and the serfs or slaves.\*

The houses except of the very rich were very rude and badly built, mostly of wood, containing a large hall ; there was no glass, only a few openings in the walls for windows covered with oiled rags to let in light and keep out the air ; there were no chimneys,

\* Pont, T. F., " History of Great Britain."



only a hole in the roof for the escape of the smoke. The serfs lived in wattled huts thatched with rushes, with holes in the walls to admit a few gleams of light and let out the smoke from the wood fire. There was no regular army, all the men had to fight for their country in time of war, which was of frequent occurrence.

The parochial system had begun to be inaugurated nearly fifty years before Walburga was born, the lands of the nobles were the parishes, and their chaplains were the parish priests.

The Council of Cloveshoe in 747 decreed that bishops must visit their dioceses once a year, and that the people must learn the Creed and the Lord's Prayer in the vulgar tongue, and Baptism and Holy Communion must be explained to them in their own language. The bishops and priests were greatly respected; the Archbishops ranked as Athelings, that is as members of the royal family; bishops with the greater nobles, and even the poorest parish priest with the lesser nobility.\*

The sacrament of Penance was administered in the seventh and eighth centuries on the continent, in the same way as it is still in the Eastern Churches. The priest questioned

\* "Intermediate History," W. J. Perry.

the penitent as to whether he had committed certain sins; some of the questions which he was instructed to ask throw a light on the manners and customs of the period. For instance, he asked the penitent if he had committed murder; whether he had worshipped wooden idols or trees, or fountains? Whether he had pillaged graves? Whether he had made a slave of a freeman? Whether he had burnt other people's houses or granges? Whether he had been guilty of any kind of violence? \* From which we gather that the continent was still only half civilised, and that although Christianity was spreading all over Europe, paganism was not wholly extinct.

The chief occupations of the nobles in peace-time were hunting and hawking, and of their wives and daughters spinning and embroidery, for the Saxon women were very good embroiderers, and every woman rich or poor spun flax and wool.†

The food even of the nobility was coarse; they had wheaten bread, but the serfs' bread was black and made of oats. Meal and the proceeds of the chase were the principal food, and beer and mead the usual drink. The

\* Ozanam, A. T., "Etudes Germaniques II."

† Perry, op. cit.

rich had wine, and in their houses it was customary to have musicians to play and sing, and tumblers and clowns to come and perform and amuse the guests during meals, which lasted a very long time. They had knives and spoons, but they used their fingers a great deal, for the first mention of a fork in Europe was in the time of St. Peter Damien, who publicly reprov'd a lady from the pulpit for using a golden prong to eat with, instead "of using the fingers which God had given her for that purpose." The Anglo-Saxons were very musical. The Benedictine monks introduced the Benedictine chant into England at the same time that the Faith was brought here; the monks were very clever in making musical instruments; they were very clever also at musical composition and the theory of music; indeed, they were the most famous authors of musical works. The Council of Cloveshoe already mentioned ordered the expulsion of harpists, buffoons and wandering musicians from the monasteries. It was at the Monastery of St. Gall that the greater part of the pieces adopted for the Divine Office were composed in the Middle Ages. The first organ that arrived in France was in 757, and it was a creation of Christian art invented by the monks. Of all the Bene-

dictines, the English monks were the most passionately fond of music.\*

The chief old English musical instrument was the rotta, a kind of lyre, but by the eighth century the harp was taking its place. The rotta had from five to seven strings; it was in the form of a lyre, and was carried on the shoulders in a leathern bag by wandering musicians. In the year 600 the Bishop Venantius Fortunatus wrote a Latin poem, in which he exhorted the Romans to sing to the lyre, the Greeks to the cithara, and the Britons to the rotta†, and the Barbarians to the harp. In Wales it used in those old times to be said that three things were indispensable to a gentleman, his cloak, his chessboard and his harp. Another saying was that a Welshman must have three things in his house, a virtuous wife, a cushion for his chair, and his harp in tune!

In the year 705, when St. Ealdhelm was Bishop of Sherborne, he one day entered a church to preach, but found no congregation. He was not at all disconcerted, but taking his harp he went out and stood on a bridge near the church, and played till he had at-

\* Montalembert, "Les Religieuses Anglo-Saxones," and "Moines d'Occident."

† Galpin, Francis, "Old English Instruments of Music."

tracted a congregation, when he led them into the church and preached to them.\*

In the eighth century a certain monk at Jarrow—some writers say he was the Prior—wrote to St. Lulle, the Archbishop of Mayence, saying: “I should like to have a harpist who could play this harp we call a *rotta*. I have the instrument but not the artist; send him to me, I beg of you, and do not laugh at my request.” †

This monastery of Jarrow was one of the twelve Benedictine monasteries, which St. Augustine founded in England at the same time that he established the twelve bishoprics in the two provinces of Canterbury and York. Canterbury was the first founded; the Church was dedicated to Christ and the monastery to the Prince of the Apostles. The Canterbury monks were the first to introduce the Benedictine chant into England in the seventh century.

The old monastery of Wimborne in Dorset, where St. Walburga was educated, was founded in the latter part of the sixth century by Cuthburga, the first Abbess. She died in 700. The monastery of Waltham Holy Cross in Essex, where St. Walburga's brother

\* Madan Falconer, “Books in Manuscript.”

† Montalembert, *op. cit.*

Willibald was sent as a little boy to be brought up, was one of the twelve above mentioned. It was in these Anglo-Saxon Benedictine monasteries that the men and women who were afterwards to evangelise Germany were trained in the eighth century for the apostolic work they were destined to perform.

The greatest place of pilgrimage in St. Walburga's time was Glastonbury; pilgrims came from all parts to visit it, and it was known as "a second Rome." It was equally celebrated for its relics, as for the magnificent building in which they were enshrined. In 725, Ina, then King of Wessex, conferred upon it the title of "Ecclesia Britanniae prima et fons et origo totius religionis." \*

St. Walburga was living during part of the period in English history known as the "Struggle for Supremacy" between the three kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex. Ina, who was then King of Wessex, was a friend and a benefactor of the Church. He helped Glastonbury, and all the monasteries in his kingdom found in him a protector and benefactor, and to Glastonbury in particular his generosity was truly princely. After he had reigned thirty-two years the Queen Ethelburga, who was also very devout, made him

\* Pont, T. F., "A History of Great Britain."

resign his throne, and he then adopted the garb of a pilgrim in his humility, and spent the remainder of his life repenting of his sins, and wandering about to various shrines, and Ethelburga kept him company. He reigned from 688 to 720, and seems to have died ten years after St. Walburga was born, but the date of her birth is somewhat uncertain.\*

If the life outside the monasteries was very different from ours, that inside also differed from the monastic and conventual life of the present day, although the Rule of St. Benedict prevailed in all the Benedictine houses then as now. One thing was the same, the Faith. The Divine Office was different; many of the Saints whose lives are now related in the Lessons were then unborn; the Lessons from Holy Scripture, the Psalter and the Canticles were, of course, the same; most of the hymns were as yet unwritten.

The discipline was much stricter, the fasting more severe, but if it is true that the men and women of those days were much stronger and healthier than we are, they were better able to bear a stricter rule of life.

The monks and nuns had to learn the Psalter by heart, presumably because of the scarcity of books, the making of which was their prin-

\* Lingard, "History of England."

cial occupation, after the recitation of the Divine Office, the *Opus Dei*, which occupied many hours and was their most important work. Their Missals and Psalters and Books of Hours were not only copied by hand, as were all their many books, but they were also most beautifully illuminated, and enriched with miniature paintings, while their bindings were most elaborate, their Missals being bound in the costliest leather, and often enriched with precious stones.

But if the exterior life of the monks and nuns differed considerably from that of their brethren and sisters of the present day, their inner life was the same; they had Holy Scripture and the Liturgy of the Church and the works of the Fathers and those of Cassian and St. Gregory the Great for their spiritual reading, and those who knew Greek—and many, even nuns, did so—were familiar with the writings of Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite, which were not translated into Latin till the ninth century, so they probably knew as much about contemplative prayer and mysticism as we of the twentieth century, with all the innumerable books we have on these subjects. Verily there is nothing new under the sun, as the wise man said.

St. Walburga, although a missionary, was



a born contemplative, and probably had she consulted her own taste would have preferred to lead a solitary, contemplative life for which she had a great attraction, to evangelising the German nation.

## CHAPTER II

### HER FAMILY

THE life of St. Walburga was so intimately connected and bound up with those of her two brothers, Saints Willibald and Winibald, that some account of them and their missionary labours must inevitably intrude into our sketch of their saintly sister, the details of whose life are necessarily somewhat scanty, seeing the remoteness of the period in which she lived.

There are six short lives of our Saint in the "Acta Sanctorum" of the learned Bollandists. The first is by Wolfhard, a priest of Eichstadt, written a hundred years after her death; the second by Adelbold, Bishop of Utrecht, who was ordained in the year 1006; the third by an anonymous writer, compiled from MSS. in Cologne and Wind-

garten; the fourth by a poet named Medibarbus, written in rhyme; the fifth by Philip, Bishop of Eichstadt—this is the longest; and the sixth by the nuns of Eichstadt, from certain MSS. edited by Stevartius.\*

Adelbold and Medibarbus add little or nothing to our knowledge, for they merely repeat what Wolfhard has told us often in very nearly the same words. Wolfhard tells us very little of St. Walburga's origin, but he is expansive concerning her miracles, especially those which occurred after her death, and he gives a long account of the first translation of her relics.

The fact that two Bishops wrote the life of St. Walburga shows in what great esteem she was held in the place where so much of her life was passed. Bishop Philip is very eloquent in her praise. He compares her to a dove, because "a dove is a solitary bird, faithful and chaste, flying alone, and Walburga was solitary excessively, flying in the solitude of contemplation, most prudent, modest and chaste."

Wolfhard, her first biographer, was a priest, and at one time a monk at Hasenburg, and afterwards a Canon; he was alive in 893, when the first translation of St. Walburga's

\* Acta Sanctorum, "Boll. III.," Feb. 27th; Migne Pat., Lat. CXXVII. and Tom CXL.

relics took place, under Bishop Erckanbold at Eichstadt, in order that some of her relics might be given to the Abbess Liubila. Wolfhard had the misfortune to offend Erckanbold, how we are not told, but he was cast into prison where he composed some historical poems on St. Walburga, and when he came out of prison he sang these before the Bishop, and obtained honours and remuneration as well as pardon. Some of these verses were used in the Responsorio in the office of the Saint.

The sixth life of the Saint written by the nuns of Eichstadt was composed after the invention of printing, because, as they say in their preface, they wished it to be printed in both German and Latin, but, according to Stevartius, who edited them, this was never done.\*

The exact place and date of her birth are neither of them certain. The county was Dorset, and the place probably near Wimborne, where she certainly was educated, and the date of her birth was not earlier than 710, probably a few years later, as it is known that she was a good many years younger than her two brothers, Willibald, who was born in the year 700, and Winibald in 701.

\* Boll, *op. cit.*

Her father was Saint Richard, sometimes called King Richard, and he may have been one of the Anglo-Saxon Kings. He was certainly of royal lineage, and perhaps on account of his near relationship to the royal family was called a king. Her mother's name was Wunna. She is believed to have been a sister of St. Boniface; she was also related to St. Willibrod. St. Richard and Wunna, or Winna as she is sometimes called, brought up their children in the Christian religion piously and strictly. They appear to have had others besides the three already mentioned for when Willibald proposed to his father to make a pilgrimage with him and Winibald to Rome, Richard hesitated to comply for some time, on account of his wife and young family, whom he could not leave unprovided for and unprotected in such rude and troublous times.

When Willibald was only three years old he fell dangerously ill, and was at the point of death when his parents took him to a crucifix in the courtyard of their castle, where the people who passed by could see him, and laid him at the foot of it, praying earnestly for his recovery and promising that if Almighty God granted their request, they would consecrate the child to His service. Their prayer

was granted, and the boy recovered, and when he was five years old Richard took him to Waltham Abbey, and gave him into the charge of the Abbot Egwald or Eadwald. Waltham Abbey is in Essex, not in Hampshire as some writers have said ; it was a Benedictine monastery, and the little Willibald was handed over to one of the monks named Theodoret to educate. As he grew older, he made great progress in his studies, especially in Holy Scripture, and by his gentleness, humility and childlike obedience, in which he had evidently been trained at home, he won the hearts of the monks who loved him dearly.\*

Winibald was, it seems, educated at home, for we do not hear of his ever being sent to school ; we are told little of his early youth, except that he was never very robust, and that he was brought up religiously in the fear of God, and that he was of a gentle, mild disposition, and a handsome youth. He was Walburga's favourite brother, which was perhaps partly due to the fact that for the first eleven years of her life they were constant companions, while Willibald was at school. When Winibald was nineteen, Willibald, who was a year older, was seized with an ardent

\* See "Canisius Lectiones Antiquæ."

desire to make a pilgrimage to Rome, to visit the tombs of the Apostles, and to Jerusalem to visit the Holy Places. We are told he was of a very ardent, enthusiastic temperament, and he came home burning with zeal, and determined if possible to persuade his father to accompany him, and to take Winibald with them. As a preliminary step, Willibald proposed that they should renounce all their possessions, which he for his part was quite willing to do, and Winibald fell in with the suggestion, kindled by his brother's fiery devotion. Their father, however, very properly hesitated, on account of his wife and other young children, including Walburga, for whom he had to make arrangements for their maintenance and protection during his absence.\*

We can imagine the discussions that must have taken place in St. Richard's household when Willibald came home, all hot to induce his father to renounce his inheritance, and set out on the long and perilous journey. He had no difficulty in persuading Winibald to fall in with his proposal, for the brothers were of one mind in determining to devote themselves to this pilgrimage, believing it to be a most meritorious work. St. Richard agreed with them in this, but he was held

\* Boll, Feb. 27th.

back for some time, out of consideration for his wife and his other children.

It was no pleasure-trip to Rome, let alone to Jerusalem, in those days of civil wars in England with robbers and brigands, pestilence and wild beasts on the continent. True, facilities for travel for pilgrims were given by the Catholic Church and the Roman Empire, but it took three months to get from Canterbury to Rome, and for safety priests and monks travelled in secular clothing when on a pilgrimage, as they were special objects of prey to the bands of robbers which infested the roads. The Carthusians and Cistercians refused to do this, and travelled in their habits.\*

The sea voyage was easier and safer than the land journey, in spite of all the perils of the deep, of winds and of storms. It is probable that St. Richard had made pilgrimages to Glastonbury, for it was in the next county, and pilgrims from all parts of Christendom were in the habit of visiting it. He had most likely been to Canterbury also, and therefore he knew something of the dangers and fatigues of the land journey, which would necessarily be more trying to him in his advancing years than to his young sons, full of

\* "Celtic Britain and the Pilgrim Movement," Hartwell Jones, 1910.



the vigour and enthusiasm of youth, and the joy of life.

At length Richard made the great renunciation—he renounced his kingdom, if he had one; at any rate, his possessions and lands after providing suitably for Wunna and the children. Walburga, who was then a child of ten or eleven, was taken to the monastery of Wimborne Minster, in Dorset, to be educated and placed under the care of the Abbess, probably with the idea of her taking the habit, when she had reached the proper age. This disposed of one of the children, and Richard knew that the child, who was very pretty, would be safe in the charge of the nuns, several of whom were his cousins. Wimborne was then a double Benedictine monastery of monks and nuns. This double monastery was not an unusual thing in those troublous times, when the monks, though separated from the nuns, were near enough to be a protection to them. The discipline at Wimborne was particularly severe, and especially strict with regard to the enclosure of the nuns. All Benedictine nuns are, of course, strictly enclosed, but at Wimborne not even prelates were allowed to go inside the nuns' enclosure.\*

\* Butler, "Lives of the Saints." See St. Thecla.

This great Abbey was founded by Saints Cuthberga and Qwinburga, who were sisters of Ina, the good King of the West Saxons. The church was built by St. Cuthberga, but not a trace of the Saxon buildings or church now remain; unfortunately they were completely demolished in the ninth century by the Danes, on one of their marauding expeditions.\* Wimborne is not far from the coast, so the monastery was an easy prey to their invasions.

The community, when Walburga entered the monastery, numbered five hundred, and the nuns were governed by the Abbess Tetta, and among them were two of St. Walburga's cousins, Saints Thecla and Lioba, both destined to play as important a part in the evangelisation of Germany as our Saint. They were also relations of St. Boniface. Perhaps Walburga's first sorrow was leaving home, and her parents and brothers and sisters, but a greater trial was in store for her a year or less after her arrival at Wimborne; but we will not anticipate events.

Pilgrims usually crossed the Channel from Sandwich or Dover, in those days, but we are told that St. Richard and his sons crossed from Hamblehaven. There is a small town

\* Butler, "Lives of the Saints," Aug. 31st.

called Hamble on the coast of Southampton Water, where the river Hamble joins it, and this appears to have been the place from which they embarked, Hampshire being the neighbouring county to Dorset; it was only a comparatively short journey by land till they reached the vessel in which they were to cross to France. The fare in those days from Dover or Sandwich across the Channel was sixpence for a person and two shillings for a horse.\*

The boats in those times were manned by galley-slaves, who rowed, and before they started the skipper promised them protection from these slaves, and also undertook to provide them with two full meals a day during the passage. Most probably other pilgrims joined them at Hamble, for it was customary for pilgrims to travel in parties for mutual protection, and there were very few travellers in those days except pilgrims. They landed somewhere on the coast of France, most likely at a place then called Quentavic, near Boulogne, which was the chief port on the northern coast of France.

The road from England to Rome for pilgrims was then nearly the same as travellers now take to Italy, but the means of transit

\* Hartwell Jones, "Celtic Britain and Pilgrim Movement."

were of course very different. The pilgrim-groups comprised horses and waggons and sumpter-mules, for those who were unable to walk, and they were liable to be attacked by robbers and brigands by day, and by thieves by night in the inns. The Mount Cenis passes were so cold that on one occasion an Archbishop of Canterbury was frozen to death in crossing them.\*

Our travellers must have crossed in the height of summer, for they left England in the month of May, and did not arrive at Lucca till September. On landing in France they first of all made their way to Rouen, and from thence they visited all the celebrated shrines they passed in France, to make their devotions there.

On their arrival at the ancient city of Lucca a great misfortune befell them. St. Richard was taken suddenly dangerously ill, and worn out and weakened by the fatigues of the journey, he had not strength to resist an illness. We are not told what his illness was, but we may be sure the proper remedies were wanting in those days, when the laws of sanitation were unknown; at any rate, the Saint passed suddenly away, to the grief of his sons. His earthly pilgrimage

\* Ibid.

was over, and he went to his eternal reward.\*

Willibald and Winibald may have reproached themselves with having persuaded him to accompany them on this arduous pilgrimage. It became known in Lucca that St. Richard, although travelling in the guise of a humble pilgrim, was a prince, if not a king, in his own country, and he was awarded a funeral in accordance with his rank, and buried in the church of St. Frigidian, where his relics are preserved to this day, and he is there honoured and his feast kept with befitting ceremony.

After the burial of their father, his sons remained for a little while in Lucca, and then resumed their pilgrimage to Rome, where they arrived on St. Martin's Day, and at once made their way to the tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul, to pay their devotions. Even in these degenerate days, to kneel at St. Peter's tomb is a thrilling experience fraught with many graces, but in those far-off times when the Faith was so strong and the perils of the journey so great, the joy of the pilgrims as they prostrated themselves at the Confession in St. Peter's must have far exceeded ours.

\* Boll, "Acta Sanctorum," op. cit.

The joy of St. Willibald and St. Winibald was indeed tempered with grief at the loss of their father, with whom they had hoped to have shared it. The hardships of the journey had told on them also, for they were both taken ill with fever at the Benedictine monastery at which they stayed soon after their arrival in Rome, and suffered from it. They nursed each other, and as soon as they were able to do so, persevered in visiting all the holy places and the various shrines and churches, passing their time thus and in prayer and the study of Holy Scripture, and the other works which the libraries to which they had access contained. They remained in Rome from St. Martin's Day, 720, till Easter, 722. Willibald then went on to the Holy Land with at first only two companions, but Winibald was too ill to accompany him and remained in Rome for five more years, studying hard to fit himself for the priesthood, and taking advantage of all the facilities for so doing which the city offered him. Willibald may have already taken the Benedictine habit at Waltham, for he was making this pilgrimage with the consent of his Abbot, and probably, while in the Roman house of his Order, performed all his choir duties, but Winibald, who was now the head

of the family, and may have inherited some of his father's wealth, remained a secular, perhaps deterred by his health and from consideration of his mother and her other children, whose protector he now was, and to whom he ultimately returned.

## CHAPTER III

### WIMBORNE ABBEY

THE monastery at Wimborne was a very large building. The nuns' part alone provided accommodation for five hundred nuns. It was probably unfinished when St. Walburga entered it as a school-girl. Although nothing remains of either the monastery or St. Cuthberga's beautiful church, we can form some idea of what it was like.

It stood on a gentle slope above the river Allen, near its confluence with the river Stour. The foundresses, being sisters of Ina King of the West Saxons, were rich women and spared no expense in the building of the church. For this, as the Saxon workmen were not sufficiently experienced, they would have brought over French stone masons and glass-makers, as did, half a century earlier, St. Benedict Biscop, when he built the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow.\* The French

\* Drane, Augusta, "Early Christian Schools and Scholars."



masons were skilled in the carving of stone and the glass-makers in glazing the windows of the church and monastery, and also in making glass for the lamps and other uses. Anglo-Saxon churches generally consisted of a nave with the semi-circular arches of the Normans, and there was an apse with a dome under which stood the high altar, there were panels on the walls divided by stone pilasters, the belfry windows were divided by balusters; the tower, or towers, as the case might be, was ornamented with arcading.

The walls were decorated with paintings or mosaics, for the art of mosaic-painting was not altogether lost, and the delineation of scenes from the Bible or the martyrdom of the saints on the walls of the churches, was one great means of educating the people in the truths of their religion. Very often pictures were brought from the continent, chiefly from Rome or other parts of Italy, to hang on the walls of the churches, after the use of them had been permitted, and by St. Walburga's time images were allowed, but the use of these had to be carefully safeguarded, lest the ignorant masses of the people should lapse into idolatry, always a fear of the bishops and clergy of those days.

The Iconoclasts had begun to disturb the

peace of the Church on this question of images about this time in Rome, and in course of time news of it no doubt reached the monastery of Wimborne, and the Council of Cloveshoe, which sat in 747, published an edict safeguarding their use.

The decoration of the church at Wimborne was probably still in progress, when little Walburga arrived there. On great festivals the high altar would have been a blaze of wax-candles and lights, decorated profusely with flowers and the priests wearing costly vestments, for everything was done to make the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass as imposing as possible. The Blessed Sacrament was reserved as It always has been in the Catholic Church, but it was in olden times usual to keep It in a side-chapel sometimes suspended over an altar, sometimes in a tabernacle in the shape of a tower, sometimes in one shaped like a chalice, and the receptacle was often of precious metal.

There was an organ, for by the seventh century the organ was used as a fitting accompaniment to the choral music of the Church. The singing and chanting of the Divine Office was one of the chief employments of the Benedictine monks in their choir, and of the nuns in theirs. Walburga, who is said to

have been a most devout child, would delight in hearing this beautiful music, and no doubt longed for the time when she would be able to join in it, for she had already decided to consecrate herself entirely to the service of God as a nun, as soon as she was old enough to take the veil.

The double monastery at Wimborne appears to have been a most gloomy looking building. The church separated the monks' part from that of the nuns, and these were more like two prisons, or at least fortresses, than convents, but the uncivilised state of the country made it necessary to fortify them against any inroads of the Danes, who in the ninth century did actually destroy them completely. The windows were very small, like loopholes, and as glass was still very rare and dear, it is not likely that the windows of either the monks' or the nuns' cells were glazed, if those of the libraries and the refectories and the chapter-houses were. Each convent had a tower, and these and the outside walls were battlemented like those of a castle. High walls enclosed the convents and cloisters and gardens.

It must have looked a formidable place to little Walburga, when St. Richard took her there, before he set out on his pilgrimage, but, as the daughter of a king, she was accus-

tomed to live in a castle which was perhaps not more cheerful-looking. St. Richard was not admitted inside the enclosure, but the Abbess Tetta appeared at a barred window to interview him, as she did whenever any visitors came. Here he committed Walburga into her charge, and then took leave of his dear little daughter. Fortunately neither of them knew that this was the last time they were to meet on earth, or the parting would have been still more painful.

Being a princess, the child was probably treated with more ceremony than other school-girls just arriving would have been, and her modest air and winning manners would have impressed even so great a person as the Abbess reigning over five hundred nuns in her favour.

Abbess Tetta was a very remarkable woman, highly gifted herself, she was quick to discern the capabilities of others. She was a strict disciplinarian, and governed her large community wisely and firmly. She is sometimes given the title of saint, so we may safely presume that her spiritual gifts were as great as her intellectual powers. Her monastery was not only one of the strictest observance, but it was also one of the most intellectual institutions in this or perhaps any other country. Her nuns were good Latin scholars ;

they knew some Greek also, as their quotations from the classics prove, but they learnt Greek chiefly in order to study the Greek Testament, and to aid them in transcribing Greek works. They learnt and taught grammar, arithmetic, astronomy, theology, history, music and singing, illuminating and miniature-painting. They transcribed Missals, Breviaries and other works for St. Boniface and other priests. This was indeed one of their great occupations. In short, they were highly accomplished, well-educated women, although it is unlikely that all of them excelled in these accomplishments. No small part of their training was the learning to sing the Divine Office, which included the learning by heart of the Latin Psalter, nor must we forget to mention the Holy Rule of St. Benedict which they also had to study.

It required a clever woman to be at the head of a large educational as well as a religious establishment like Wimborne Abbey, and the Abbess had to superintend the management of the lands and farms attached to the Abbey as well. She had stewards under her and help from the monks in this, but little was done without consulting her. She was the supreme authority; she was a little sovereign, and her subjects treated her with as much reverence and ceremony as if she

were a queen. No wonder if little Walburga, princess though she was, and accustomed to the court ceremonies in her father's castle, quaked when left alone with this great lady. The poor child had just left a happy home, with a loving mother, and brothers who idolised her, and she had just said good-bye to a father whom she in her turn worshipped with the reverential love of a devoted daughter, which, although we hear less about it, is as beautiful an affection as the love of a son for his mother.

But if Abbess Tetta was somewhat awe-inspiring, she was soon to meet a very different type of nun, her cousin, or, as some German writers say, her aunt, Lioba, who became her novice-mistress later on.

Few even of the saints have been described in more enthusiastic terms than St. Lioba, who is said to have been beautiful as an angel, and she was as angelic in disposition as in her countenance. No one ever saw her angry; she was always sweet-tempered and joyful, although she rarely if ever indulged in laughter. She was never arrogant or proud of her learning and other accomplishments, yet she was well versed in Holy Scripture and the works of the Fathers, and in the canon-law of the Church; she was passionately fond of reading and

study, and could write Latin letters, and was equally clever with her needle.

Here we must pause for a moment to say that the Wimborne nuns were experts in church-embroidery. The Anglo-Saxon women had a great talent for it, and there was a special kind known as English work, in which gold and silver thread was largely used as well as coloured silks, and jewels were frequently introduced. One of the works of the Wimborne nuns was this embroidery, which they made up into vestments for Mass, and no doubt this was one of their favourite occupations, and certainly formed part of Walburga's education.

St. Lioba's name meant in Saxon "the Beloved One," and she was so called because of her beauty and her sweet lovable nature. Her biographer, Rudolf, a monk of the famous Abbey of Fulda, says of her, that "she was as boundless in her charity as admirable in her knowledge." He tells us that she loved to wash the feet of her spiritual children, and to serve them at table, and even when fasting herself she did this.

Into the loving care of Lioba her little niece or cousin Walburga was now given by Abbess Tetta, and we can fancy the child's tears were soon dried when Lioba took her

in her arms to comfort her, and then to introduce her to her young companions, for there were other children being educated in the convent, some destined never to leave it, and these, like the nuns according to the Holy Rule, were taken from all classes and ranks of society, from a princess like Walburga down to peasant women, and there were as yet no lay-sisters; the nuns all ranked in order of their profession, according to the time when they took the habit, except those who were elected to particular offices, such as Abbess and Prioress, Novice Mistress, etc.

There was another nun in the convent who was a relation of Walburga's, St. Thecla, probably a cousin, for, like St. Lioba, she was related to St. Boniface, Walburga's uncle, whose original name till changed by the Pope was Winifred. These three were all related to Walburga's mother Wunna or Winna.

We know little of St. Thecla, except that she was another highly gifted woman, destined eventually to accompany Lioba and Walburga to Germany; she was sister to Meginoz, Bishop of Wurzburg. St. Walburga, we are told, became very strongly attached to both of these relations of her mother.

Her uncle St. Boniface seems always to have kept up a correspondence with the nuns



at Wimborne, and especially with St. Lioba, one of whose letters to him written in Latin has been preserved. In it she calls herself by the Saxon form of her name, Leobgitha. It runs as follows translated into English:—

“To the Very Rev. Lord Bishop Boniface, well beloved in Christ, his cousin Leobgitha, the last of the servants of God, health and eternal salvation. I beg your clemency to remember the friendship which formerly united you to my father, Tinne, inhabitant of Wessex, and who left this world eight years ago, so that you may pray for the repose of his soul. I also recommend to you my mother Ebbe, your relation as you know better than I, who still lives in great trouble and for a long while has been weighed down with infirmities. I am their only daughter, and please God all unworthy as I am to have the honour to have you for brother, for none of our relations inspires me with so much confidence as you do.

“I have ventured to send you this little present, not that I think it worthy of your notice, but so that you may remember my weakness, and that in spite of the distance between us, a link of true tenderness may unite us for the rest of our days. This

then, dear brother, is what I beg of you, that the shield of your prayers may protect me against the poisonous darts of the enemy. I ask also that you would excuse the rusticity of this letter, and that your affability will not refuse me an answer, for which I long. You will find below some verses which I have tried to compose according to the rules of the poetical art, not from confidence in myself, but to exercise the little wit God has given me and to ask your counsel. I have learnt what I know from Eadburg my mistress, who never ceases to study deeply the divine law. Adieu.\* Live a long and happy life. Pray for me."

Apparently they were not taught to date their letters at Wimborne, for there is no date to this charming letter, which after the fashion of the time concluded with a little Latin distich.

St. Boniface granted her request and answered her letter, and sent her ten acrostics in Latin verse on the Virtues, which he called "ten golden apples gathered from the tree of life, where they hung among the flowers."

Walburga, as we have said, was not the only

\* Translated from "Etudes Germaniques II.," by A. F. Ozanam.

child in the convent, there would certainly have been several, perhaps many others, being educated, some with the intention of taking the habit eventually, if they developed a vocation. Walburga had already confided to her father, her desire to consecrate herself to the religious life, but she was too young to fully understand all that this meant, and what a sacrifice she was contemplating. It might be only a passing wish or a romantic fancy, but the Abbess Tetta watched the child carefully and soon discovered that not only was she gifted with unusual talent, but also with singular graces.

The Abbess was an experienced judge of character, having so many different personalities of every rank and age to deal with, and Walburga's qualities soon made a very favourable impression upon her, but perhaps it was not until the news of St. Richard's death reached the monastery that she was able to decide that the child had a true vocation. This news did not reach Wimborne till a year after St. Richard's death at Lucca. It was Walburga's first great sorrow, and it evidently strengthened her in her resolution never to leave the convent, in which her beloved father had placed her.

We can easily imagine that when the sad

news reached her mother, Winna, she went to the monastery to break it to her little daughter, and no doubt her brothers Willibald and Winibald wrote to their little sister to condole with her and to give her an account of their father's last moments, and of his burial at Lucca. Even if this human sympathy failed her, Walburga, young as she was, knew where to turn for comfort, and heard the sweetest of Voices saying, "Come unto Me all ye who labour and are heavy-laden and I will refresh you."

Many years after this an inscription was placed over St. Richard's tomb at Lucca, saying that his body was placed there near St. Frigidian,\* and that his glory shone abroad by many miracles. It is also recorded how he, a king in his own country, had left his crown for life eternal, had left his throne to visit the shrines of the saints, and had exchanged his sceptre for a pilgrim's staff, and his royal purple robes for the humble habit of a pilgrim.

\* Schmid, Franz Anton S. J., "Leben der Heiligen Walburga."

## CHAPTER IV

### ST. WALBURGA TAKES THE BENEDICTINE HABIT

THE death of St. Richard only strengthened little Walburga in her desire to become a nun, and consecrate herself entirely to Our Lord, Whose love was pursuing her and urging her to become His spouse. Abbess Tetta watched the submission and resignation with which she bore this sorrow, and as she grew up became convinced that her vocation was a true one. Her humility and obedience were evident to all who came in contact with her, and these are eminently Benedictine virtues. St. Benedict enjoined twelve degrees of humility on his monks, and the obedience he asked of them was to be as "if the command came direct from God, and without delay."\* The old maxim, "do as you are bid and do it at once," would seem to be derived, all

\* "Benedictine Monachism," by Abbot Butler, O.S.B.

unconsciously, no doubt, from St. Benedict's teaching.

The obedience was to be to the Holy Rule and to the Abbess, who was invested with parental authority over her children, and was to be looked upon as their mother, and in her turn was to love them as her own children. The idea of St. Benedict and St. Scholastica, who followed her brother's teaching, was that each monastery or convent was to be regarded as the home of the monks or nuns, the community as a family, and a family spirit was to be cultivated; the nuns were to love each other as sisters and the Abbess as their mother.

St. Walburga's teachers by now were not only aware of her sweet disposition, but also of her talents and her exceptional gifts of intellect as well as of grace, though perhaps none of them foresaw what a great apostolic work God had planned for her ultimately, for which her training as a religious was to be the preparation. Benedictine nuns, as everyone knows, were founded by St. Scholastica, St. Benedict's holy sister, whom he loved as dearly as she loved him, and there is no purer love than the love of brothers and sisters for each other.

The vow of stability, which differentiates

St. Benedict's rule from all other rules, was and is as binding on the nuns as on the monks. Roughly speaking, it means that the religious were not to go from monastery to monastery or from convent to convent, but the nuns were to remain all their lives within the enclosure of their own convent in which they were professed. This was the rule; the exception was if the community outgrew the accommodation of the convent, and it was necessary to send out a certain number to form a new community, or if an extraordinary event like the evangelisation of another country called them to go abroad, when a dispensation from the vow of stability was necessary.\*

We have seen that the enclosure at Wimborne was very strict; in fact, it was the strictest part of the rule of which St. Benedict said, "there was nothing harsh or burdensome in it."

No bodily austerities are prescribed, nor were any allowed without the permission of the Abbess. Ample time was allowed for sleep; in winter the monks were to have eight hours and in the summer five hours in the night, and a siesta of two hours in the middle of the day, and we learn incidentally that this rule obtained among the nuns also,

\* "Benedictine Monachism," Abbot Butler.

who were certainly not allowed less sleep than the monks. Abbess Tetta was very strict in seeing that her nuns took this midday sleep, or at least that they should lie down; if they could not sleep, they might read, but they were bound to lie down on their beds and rest.

They went to bed by daylight most of the year, but they always rose at two for Matins and Lauds, and they did not go to bed again. In summer they had to rise a little earlier, as Lauds had to be said at dawn. In winter they went to bed at six o'clock, so they had fully eight hours sleep before Matins, and in summer they retired about half-past eight.

The monks were only allowed one full meal a day, except from Easter to Holy Cross Day, September 14th, when supper was allowed, but the nuns were evidently allowed supper all the year round after Compline, as an incident in St. Walburga's life to be related in due course proves. Total abstinence from flesh-meat, except in case of illness or weakness, is the rule; it is uncertain whether game and poultry are permitted, but eggs, milk, cheese, technically called "lacticinia," and fish are all permitted, and two hot dishes are to be provided for the midday meal, in addition to fruit and vegetables. It must be remem-



bered that both St. Benedict's and St. Scholastica's Rules were originally made for Italians, and principally for peasants, who were unaccustomed to meat or to breakfast, therefore a good dinner in the middle of the day, with sometimes a light supper in the evening, were all they were accustomed to or required.

When the Benedictines came to colder countries like England and Germany, the Rule was sufficiently elastic to permit of modifications if it were found necessary for the health of the community.\* Wine was allowed, and possibly in England mead or beer, which were the national drinks, for in those days there was no such thing as tea and coffee in Europe. The bedding of the nuns was fairly comfortable. They were allowed a mattress and pillow, blankets and a coverlet. Their clothing was to be sufficient to keep them warm, and it was not to be worn when it got shabby; then when partially worn out, it was to be renewed and the old garments given to the poor. The nuns wore a black habit and in chapel a black cowl or hooded cloak like the monks. They also wore veils, white homespun linen for the novices, and black for the professed nuns. The cloth and linen for their dress were spun, and probably

\* Abbot Butler, *op. cit.*

woven also in the monastery, and probably the sandals or shoes or whatever they wore on their feet in the eighth century were made within the precincts. There were cobblers among the monks, for a Benedictine monastery was like a little town with workshops of all kinds for making all the necessary articles required in the monastery within the walls, and among the monks were workmen of all sorts of skilled labour. And Wimborne, we must remember, was a double monastery, which doubtless supplied all the wants of both communities.

As St. Benedict's Rule was for monks living in community, that is for the cenobitic in contradistinction to the eremitical life, so the nuns did everything in common. They prayed in common in the chapel, they ate together in the refectory, they worked together in the school-rooms or about the convent, and they slept in dormitories not in separate cells; and to some people this would seem the hardest part of the life, particularly as the nuns were taken from all classes of the community, and the peasant class predominated, whereas at Wimborne there was such a large family as five hundred nuns. It may well be imagined that with five hundred women all of different ages and classes of society, different

dispositions and tempers, different capacities and abilities, it was not altogether an easy life that they were called upon to live; there must often have been friction, and a great deal of that gift which is almost a grace, tact, must have been necessary to live in peace.

To St. Walburga coming from her father's court, where she was a little princess, and accustomed to be treated with deference by the courtiers, it must have been a great change to have been ordered about by her father's subjects, some of them peasants, as certainly some of her religious superiors must have been originally, but her natural humility and sweetness enabled her to bear this and all other similar trials. The obedience under St. Benedict's rule enjoins on a nun not only obedience to the Abbess, but also to all superiors, that is to all the nuns older in religious than herself, unless she herself was in office.

Stability is the first Benedictine vow, conversion of manners the second, and obedience the third. This conversion of manners is defined by one of the commentators on the Rule, Paul Warneford, to be "the rooting out of vices and planting in of virtues." As St. Walburga appears to have had no vices to root out, and to have been endowed with

most of the virtues, this must have been the easiest part of the Rule to her.

Abbot Butler, in his book on "Benedictine Monachism," says that "St. Benedict instituted his monastery to be a school for the service of God, that service being the threefold service of self-discipline, prayer and work."

This, from the day that St. Walburga was clothed in the Benedictine habit, was henceforth to be her life, and as far as she then knew to be lived within the enclosure of Wimborne Convent. We have now seen something of the outward circumstances of her life within the convent. After she became a nun her waking hours, with the exception of rather more than one for meals, were to be divided between prayer and work. The chanting of the Divine Office, the "Opus Dei," was and is the chief work and prayer of all Benedictine monks and nuns. This, as Cardinal Gasquet has said, "is the soul of Benedictine life." It was so in the eighth century, and it is so in the twentieth. At least four hours were occupied in it, perhaps more, though, on the whole, it is not longer than the Roman office said by secular priests. There are four lessons in each of the three nocturns in the Benedictine Breviary instead of three as in the Roman. Immediately after

Lauds at least half-an-hour was allowed for silent prayer before leaving the chapel, to begin the ordinary work of the day, and other times in the day were set apart for the rest of the canonical hours and private prayer.

A certain part of St. Walburga's time would have been occupied in household duties, as all the nuns had to take part in the work of the house ; some time was given to reading and study, and the rest to transcribing or church embroidery or illuminating or whatever her special talent fitted her for, and this we are not told.

A fixed hour for recreation was universal in all Benedictine monasteries and convents by the ninth century, but it does not appear to have been the custom in St. Walburga's days. The nuns were allowed to speak to each other when necessary, except during the hours of solemn silence, from after Compline till they rose for the night office. During the day they were to be sparing in speech, and to avoid anything like gossip, tittle-tattle, or foolish talking, and they were encouraged to practise silence as a mortification, and to offer their silence to God.

St. Walburga had from a child had a great attraction to silence and solitude, so the practice of silence would not have been diffi-

cult to her. She was a contemplative soul, and loved to be alone with her Divine Spouse. As she grew older, this longing for solitude grew upon her. All of her biographers mention her love of it, and one of them tells us that when she got to Thuringen and joined her brother Winibald, this longing for solitude became very strong, and was apparently gratified to some extent for at least a time.

In a busy convent like Wimborne surrounded as she was by five hundred nuns, this craving could only have been satisfied if she had lived as a recluse in a cell, within the enclosure, as was sometimes the custom in the early and later Middle Ages, for souls who were drawn to the anchoritic life. We are not told that St. Walburga ever did this at Wimborne, but she had no doubt heard of her contemporaries, the two St. Withburgas and St. Tibbe, who were, all, like her, Anglo-Saxon princesses, and lived as Anchoresses enclosed in cells in the eighth century.

The fact that this yearning for solitude was so strong when Walburga reached Thuringen makes it seem possible that she may have lived in a cell at Wimborne, and missed it when she reached Thuringen, after her long and laborious journey thither, but this is mere conjecture; all we actually know

is that she had this great attraction for silence and solitude, in order to live a contemplative life in its strictest sense.

The date on which St. Walburga took the habit is not known. Some writers think it was delayed for some time, others (Alban Butler) think that after her education was finished at Wimborne she went home to her mother for some time, and that while there she had several offers of marriage from neighbouring princes, but that she refused them all, being resolved to consecrate herself entirely to God in the religious life.

It is of course quite possible that whether she went home or not, and other writers say that when the door at Wimborne closed on her after St. Richard left her with the Abbess, it never opened for her again till she went to Germany, there may have been suitors for her hand, proposals may have been made to her mother Winna for her; her high rank, her beauty, and her sweet disposition make this probable, but all that is certain is that she never accepted any of these offers. She does, however, appear to have remained some time at Wimborne before she took the habit, longer even than her tender age required.

Other writers have thought that she waited until her brother Winibald returned from

Rome, in order to consult him, and that he might be present at her clothing. This seems most likely, for she was devoted to him and he to her, and it is certain that he left his monastery in Rome to return home on important business, and it seems very likely that the decision as to St. Walburga's future was of sufficient importance to call him to England. Her dowry would have to be fixed and settled, and Winibald in Willibald's absence abroad was the head of the family. Winibald came to England in or about 727, when St. Walburga would be about eighteen, and as he remained in England a year or two, she was quite old enough to take the habit while he was at home.

It would have been a great joy to St. Winibald to see his beloved sister clothed in the Benedictine habit, and a great consolation to St. Walburga, to feel that he was present, perhaps taking some minor part in the ceremony, for he was not yet a priest, but had apparently taken some of the minor orders. They were now doubly related, for they were now both members not only of the royal family of Wessex, but also of the great Benedictine family, in which the family spirit is so strong. They were now related spiritually as well as in the flesh.



## CHAPTER V

### SAINTS WILLIBALD AND WINIBALD SEND FOR ST. WALBURGA

WE left both St. Walburga's brothers, Willibald and Winibald, in the Benedictine monastery in Rome, probably in that of St. Andrew on the Coelian Hill. Willibald remained there two years, possibly he made his religious profession there, for he must have taken the habit at Waltham. At the end of this time, he, with two or three companions, young Englishmen, set out for the Holy Land. They sailed first to Cyprus and from thence to Syria. St. Willibald\* suffered incredible hardships on the journey, many of them self-imposed, for he added severe mortifications to those inevitable to pilgrims in those days.

\* Acta Sanctorum, Boll, Julii VII.

He lived on bread and water. His companions may have done so, too, for all we know; they all slept on the bare ground when they were ashore.

When they reached Emesa St. Willibald was arrested as a spy by the Saracens, who loaded him with irons and treated him cruelly and cast him into prison, where he was kept in very close confinement in which he suffered terribly for three months. Then some influential friends in Syria, possibly hearing from his companions that he was a British prince, interested themselves in his case, and convinced the Syrian governor that he was no spy and so obtained his release.

He and his companions then went on to Palestine, visiting first Nazareth and Bethlehem, from whence they went to Egypt, then to Canaan-Galilee, Capernaum and Jerusalem, endeavouring by this choice of route to follow the course of Our Lord's life from the Incarnation at Nazareth to His death on Calvary and Ascension on Mount Olivet. They visited all the lauras, monasteries and hermitages they came across in Egypt and Palestine, and St. Willibald learnt all he could of the habits and rules of life and methods of prayer of the hermits and monks he met.

Like his sister, St. Walburga, he was a

contemplative soul, and spent much time in prayer and contemplation at all the holy places they visited. On his way home to Rome he was taken dangerously ill, which is hardly to be wondered at seeing all the hardships he underwent. On his recovery he and his faithful fellow-pilgrims resumed their journey back to Italy, and after an absence of seven years, they finally reached Rome in safety.

It seems very uncertain where St. Willibald really took the monastic habit ; some writers think he did so at Waltham, where St. Richard took him as a child to dedicate him to God's service. Alban Butler says he did so in Rome. Herr Schmid\* says he took it at Monte Casino. At any rate, he certainly went there and asked to be received as a member of the community. In a certain sense Monte Casino may be considered as the mother-house of the Benedictine Order, since it was founded by St. Benedict, but all Benedictine monasteries are separate congregations, and all independent of each other. The Abbot of Monte Casino granted Willibald's request, and there he lived for ten years. And there for the present we will leave him, while we see how it was faring with Winibald in Rome.

\* Schmid, F. A., " Heilige Walburga," 1867.

St. Winibald was very delicate. From his childhood he had been weak and sickly, for which reason he had been educated at home, and after his illness in Rome following his pilgrimage thither, he was too weak to go to the Holy Land with his brother, but remained in the monastery of St. Andrew, and there took the habit and served his novitiate and made his profession, according to some accounts. It is certain he spent his time in Rome in study in this monastery, and then was obliged to go to England on family business, as we have said above.

He remained in England for a year or two. His mother was still alive, but he was destined never to see her again after he returned to Rome, taking with him a younger brother and several other relations whom he had persuaded to become monks, and to go with him to Rome to put on the Benedictine habit.

On reaching Rome he met his uncle, St. Boniface, who was there on a visit endeavouring to get recruits for his army of missionaries, and he persuaded his young nephew to go back with him and help in founding the Church in Germany, a dangerous and difficult task, as paganism was rife there. St. Boniface's headquarters then were in Thuringia, and

thither St. Winibald went with him, and on arriving Boniface, who was then Bishop of Erfurt, ordained him priest, for in those days very few Benedictine monks became priests. It was several centuries later before this became the custom. They were religious, and their chief work was chanting the Divine Office in choir, but they were not in holy orders.

St. Boniface then placed seven churches in St. Winibald's charge. Some writers say seven monasteries, and probably in course of time, as other workers joined him, monasteries grew up round the churches. His headquarters at first were at Erfurt.

St. Willibald in 739 or 740 obtained permission from Abbot Petronax of Monte Casino to revisit Rome, in company with a Spanish priest, who had begged to have him as an escort, and Pope Gregory III., after hearing an account of St. Willibald's travels and pilgrimages from him, in which he was much interested, suggested to him that he should go to Thuringia, to his uncle Boniface, and work with him in the evangelisation of that country.\* St. Willibald wished to return to Monte Casino and get his Abbot's permission first, but the Pope said this was unnecessary,

\* Boll, *op. cit.*

as he could dispense him from his vow of stability. Accordingly Willibald threw himself at the feet of the Holy Father, and professed his readiness to be sent whither he wished, and at Eastertime he set out on his apostolic mission to Thuringia. He first went to Lucca to visit his father's tomb, then through Pavia and Brescia into Bavaria, to Duke Odilo, where he apparently expected to meet his uncle Boniface. He spent a week at this court, and then went on to pay another visit to Count Suitger, where he stayed another week, and then accompanied by Count Suitger, went to meet St. Boniface at a place then called Liutbrath in Bavaria, but it is unknown where this was, as there is no place of that name to-day in Bavaria.

In Bavaria, Willibald met his brother Winibald again, for the first time since they had parted years ago in Rome. The brothers met with the greatest demonstrations of affection, Winibald weeping for joy to see his brother safe after all the dangers he had undergone.

St. Boniface, who was then Archbishop of Mayence, ordained Willibald priest, and very soon after consecrated him Bishop of Eichstadt, and soon afterwards made him Chancellor of Mayence, which gave him pre-

cedence over all the other bishops of Mayence. Willibald now worked hard in both Bavaria and Franconia in converting the inhabitants, founding churches and monasteries and visiting the various missions in his diocese. The Church grew in power, and so many conversions were made that more and more workers became necessary to cope with the work. Especially were women needed to teach the women and children, and eventually it occurred to St. Boniface and his nephews to ask some of the Wimborne nuns to come over to Germany and help them. St. Boniface had for years corresponded with St. Lioba, who was related to him, and knowing what a priceless treasure she was, and how valuable a helper she was in the Wimborne convent, he decided to write to Abbess Tetta and ask her to send Lioba and other nuns from her community to Thuringia to help him in the apostolic work of evangelising Germany. He did not disguise from her the dangers they would encounter, not only on the journey, but afterwards in this pagan country, though of course he would see that every precaution for their safety was taken.

About this time news reached Willibald and Winibald of the death of their mother Winna, St. Boniface's sister, who was also

related to the late King of the West Saxons, Ina. Winna and St. Boniface were natives of Crediton in Devonshire, and St. Lioba's mother, Ebba, appears to have been another sister.

There were, of course, no such things as regular mails or post-service of any kind in those far-off days; letters from one country to another were entrusted to travellers, mostly pilgrims, for there were few others, and those for overseas were dependent on the sailing of some vessel, and these sailings were dependent on the winds and the waves and the weather, all of which had to be reckoned with when ships were of a very cumbersome and primitive type. Still, they managed to communicate with each other, but how long it was after Winna's death before the news reached her sons, probably in letters from St. Walburga, we do not know. Their first thought was for their sister, and when St. Boniface suggested sending for some of the Wimborne nuns, they took counsel with him as to the expediency of asking Walburga to come and labour with them in the work they had undertaken.

They all knew her capabilities, her sanctity, her humility and sweetness of disposition, and when the brothers suggested the idea



to their uncle, St. Boniface, he at once agreed that Walburga must be one of the party to be invited to come over to Germany from Wimborne monastery. Accordingly they wrote to Abbess Tetta, asking that Lioba, Walburga and another relation of theirs, St. Thecla, should be the leaders of the missionaries,\* for so they were, and a very high calling it was, but the brothers and St. Boniface had very little doubt what the answer would be. None of these holy women would, they knew, shrink from accepting such a call, on account of the dangers and hardships attendant on it, if they were convinced that it was their duty to obey.

It was possible that Abbess Tetta might raise insuperable objections which had not occurred to them. She might not consider them strong enough for such a mission, but in the meanwhile all they could do was to wait for the answers to their letters, and to pray that their requests might be granted if it were God's Will.

It seems that St. Boniface was able to find some faithful messengers, to whom he entrusted these important letters, and that they made a special journey to England to deliver them personally to Abbess Tetta at

\* Boll, Acta Sanctorum, Feb. III.

Wimborne. As Archbishop he would have had facilities for doing this, and the old biographers say that he did so. The same messengers doubtless brought back the answers, remaining in England until the decision on so important a step was taken.

## CHAPTER VI

### ST. WALBURGA GOES TO GERMANY

ST. BONIFACE'S messengers reached Wimborne in due course with the letters inviting St. Lioba and St. Walburga and other nuns to go over to Germany, and help him in evangelising the country. They were received by Abbess Tetta at her grille, and were able to give her the latest news of St. Boniface and Saints Willibald and Winibald. We can imagine what a sensation such important letters must have caused in a convent of enclosed nuns, who had expected to pass the whole of their lives within its enclosure.

The holy Abbess immediately convoked a council in the chapel, to discuss the matter, and to ask God to inspire her with wisdom wherewith to make such a vital decision as the occasion required. It was not the first time that St. Boniface had made known, in his letters to St. Lioba, his need for women workers to undertake the Christian education

of the German women and children, which was no part of the work of his monks. Those who were priests could preach to them, but they could not undertake the education of these half-civilised, ignorant, pagan women, who are described as rude in manners, half barbarous, and sorely in need of the teaching and influence of cultivated women, such as the nuns or at least some of the Wimborne nuns, were. But although St. Boniface had spoken of this want, hitherto he had not been in a position to ask them to come over ; now, thanks to the generosity of his converts, he was able to provide them with shelter and the means of support, and to build convents in various places for them, and thus he could now assure Abbess Tetta, who was responsible for their welfare, that they would be safely housed and provided for on arrival in a foreign land. He specially asked that St. Lioba should come as the Superior and leader of this first band of nuns, and for St. Walburga and St. Thecla to be among the number of those sent.

St. Walburga was now thirty-eight, and had been twenty-five years in Wimborne monastery. St. Lioba and St. Thecla were older. After the Council, St. Walburga remained in silent prayer for some time, during which she

felt very strongly that this call to her, at any rate, came from God, and that she who loved to do His will in everything must obey it. She said nothing to anyone of what had passed within her until Abbess Tetta sent for her, and told her that she had decided to send her under St. Lioba's care to Thuringia, to work under her uncle's orders. Walburga then confided to her spiritual mother what had passed within her soul in the chapel, and that in spite of the dangers she knew she would have to encounter, and notwithstanding her grief at leaving the Abbess and her sisters in religion, and the convent which had been so happy a home for so many years, she was quite willing to leave all, her country and countrywomen, and accompany the other nuns to Germany.

To see her brothers again and to work under them would be a great consolation for all she was leaving behind. Her parents being now both dead, there was no parting with them to be undergone; on the contrary, there was the joy of meeting her brothers, to whom she was so tenderly attached, to look forward to, and the happiness of working with them. The preparations for the journey took some time, in days when means of transit were so primitive. Fortunately Wimborne was only

a few miles from Hamblehaven, from whence they surely sailed as St. Richard and his sons had done. As the party now consisted of thirty enclosed nuns, some of high rank, St. Boniface may have chartered a special vessel for them, since the accommodation in the ordinary vessel of the time was of the very roughest description, the cabins being likened by some writers to the Black Hole of Calcutta. Moreover, they were to cross to Antwerp, so it was a long passage, to avoid a long land journey across France and Belgium, as this would have been even more fatiguing and dangerous.

Before starting, there was a beautiful service in the chapel,\* described in old office books in use for pilgrims before setting out on a pilgrimage, and in a large monastery like Wimborne, where all the services of the Church were carried out with the greatest reverence and ceremony, this "Officium Peregrinorum" may well have taken place.

In the nave of the church was erected a small building, called the House of Emmaus, and after the travellers had prostrated themselves in the choir, some psalms and prayers were recited over them. Then two priests dressed like travellers, with staff and scrip,

\* "Celtic Britain," etc., Hartwell Jones.

advanced slowly down the middle aisle singing the hymn "Jesu Nostra Redemptio"; a third priest carrying a cross, vested in an alb and barefoot, meets them, and asks them in the words of the Gospel, "What manner of men are ye seeing that ye have heard not these things?" And then the rest of the Gospel from St. Luke, describing the scene between Our Lord and the two disciples of Emmaus on Easter Day is recited. The disciples then beg the priest to enter the castle or house of Emmaus with them, chanting the words, "Abide with us for the day is far spent." The third priest then breaks bread with them and disappears. The nuns then rise, for they have been prostrate all this time, and all sing or chant, "Did not our heart burn within us as He talked with us by the way?" The choir then chants the rest of the Gospel, and after this Vespers were said.

St. Lioba and her nuns may have walked to Hamblehaven, or they may have ridden on horseback. When they reached the ship another service took place, after the skipper had promised to protect them from the galley-slaves who rowed the boat when the wind failed, and there were often as many as thirty or forty of these slaves on board a vessel.

When all had embarked and the cargo and baggage were stowed away, one of the monks who was also a priest came forward, and the skipper said to him in the appointed words, "Sing for God's sake." Then the priest leading, all chanted the "Veni Creator Spiritus." The skipper then said: "Unfurl the sails for God's sake." The slaves then unfurl the sails, the anchor is weighed, the priest blesses them from the shore as the boat sails away.\*

When they embarked there was a favourable wind and a calm sea, and the conditions seemed favourable for a good passage, but the crossing to Antwerp is a nasty one, and after some while the wind changed, and the sailors had to take to their oars. Then a storm arose, and the waves grew mountains high, and they were in the greatest danger of being lost. The galley-slaves, seeing this, threw down their oars, and prayed to God to save them, and the sailors threw overboard some of the cargo to lighten the vessel. Then St. Walburga, seeing this, and the danger they were in, and the terrified faces of her companions, prostrated herself on the deck in prayer, begging Almighty God to save them. Presently she rose and rebuked the winds and the waves, and bid them be calm, and

\* Hartwell Jones, *op. cit.*



the winds and the waves subsided.\* All then joyfully thanked God, Who had heard St. Walburga's prayers, and by them had delivered them from a watery grave, and, says Wolfhard, her oldest biographer, "they venerated her who, by this miracle as they counted it, had shown herself specially beloved by Him Who had heard her prayers."

They finally landed safely at Antwerp, where the sailors spread the account of this wonderful miracle of prayer in the city, and the inhabitants showed the nuns the greatest attention. They stayed several days here, visiting all the churches and shrines in the town and immediate neighbourhood. The Belgians, who already regarded Walburga as a saint, in consequence of the wonderful answer to her prayers on board ship, were loth to part with her. However, the nuns were anxious to reach the end of their journey, and at the end of a week or so proceeded on it. It seems most likely that as sea or water travelling was so much safer and less fatiguing than going by land, that they went by boat as far as the Rhine was navigable, which certainly would not be beyond Bingen in those days, if indeed so far.

\* Boll, Feb. VIII. Migne, Wolfhard, in Pat. Lat., CXXVII. to CXXIX.

We are not told where they first met St. Boniface and St. Willibald, but it was most likely at Mayence, the seat of St. Boniface's Archbishopric. They were received with the greatest joy and enthusiasm, and stayed for some time with St. Boniface and St. Willibald, St. Walburga telling them she had hastened to come as soon as she knew it was God's will that she should accept their invitation.

She had not seen St. Willibald since he left home on his first pilgrimage with his father, when she was only a child. He could not have recognised the little girl of ten or eleven he had left in the nun of thirty-eight, and probably he was almost as much altered by his travels and all the hardships and illnesses he had undergone. It must have been during this visit to St. Boniface that St. Willibald dictated his travels, a celebrated book of early travel called the "Hodœporicon," to one of the Wimborne nuns, and that one must surely have been his own sister, who was quite capable of doing it. St. Walburga is considered by some writers to be certainly the authoress of this book, and consequently the first English authoress. Some writers attribute it to another nun of Wimborne, whose name they do not mention. The internal evidence, as well as the natural probability,

point to St. Walburga as the authoress of this most interesting work. Her humility would have led her to suppress her name and to disclaim the authorship and to call herself merely, "a nun of Heidenheim," that is the monastery of which she ultimately became the Abbess.

In the course of the book, she calls herself "a poor little creature."\* and in another place she says that her book is the work of "a little ignorant child, plucking a few flowers here and there from numerous branches rich in foliage and in fruit, in order that he that glorieth may glory in the Lord."† All this is so characteristic of Walburga, who loved to humble herself, that apart from the probability that St. Willibald would certainly have chosen his beloved sister in preference to any other nun to write his travels, we see no reason to deprive our saint of the title of the first English authoress, albeit her book was not written in English, for there was no English then to write in, nor even in Anglo-Saxon, but in Latin, with which language St. Walburga was thoroughly conversant, and certainly knew well enough to write in the colloquial Latin of the "Hodœporicon." We shall return to

\* "Hodœporicon," Preface.

† Ibid., cap. I.

this book later, but as it seems most likely that it was at Mayence that St. Willibald told her the story of his adventures, it seemed the place to refer to it.

It must have been a great disappointment to Walburga on arriving at their first destination to find that her favourite brother Winibald, who was now a monk, and priest in charge of seven churches or monasteries, was not at Mayence, but a long way off in Thuringia. Exactly how far off and whereabouts he was, she would have no idea, for the name of the place would have conveyed nothing to her; the geography of those days was most elementary and very incorrect. There were no maps, the Plans of Cosmas if she ever saw them would not have enlightened her any more than a so-called "Mappe monde," or map of the world of Albi, which was made in the eighth century, and was full of egregious mistakes.\* The only way in which she could estimate the distance between her and Winibald would be by the number of days' journey from her to him.

When St. Boniface was arranging where to place the nuns, who had come over to help him, St. Walburga begged that she might be allowed to go to Thuringia, and place herself

\* Beazley, "The Dawn of Modern Geography."

under the direction of her brother, St. Winibald, and work under him.

It was St. Boniface's plan to build monasteries in the districts he was evangelising, and place monks in them to preach and teach the people the truths of the Christian religion. In his archbishopric of Mayence he had built a convent at Bischofsheim, and there he sent St. Lioba and some of the Wimborne nuns and placed her over them as Abbess. St. Thecla went with her and lived under her for some time, till she went to Ochsenfurt, where she was made Abbess, and afterwards was moved to Kissingen as her numbers increased, and Ochsenfurt then declined.\*

Some writers say that St. Walburga went with St. Lioba to Bischofsheim, and lived under her for two years, but her old biographers† relate that St. Boniface and St. Willibald allowed her to go to St. Winibald, to lead the monastic life there under his guidance. History does not tell us the name of the place where St. Winibald was when St. Walburga and some of the Wimborne nuns who had come over with her joined him, nor do we know the names of the seven churches and monasteries which St. Boniface

\* Butler's "Lives of the Saints."

† Wolfhard and Philip, Bishop of Eichstadt.

had placed under his care. We know nothing of their journey from Mayence nor of the joyful meeting of this brother and sister, whose love and devotion for each other closely resembles that of St. Benedict and his sister St. Scholastica. When St. Walburga arrived she humbly begged St. Winibald to place her and her companions in a convent, and to undertake the care of their souls, and advise them in the work they had come out to do. St. Winibald consented and placed them in a convent near where he was himself, which in the time of Bishop Philip of Eichstadt was called the Convent of St. Walburga, and seems to have been somewhere in the locality of Eichstadt.

There she persevered in a life of contemplation and frequent vocal prayer as her Rule demanded, "in efficacious intercession, in discreet silence and in active work." The date in which St. Walburga and her companions came to Germany was about 748.

## CHAPTER VII

### ST. WALBURGA BECOMES ABBESS OF HEIDENHEIM

THE headquarters of St. Winibald when St. Walburga joined him appear to have been Erfurt, from whence he governed the seven monasteries under his care, in which task he frequently consulted both St. Boniface, under whose direction he himself was, and his brother, St. Willibald. His life was frequently attempted both by violence and poison by the pagans in the neighbourhood, but he always escaped. His delicate health may have induced him, after St. Walburga had been some years with him, as well as his humility to desire to retire into solitude, for his fame had spread throughout the Province of Thuringia, and "he feared that the fruit of his labours should fade away through vainglory," so he begged St. Boniface to allow him, after he had resigned the care of the monasteries he ruled, to retire into a solitary place and remain in the exercise of contemplation in solitude.

St. Boniface consenting, he went to a wild, desolate spot called Schwannfeld, and when he had spent some time seeking a suitable spot, he reached a solitary district between thick woods and valleys, with springs and streams running through it, a most convenient place for a monastery. St. Willibald joined him here for a time, and both brothers decided that it was a most desirable spot for a new foundation from which to spread the Christian religion. This place seems to have been suggested to Winibald, by Count Odilo of Bavaria, who invited him to leave Thuringia and settle in Bavaria.

It was an ideal spot with beautiful scenery, well-wooded and well-watered, but at present only a pathless wilderness, but the brothers intended to cultivate it when other monks joined them. At first St. Winibald built an oratory with cells round it imitating the Fathers of the desert, and then he collected religious men desiring to serve God in the monastic life, under the rule of St. Benedict. The first cells were only wooden huts, but afterwards he built a monastery and founded it with the help of St. Willibald, and called it Heidenheim, a name it retains to this day. The monks cultivated the country round and made of a wilderness a fertile district, capable



of providing them with corn and fruit and vegetables.

All this took some time, but as soon as his own monastery was finished he built a convent for St. Walburga and her nuns. Heidenheim is not a great distance from Eichstadt, so it was in St. Willibald's diocese, and he and Winibald bought the land on which both monastery and convent were built. It was a double monastery like Wimborne, but the convent, as there, was quite separate from the monastery.

While the building of Heidenheim was going on, St. Walburga had had plenty of time to lead the contemplative life to which she was so much attracted, and which her brother Winibald evidently encouraged, for we are told that while she was in the convent in which he first placed her, the longing for solitude again became very strong within her, but now she was to be called to a more active life, for as soon as the new convent at Heidenheim was ready, St. Winibald sent for her and her nuns and "placed them in it and taught them how to converse with God and attain perfection," in which St. Walburga was already well versed, if her community were novices in the religious life, but all needed direction and guidance.

The convent was soon enlarged, and the numbers increased. The faithful in the neighbourhood endowed it with money and farms and furniture, and gave them gifts of gold and silver and jewels and vestments of cloth-of-gold. St. Boniface had made Winibald Abbot of Heidenheim, and when he and St. Walburga, whom he had made Abbess, saw how rich they had become, they gave those monks who were living in cells near them in great poverty a large proportion of their riches, and they also gave generously to the poor of the neighbourhood. St. Walburga, we are told, was frequent in manual labour, more frequent in reading, most frequent in prayer. She was never idle. She spun, as did all women in those days, she read Holy Scripture most devoutly, as if she heard God speaking to her face to face. She was frequently seen in ecstasy, when meditating on the love of God. Illuminated by God, she illuminated the minds of men, and several of the miracles recorded in connection with her were related to light. One of these miracles recorded by all her old biographers happened at Heidenheim, while she was Abbess. One night when Vespers were finished, St. Walburga, according to her custom, remained in church after the other nuns had left and gone to supper, and

when she was ready to go, it had become so dark that she could not find the way out of the church to the refectory, so she asked the custodian of the church, whose name was Gomerandus, to give her a light, but he being a churlish fellow, and perhaps cold and hungry and cross because the Abbess's prolonged devotions kept him from his supper, rudely and absolutely refused to grant her request. Walburga, being a saint, refrained from rebuking him for his rudeness, and from ordering him to comply with her most reasonable request, which she as Abbess had the right to do. She offered the mortification to Our Lord, and meekly groped her way out of the dark church, through the impenetrable gloom of the cloisters to the refectory. Doubtless she knew the way well enough through traversing it so frequently, but in the pitch darkness of a winter's night it was difficult to find.

At last she arrived at the refectory, where the other nuns had already assembled for supper, and mounting the pulpit from which it was the custom to read aloud during meals, she read the appointed portion for the day, afterwards going supperless herself to bed.

Then a strange thing happened. "In the nuns' dormitory such a brilliant light shone

till the bell rang for the nuns to rise for Matins, that it seemed to penetrate every part of it like lightning. And all the nuns who saw it wondered, and rejoiced and went devoutly to Mother Walburga and told her of this terrific light.

“She, turning to God, burst into tears, exclaiming, ‘To Thee, O Lord, Whom I a humble maiden have served from my cradle, I give thanks, Who to kindle the souls of Thy servants my adherents hast deigned to visit me unworthy, with the consolation of Thy Light, and has purged the thick darkness with the rays of Thy mercy, and this is not to be attributed to my merits, but to the gratuitous munificence of Thy Love, and to the prayers of my brother, Thy devout servant.’” \*

This miracle although we have recorded it here, did not take place until after the death of St. Winibald, to whom she was here referring.

It is not to be wondered at that so few actual details of the works and lives of these two saints have come down to us, seeing that in those far-off days when Christianity was only just introduced into Germany, their contemporaries were more concerned in spreading the Faith, and civilising the people, than in

\* Boll. Acta Sanctorum, Feb. 27th.

writing the lives of those who were fellow-labourers with them.

During St. Winibald's life, St. Walburga followed his advice in all things temporal and spiritual; they worked together in evangelising the people, and in the exercise of charity to those outside the walls of the monastery, and he was the confessor and spiritual director of his sister and her nuns, and led her in the ways of contemplation, whose paths are dangerous to tread without a guide.

In the exterior works of the double monastery, such as the cutting down of the superfluous forests, and the cultivation of the land, their brother Willibald worked with them, for he was a co-founder of Heidenheim with St. Winibald, as well as Bishop of Eichstadt, in which diocese it was.

It soon became known in the district that St. Winibald's monks and St. Walburga's nuns were leading a most strict and holy life of fasts and vigils, of prayer and praise by day and by night. God did not suffer their light to be hidden under a bushel, and as example is better than precept, many converts were made; besides, it must be remembered that these holy men and women brought as many temporal as spiritual blessings to the neighbourhood, by teaching and edu-

cating the people who in return helped them with alms, so that Heidenheim, like other monasteries which are well ordered in spiritual things and the discipline well maintained, in temporal things also was blessed abundantly.

But, although the double monastery prospered in material things, the monastic manner of living in moderation and mortification was not in the least modified, but Winibald and Walburga looked upon the gifts of the faithful as a loan from God, and as the property of the poor, which they could use for their own absolute needs, but were bound to share the superfluity with the poor. At the same time we must not forget that they were Benedictines, and the poverty of Benedictines, as we have said, is not the same as Franciscan poverty, and St. Benedict never intended that it should be so, but wished his sons and daughters to have all the necessaries of life in moderation.\*

Both convents became places of refuge for the poor and suffering and distressed, where they could find consolation and help of all kinds for their cares and troubles whether temporal or spiritual.

The medical knowledge of those days was little, and that of surgery less, but in every

\* "Benedictine Monachism," Abbot Butler,

monastery and convent there was at least one monk and nun who knew something of the medicinal properties of plants and herbs, and some knew a great deal, and were able to treat the sick poor, who came to the monasteries for medicines, and alleviate their sufferings and sometimes were able to cure them. The ignorant peasants would look upon these cures as miracles, as they sometimes were, and it increased their reverence for their benefactors as well as their gratitude to them.

This was certainly part of the work of the Heidenheim monastery. The men and boys of the neighbourhood would go to St. Winibald and the women and children to the convent to St. Walburga, who in the course of her life as well as after her death, acquired a great reputation for healing all kinds of ills, especially blindness and hydrophobia.

It must have been only a year or two, certainly not more than three or four, after St. Walburga and her nuns had settled at Heidenheim, that some terrible news reached the monastery, for the brothers Willibald and Winibald bought the land on which the double monastery stood in 750, and in 754, or according to some writers in 755, their uncle St. Boniface was murdered by pagans in Friesland. How long it was before the news reached Heiden-

heim we do not know. It seems after he made St. Willibald co-adjutor-bishop with himself, St. Boniface practically resigned his archiepiscopal duties, in order to travel further and preach the Gospel to the heathen population of Friesland, in the extreme north of Holland. Here he made a good many converts, and apparently having as yet no church, he arranged to hold a Confirmation in the open air, at a place called Dokkum, which is not very far from the north coast of Holland, whither he probably went by sea. He was in the middle of the ceremony, when a large number of the pagans of the neighbourhood burst in upon them, and slaughtered mercilessly the holy Archbishop and about seventy of his followers. Some must have escaped, because his body was afterwards rescued and taken to Fulda, in the present province of Hesse-Darmstadt, where his most famous monastery stood, and there he was buried.

It was a very long way from Dokkum to Heidenheim, and we do not know when the news reached the monastery; probably St. Willibald first heard it, and he would lose no time in letting his brother and sister know, in order that masses might be said for St. Boniface's soul.

It was a terrible blow to St. Winibald, the



Archbishop's nephew and spiritual son, for he was devoted to St. Boniface, and as a matter of fact it was indirectly the cause of his own death.

It does not require much imagination to picture the consternation and grief St. Walburga must have felt when St. Winibald came across to break the news of the massacre of St. Boniface and his companions. The remains of the Archbishop and Apostle of Germany were taken by some of his followers, probably by St. Willibald's orders to Fulda; as Dokkum was near the coast, they were most likely taken by sea to Antwerp and thence by land. Bad as were the means of transit in those times, they seem to have had facilities of some sort for moving the dead about, as we so often read of the translation of the saints. At any rate, it was safely accomplished, and the tomb became a great place of pilgrimage.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ST. WINIBALD'S DEATH AT HEIDENHEIM

WHETHER it was the shock of St. Boniface's martyrdom or not, we do not know, but St. Winibald, always very delicate, now became so ill, that he had to have a chapel with an altar in his own cell, where he could say Mass when he was too ill to go to church.

After the translation of St. Boniface to Fulda, Winibald became so ill that he was considered to be at the point of death. Before this he had given himself up more than ever to contemplative prayer, to which he, like his sister, had such a great attraction; he now lived in solitude, as much as his duties as Abbot permitted him to do without neglecting them, when well enough to perform them. When well enough he would visit his sister Walburga in her part of the double monastery, to discourse with her on spiritual things, and when necessary on the affairs of the monastery.

When his life was almost despaired of,

and he was said to be at the point of death, he made up his mind to undertake a pilgrimage to his uncle's tomb in Fulda, in the hope of being cured by his intercession, and in order to honour his memory. It is about 120 miles from Heidenheim to Fulda, and how any one so ill as he was at the time could undertake such a pilgrimage, which it seems he made at any rate mostly on foot, is extraordinary. He did propose to go first to Würzburg, which is rather more than half-way between Heidenheim and Fulda, both of which towns stand on a river. His object in stopping at Würzburg was to visit the Bishop of that city, named Megingoz. He arrived there safely, but how he managed it and how long it took him and his companions, for he must have had some of his monks with him to look after him in his weak state, we do not know, but we will hope the Bishop took good care of him, during his visit and made him rest for some time before resuming his pilgrimage to Fulda on which he was bent. On both journeys to and from Fulda, he was so weak that he was often obliged to stop and rest for weeks, before he could continue his journey. He did succeed in reaching Fulda, and paying his devotions at St. Boniface's tomb, and after three weeks he got so much better, he thought he had

been cured, but he soon had a relapse, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he managed at last to reach Heidenheim alive ; it was only his indomitable will and prayer that enabled him to do so. There after being cared for by his monks, he got better, but no sooner was he partially recovered from this pilgrimage, than he made up his mind to undertake another, to Monte Cassino in order to die in the cradle of the Order. His monks could not bear the idea of their Abbot leaving them again, never to return, as it was evident from his state he would never have the strength to do, and perhaps they appealed to St. Willibald, at any rate he heard of it, and put his foot down on this mad scheme of the dying Abbot, and some of his friends also advised him to give it up, and to remain with his own beloved and loving monks, for the rest of his suffering life.

After this his illness increased, and it soon became evident to all around him, that his end was very near ; he took leave of his religious brethren and sent for his brother Willibald, to whom he was so tenderly attached, to come and give him the last consolations of religion. St. Willibald arrived early in the morning of December the 18th, in the year 761, and on the same day St. Winibald breathed his last,

in the arms of his brother, Willibald, in the sixtieth year of his age. For the last three years of his life he had been continually suffering, and had been frequently at death's door. He was a most holy man, a great contemplative soul, most zealous in spreading the Faith, who had given up home, fortune, rank and position to lead a humble life as a monk and an evangelist, in a foreign land where his life was frequently in danger.

One of St. Walburga's old biographers, Bishop Philip, tells us that after Winibald's death, the monastery bells tolled of themselves without the help of any ringers, and that the candles on the altars were lighted without any human agency, a miracle he evidently believed himself.\*

The next day St. Willibald sang the Requiem Mass in the church St. Winibald had built at Heidenheim, in the presence of the monks and his heart-broken sister, St. Walburga, the Abbess, and her nuns, and then he buried him in the same little church in a stone grave.

Some years afterwards St. Willibald enlarged this church and decorated it, and dedicated it to St. James the Great, who has been since the patron Saint of the place.

\* Boll., Feb. 27th.

St. Walburga's grief at this heavy blow was very great. She lost not only her favourite, and dearly loved brother, with whom a great part of her life had been spent in close companionship, but also her spiritual guide and confessor with whom she had taken sweet counsel, who had shared all the troubles and the burden of her office with her. His death was a life-long sorrow, time might deaden it, but it could never heal the wound, nor supply the loss. Her grief seems to have annoyed her old biographer Wolfhard, for he says: "Walburga, after the custom of the female sex, besides remembering, was always speaking of the death of her brother Winibald pressing on her heart."\* It was rather a good sign than otherwise, for if she was able to speak of it, it showed she was at any rate resigned to it, as no doubt so holy a woman would be, for however great her grief might have been, she never rebelled against God's will. She felt the trial more because St. Willibald could not remain long with her at Heidenheim; his episcopal duties called him away, but before he left, he arranged for the guidance of both monasteries, by placing his sister Walburga as Abbess over both the monks and the nuns. Probably the monks who had

\* "Acta Sanctorum," op. cit.

joined St. Winibald were all young men, and recent converts to the Faith, and Willibald may have well hesitated to place any of them in Winibald's place, so he solved the difficulty by putting monks as well as nuns under St. Walburga's rule. She may have been the first Abbess to govern monks and nuns, but she was not the last to do so. St. Bridget of Sweden did the same in her double-monasteries, and St. Theresa helped to reform the displaced Carmelite monks, and not only monks but bishops also consulted her on spiritual matters.

St. Willibald could not have made a better choice of a successor to his brother than Walburga, who was so deeply penetrated with the spirit of St. Winibald, and who had learnt from him to maintain the discipline of the Order with sweetness and mildness, and to combine the family spirit of St. Benedict with the strict observance of the Holy Rule. She would never let the monks forget, that whatever other work they might undertake in educating and civilising the people, and in cultivating the soil, the "Opus Dei," that is the solemn recitation of the Divine Office, was the great work of their lives, and their first and most important duty. Accordingly, before St. Willibald left Heidenheim he installed

Walburga as Abbess of both monasteries. Her humility and meekness, and the shining example she set to all by her holiness made her a *persona grata* to all, for she helped everyone by her charity to seek perfection. She never sought pleasure, but on the contrary macerated her delicate body by fasts and disciplines, she prolonged the night watches prescribed by the rule absorbed in contemplation, and was often found in ecstasy in her oratory. She never neglected her duties, but she never allowed herself to be absorbed by them. Her methods of governing were those she had learnt from her relation, St. Lioba, now Abbess of Bishoffsheim, where according to some writers she spent some time after their first arrival in Germany.

After the death of St. Winibald until her own, she spent the rest of her life in the government of this double monastery, persisting in prayer by day and by night, and it is said that whatever she asked of God she obtained.

Among the scanty details of her life that have come down to us, is a wonderful example of an answer to prayer obtained by her.

It happened some time after the death of Winibald, that on a certain evening she crept out of the monastery, no one hearing her, and made her way in the dark to the house of a



rich man in the neighbourhood, and stood before his gates like a poor pilgrim. This man had some very fierce dogs, whose barking warned him that some one was at the gate, and he fearing that the dogs would attack whomsoever it was, called his servants and hurried with them to the gate, to see who this late visitor might be. It happened that his only child was dangerously ill, and her life completely despaired of, so much so that preparations for her funeral were already being made, for it was the custom to bury the dead within twenty-four hours after death.

When the master reached the gate, and called off his dogs, St. Walburga said, "Never will what thou fearest happen to me, your dogs will not bite Walburga, for so I am called, and He Who brought me here to your house, will lead me back safely to the place from whence I came, and He Who now led you to the door will confer the gift of healing on your house, if with all your heart you will believe in the Physician of Physicians."\*

The illustrious master then asked with consternation, why so eminent a person as the Abbess should stand at his gate. And Walburga answered that she had not come without reason.

\* Boll., Feb. 27th.

Then he begged her to come into his house, and leading her in with great veneration he showed her every attention, begging her to pass the night in his house, and telling her that his only daughter was dying, and as there was no hope of her recovery, some of his servants were preparing her grave. When the time came to retire for the night, St. Walburga refused to go anywhere except to the room of the dying girl, so the father "weeping loudly" led her there, and left her while he continued to superintend the very premature arrangements for the funeral.

St. Walburga then knelt down, and passed the whole night in prayer for the recovery of this only daughter of the house, and when the morning came, the patient arose cured, to the amazement of the family. The poor mother, worn out with weeping and nursing, and the father gave thanks first to Almighty God, Who had given them back their child from the brink of the grave, and then thanked Walburga, pressing gifts upon her humbly, and committed themselves to her prayers, but she refused to receive any of their gifts, and insisted on returning on foot and alone as she had come to her monastery.

For eighteen years after the death of Wini-bald, Walburga continued to rule both monas-

teries wisely and well. During this time she is said to have written the life of St. Winibald containing an account of his two pilgrimages to Rome, on the second of which some writers say, St. Walburga accompanied him, but other writers deny this, and it seems probable that Walburga never left Wimborne until she went to Germany.

Sixteen years after Winibald's death, St. Willibald decided to move his body to Eichstadt, to the church he had built there, but why he did this we are not told. There was a great function in the church at Heidenheim on the day when the stone grave in which Winibald's remains had been deposited was opened, in the presence of monks and nuns, and a great many ecclesiastics and people from the neighbourhood, and to the amazement of all when the grave was opened, the body was found incorrupt.\*

It must have been a very trying day for St. Walburga, but any grief she may have felt at the body being taken away, and moved to Eichstadt, would have been dispelled by this discovery, which was looked upon as a great proof of Winibald's sanctity.

\* F. A. Schmid, S.J., "Heilige Walburga."

## CHAPTER IX

### HER DEATH

WE will now pause for a moment to see what had become of the more celebrated of the Wimborne nuns, who came over to Germany with Walburga. Of these the most celebrated was St. Lioba, evidently a most lovable, attractive creature as well as a great Saint. St. Boniface had made her Abbess of Bischoffsheim, which was about 120 miles due north of Heidenheim. Her holiness and her charming personality attracted numbers of subjects, who increased so fast, that she founded several other convents from Bischoffsheim. Ozanam says of her, "that the wild Germans who formerly cared for nothing but the wild tumult of battle now knelt at the feet of this gentle ruler. Her humble work hid itself in quiet retirement, still history points out her place as the original foster-mother and nurse of German civilisation."

The same writer goes on to say, "that the holy Walburga who was richly endowed with

gifts of nature and of grace, and had been brought up in the same spirit as her spiritual relation, her Aunt Lioba, guided and ruled the nuns' convent at Heidenheim, entirely in the same spirit as her talented teacher Lioba, and spread throughout the country at Heidenheim similar blessings as Lioba at Bischoffsheim."\*

St. Boniface perhaps, foreseeing his own martyrdom, had begged St. Lullus, the Abbot of Fulda, also an Englishman, and his monks to take care of Lioba after his death, and when she died to allow her to be buried at Fulda near his own tomb. Lioba often visited Fulda after St. Boniface's death, no doubt to pray at his tomb, and on these occasions she took four or five nuns with her, and they stayed in a neighbouring cell. This may mean a small convent perhaps founded by St. Lioba from Bischoffsheim. She was a great friend of King Pepin, and also of Charlemagne, and the latter frequently sent for her to come to his court at Aix-la-Chapelle, to stay with Queen Hildegarde, who loved her dearly, and consulted her on all important matters; she would have liked to have Lioba always with her, but the Abbess always hastened back to her monastery as quickly as she could. When

\* Ozanam, A. F., "Etudes Germaniques II."

she was very old she resigned the government of all the monasteries she had founded and retired to a new convent at Scornesheim, four miles from Mayence.\* Here she died on the 28th of September, 779, about seven months after St. Walburga. She was called in Germany Philomena, or the "beloved one."†

She, like St. Walburga, was always very careful that her nuns should take the mid-day siesta prescribed by the rule; they might read if they were not sleepy, and often she allowed them to read aloud to her, while she was resting after the mid-day meal, but if they made a mistake, which they sometimes did to see if she were asleep as she appeared to be, she always woke immediately and corrected them, if they made a false quantity, for she was an excellent Latin scholar. St. Thecla, who was related to both Walburga and Lioba, and came over with them, went at first to Bischoffsheim and lived under St. Lioba until St. Boniface, who corresponded frequently with her, made her Abbess of Ochsenfurt, and later on moved her to Kissingen, after which Ochsenfurt declined. She was apparently younger than either Lioba or Walburga, at any rate she survived them about eleven years

\* Butler's "Lives of the Saints."

† Drane, Augusta, "Christian Schools," etc.

and died at Kissingen in 779. She was the sister of Megingoz, Bishop of Würzburg. The names of three other Wimborne nuns have come down to us, Chunihild and her daughter Berathgilt, both highly educated, talented women, on which account they were sent to Thuringen as teachers, but history does not tell us where they lived, or whether they were made Abbesses, probably not as it is not mentioned.\* Chunidrut, another Wimborne nun, was sent to Bavaria, but she may have come over before the others with St. Boniface in 736, as a missionary to Bavaria, as he went there in that year himself. This we learn from Otgar, Bishop of Eichstadt, of whom we shall hear more presently. Another of St. Walburga's companions who came over with her to Germany was Rudolfaude; she may have been the Heidenheim nun who is mentioned as being a relation, some writers say a cousin, of Willibald, and if so, of course of Walburga, to whom the authorship of the "Hodoeporicon" is sometimes attributed. She was evidently a nun of some importance, or her name would not have been specially mentioned, as one of the thirty who accompanied St. Lioba and Walburga on their memorable journey to Germany.

\* Schmid, S. J., "Heilige Walburga."

It is impossible at this distance of time to estimate accurately the wonderful benefits these noble, in every sense, Anglo-Saxon women conferred on the German nation, not only in bringing to them the Christian religion, and setting them an excellent example of Christian manners and morals, but also by the education they were able to bestow on all classes of women and children. They not only taught the poor of the district, but the children of the nobles received in their convents an education by no means to be despised, even in these days of the higher education of women, for as we have seen, many of the Wimborne nuns like Lioba and Walburga were good Latin scholars, they knew a little Greek, and they were well abreast of their time in all branches of knowledge. Nor was this all, they exercised hospitality to all rich and poor, they appear to have kept open house as we say, and none who sought hospitality were turned away from the monastery doors. This in itself must have had a civilising influence on the wild nation only just struggling out of barbarism, for however rough the table appointments and manners of that time may appear to us, those brought over from England were certainly much in advance of those prevalent in Germany.

For sixteen years after the death of St.



Winibald, St. Walburga laboured at Heidenheim, governing both monasteries, teaching, entertaining, and both by precept and example raising the inhabitants of the neighbourhood to a higher level.

Whether during all these years at Heidenheim, St. Lioba ever visited her we do not know, but as we have said she frequently travelled to visit her other foundations, to Fulda to St. Boniface's tomb and to Aix-la-Chapelle to the court, it seems likely that she sometimes came to see her holy cousin and former pupil, the saintly Abbess of Heidenheim, for this last place was much nearer to Bischoffsheim than Aix. There was a very strong bond of affection between the two cousins and sisters in religion, great friendship and that of the highest kind, besides great community of interests, so it seems likely two such loving and lovable women would have made every effort to meet and hold sweet converse together, which in their case would have been no mere conventional phrase. They must certainly have corresponded, whether they met or not, but unfortunately none of their letters have come down to us.

When in her sixty-ninth year St. Walburga fell ill, and her nuns saw she was not likely to recover, they sent for her

brother, St. Willibald, the Bishop of Eichstadt, but he does not appear to have arrived in time to see his dearly loved sister once more alive.

On February 25th, in the year 779, which that year fell on a Thursday, she received the last Sacrament, and then her nuns being summoned to her bedside, she exhorted them all to persevere in their holy vocation, with humility and love as they stood weeping round her, knowing only too well there was none of them worthy to fill her place.

She had no fear of death, but feeling her work here was finished, she was not only resigned to die but anxious to go to her Heavenly Bridegroom. All her life she had striven after union with God by love, so now she longed to be with Our Lord, and death had no terrors for her.

During her life she had had experimental knowledge of the sweetness of union and communion with Him, she had frequently tasted the joys of contemplation ; her faith at times had been almost sight ; prayer had been to her a garden of fair delight ; in her colloquies with Him she had heard His voice speaking within her soul ; she was no stranger to those mysterious divine touches that come unsought and when least expected ; she had already

experienced foretastes of Heaven, and was glad to be rid of the burden of the flesh, and the cares of this earthly life. She had that mystical knowledge of God, which comes only by love, and now in the last hour of her earthly life, she felt the strength of His arm thrown round her, and supporting her through the valley of the shadow of death.

She had not taken up the government of this double monastery at St. Willibald's direction without tears, and now when she laid it down she was loved and mourned by all her subjects as a most loving mother.

Although the details of the life of St. Walburga which have come down to us are so few, there is no lack of material concerning the strange happenings after her death, and of the miracles wrought by her since, even down to our own time. It is said by some of her biographers, that St. Willibald did arrive at Heidenheim in time to see her alive and to administer the last Sacraments to her, other writers say that he only arrived in time to bury her.

Some wonderful things occurred at the monastery after her death; her body is said to have been surrounded by a halo of light, as she lay waiting to be buried in the church, and that an odour of marvellous sweetness

proceeding from it filled the whole house.\* Another account says that her dead body was seen in a vision by some of the community glorified, and when it was taken to the church, the lights were kindled miraculously without any human agency, and the bells rang of themselves.† This is another instance of light being connected with the supernatural events of St. Walburga's life and death, and is one of the reasons that she is invoked in blindness. She is also invoked in Germany and Belgium against mad dogs and hydrophobia, because the fierce dogs of the nobleman whose daughter she healed by her prayers, did not attempt to attack her, and she showed no fear of them.

She was buried by her brother Willibald, the Bishop of Eichstadt, in the church at Heidenheim, near the grave of her brother Winibald, before his translation to Eichstadt. Her grave became a place of pilgrimage for some years after her death, and many prayers were granted at it, but after the death of St. Willibald the number of pilgrims gradually declined and eventually ceased, and devotion to Walburga and Winibald died out here, and was transferred to Eichstadt.

\* Boll., Feb. 27th, Wolfhard.

† Boll., Feb. 27th, Philip, Bishop of Eichstadt.

## CHAPTER X

### TRANSLATION OF HER REMAINS TO EICHSTADT

THE length of time by which St. Willibald survived his sister is a matter of doubt. Alban Butler places his death as late as 790, and his birth in 703, making him eighty-seven when he died. The learned Bollandist writer, F. Sollerius, S.J., says it could not have happened before 786, since in October 785 he signed a document in the monastery of Fulda, giving to the Abbot Pangolf and the monks nine farms and their appurtenances.\* Later writers, however, place his death earlier, the German writer, Father Schmid, S.J., says it took place in 781, and the writer in the Catholic Encyclopædia on Eichstadt gives the same date as Father Schmid, namely, 781, making him just eighty-one when he died, as he was

\* Boll., Acta Sanctorum, Julii II., pp. 501, *et seq.*

born in 700, but he adds the date 786 in brackets. Some writers have thought that Winibald was the elder of the two brothers, but the general and best founded opinion seems to be that Willibald was the elder and was born in 700, and all agree that Winibald was born in 701.

Willibald died a most holy death, the day of his approaching end being revealed to him by God. He rejoiced exceedingly, for he was weary of life and longed to go to his eternal reward. He celebrated Mass and gave Communion to himself and others, and afterwards took leave of his scholars and spiritual sons, giving them his blessing, and passed away immediately, quite peacefully, on July 7th, the day on which he is honoured.

Bishop Philip, of Eichstadt, who wrote the lives of Willibald, Winibald and Walburga, wrote a long and somewhat fulsome panegyric on his virtues, of part of which the Bollandist writer, F. Sollerius, gives a few extracts in the course of which Philip says:—

“He was generous in alms-giving, industrious in watching, devout in prayer, perfect in charity, profuse in philanthropy, excellent in doctrine, ready in speech, most holy in conversation; he showed sincerity of mind and serenity of countenance, and the affection

of a most gentle heart in the mildness of his speech. The most blessed man did as much for eternal salvation by his words as by his preaching. The excellence of his mind was conspicuous in his face, in the beauty of the exterior man, so that one might think the same to be an express image of holiness.

“He was terrible in aspect to the irreverent, reverent in reproof, to be feared in his severity, to be venerated in his kindness. The meekness of humility tempered in him authoritative censure, and when he threatened delinquents with his frown, the serenity of his heart encouraged them. Towards the good, Peter appeared in his face, towards the evil, Paul in his spirit, thus in him the affection of B. Peter and the strictness of B. Paul met, so that scarcely anyone could keep in his presence, but could by no means bear his absence for long.”\*

He founded the cathedral school at Eichstadt for the training of clerics and taught in it himself, and left it in a flourishing condition at his death. It was the scholars from his school who surrounded his bed when he died. He built the cathedral, and it was here in the choir that he was buried on the third day after his death, in the presence of a large con-

\* Boll., A.S.S., Jul. VII., p. 495.

gregation, including the cathedral and other clergy, and the scholars from his school and the laity from the neighbourhood.

When he first came to Eichstadt he had found it a wilderness, thickly planted with oaks, hence its name, and only a small church ; when he died, he left it a small cathedral city with several handsome buildings. He was looked upon as the Apostle of the district, and after his death this honour increased, for many wonderful things took place at his tomb. He built the Abbey at Eichstadt in 740.

The only book that he wrote was the life of his uncle, St. Boniface, who had first consecrated him Bishop of Eichstadt in 741, and a few years later, in 745, had made him co-adjutor with himself, and diocesan organiser or Chancellor.

After his death, devotion to St. Walburga at Heidenheim gradually ceased, and the pilgrimages to her tomb were discontinued, but this was not until all the nuns who had taken the veil during her lifetime had died.

In the year 800, the monks' part of the monastery was turned into a house of secular canons, but by whom or why this was done is not known. The Benedictine monks founded by St. Winibald, moved to a place called Her-



rieden, of which monastery, Wolfhard, who wrote the life of St. Walburga so often quoted here, was a monk. Eighty-eight years later Herrieden was also changed into a house of secular canons.

Later in the ninth century, the monastery and church which St. Willibald had rebuilt at Heidenheim, were allowed to fall into a most dilapidated condition, and when Bishop Otkar was promoted to the See of Eichstadt in 868, he decided to restore them both, and sent workmen in for that purpose. The memory of St. Walburga seems to have died out for a time, at any rate at Heidenheim, for the workmen appear to have ignored her tomb and desecrated it.

One night Bishop Otkar had a dream or a vision, in which St. Walburga appeared to him, and told him the workmen at Heidenheim were treading with their muddy shoes on her grave, and that her remains were no longer honoured, and lest he should think this was only a dream and not a true vision, she would send him a sign in the morning.

She was as good as her word, for in the morning there came a messenger post-haste from Heidenheim asking to see the Bishop, and when admitted to his presence told him that during the night a terrible accident had occurred at

Heidenheim, and the whole of the north wall of the church, which had just been rebuilt had fallen down with a great crash.\*

Bishop Otkar at once recognised that this was the sign St. Walburga had promised to give him, and that his dream of the previous night was no mere dream, but a vision in which the saint had appeared to him. He seems to have been very much alarmed, and went over at once to Heidenheim, where no doubt there was trouble that day, when the workmen were rebuked for their treatment of the Saint's grave.

All the inhabitants had been terrified in the night, by the fall of the newly built wall, and when in the morning the Bishop, accompanied by his clergy, arrived in state to reconsecrate the church and have the body exhumed, and placed in a more honourable place in the church, there were great crowds present, according to the Saint's old biographer, the Monk Wolfhard.

The remains were removed to another part of the church temporarily, but when Bishop Otkar returned to Eichstadt, he decided to have the relics removed there, and he sent two priests, named Waltho and Adelung to Heiden-

\* Boll., Feb. 27th, Wolfhard ; Schmid, S. J., "Heilige Walburga."

heim, with orders to bring the sacred body to Eichstadt, with all reverence, and to get a Heidenheim priest named Ommons, and a nun named Liubila, to assist him to do so. Accordingly, on the 21st of September, 870, the first translation of St. Walburga's remains took place, and at the same time the remains of her brother St. Winibald were also brought to Eichstadt. St. Winibald's body had been placed by his brother St. Willibald in a movable coffin or shrine which could be easily carried about and was translated a great many times.

The thousand years' jubilee of the double translation of these two saints was celebrated at Eichstadt on September the 21st, 1870\*.

It seems that there was a convent at Eichstadt to which some of the Heidenheim nuns had removed in Bishop Otkar's time, and lived there as Canonesses, and the church of the Holy Cross was attached to this monastery, and for this reason the remains of St. Walburga were placed there among the descendants of her own nuns, and not in the cathedral at Eichstadt, the nuns having the greater claim to her relics.

The two coffins of the holy brother and sister

\* Schmid, F. A., S.J., op. cit.

were received by Bishop Otkar with great solemnity, a grand procession with the Bishop in his robes at the head, the students and choir singing hymns and canticles, met the coffins and conducted them to a temporary resting place in the church of the Holy Cross for public veneration.

St. Winibald's remains were not allowed to remain long at Eichstadt. After being there for three days, they were taken back to Heidenheim and kept there for the present at any rate, for they were not permitted to rest in peace anywhere for long. Possibly the monks and inhabitants of Heidenheim would not be deprived of their Saint's body, and demanded it back.

It was the custom in those days for Bishops to proclaim solemnly in the church or cathedral, the canonisation of a Saint, for which they frequently received first the consent of the reigning Pope. Bishop Otkar applied to Pope Hadrian II. for this permission, in the case of St. Walburga, and according to Bishop Philip, on May 1st, 870, proclaimed her canonisation at Eichstadt.\* The whole bishopric of Eichstadt keeps the feast of her canonisation on the 1st of May, and according to Bishop

\* Boll., Feb. 27th.

Philip has done so from the earliest times since her translation.

A later writer than Bishop Philip, named Burchard, says that by the desire of Bishop Otkar, Hadrian II. placed St. Walburga's name in the number of the Saints.

Bishop Erkanbold, Otkar's successor, who was reigning in the time of Wolfhard, the Saint's first biographer, also obtained her canonisation from the Holy See in the year 893, and proclaimed it with great ceremony in the church at Eichstadt amid wonderful happenings, for once more was the tomb of the Saint opened.

To explain the reason for this second exhumation we must go back a few years, when there was living at Heidenheim the nun named Lioba or Liobila (just mentioned), evidently called after Saint Lioba. This second Liobila, as she is more often designated, was a very rich woman and possessed a large estate at a place called Monheim or Mowenheim, about fifty miles east of Heidenheim. Hither (after the removal of St. Walburga's remains to Eichstadt), she decided to retire and found a convent; she may have built one, or perhaps she adapted a house already standing to her purpose; this we are not told, but at any rate she moved there, and founded a convent

with herself as Abbess, taking with her her own sister Gerlinde and four other nuns from Heidenberg, so the new community was a very small one at first.\*

In Bishop Erkanbold's time, Abbess Liobila was in great trouble and anxiety because her relations, jealous that she was spending her money on the Church, disputed her right to the estate, and were threatening to turn her out of the convent and seize the property.† Liobila, who had a great devotion to St. Walburga, and was apparently also a clever woman, who foresaw that if she had some of the relics of St. Walburga at Monheim, not only would they, as she believed, protect her from her relations, but also would they attract pilgrims to Monheim, which would be a source of income to the new convent, as miracles would be sure to happen and thankofferings would be made by the recipients of restored health. Accordingly she appealed to Bishop Erkanbold, to let her have some of St. Walburga's relics to place in the chapel of her new convent.

To grant her request, the Bishop had the tomb, or the mausoleum as it is called in one account, re-opened in the church at Eichstadt in the presence of a large congregation, and with

\* Schmid, "Heilige Walburga."

† Boll., Feb. 27th.

much ceremony, and now the bones were seen to be covered with this scentless, colourless, tasteless fluid, known as the oil of St. Walburga. Some of the bones were then removed and taken with the greatest care to Monheim, where they were placed over the chief altar in the nuns' chapel, to which we will return presently.

Some of the oil was collected in the church of Eichstadt by Bishop Erkanbold, and given to the sick to be drank. Then he announced that he had obtained from the Holy See the canonisation of St. Walburga; this all happened on the feast of SS. Philip and James (May 1st, 892), one of the days on which St. Walburga's feast is kept at Eichstadt.\*

Bishop Philip, of Eichstadt, in his life of the Saint says that he was cured himself when seriously ill by drinking the oil of the Saint. He and others say that when Mass is said on an altar containing her relics, the oil flows more copiously at the Consecration of the Blessed Sacrament.† He also tells us that the flow of oil ceased, when one of the Bishops of Eichstadt placed the town under an interdict, and flowed again at the Consecration when the interdict was removed. He mentions as other oil-yielding Saints, B. Catherine, B. Nicolas, and "our glorious pontiff, Gun-

\* Boll., op. cit.

† Schmid, S. J. op. cit.

debarus." Bishop Philip and all who wrote the life of St. Walburga say that this oil gives sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, that it cures the lame, and all diseases are healed by it.

In 1610, the learned Jesuit, Father James Gretserus, wrote a tract dedicated to John Christopher, Bishop of Eichstadt, on this oil, describing the place in which the relics of the saint were enclosed, "as a hard, solid, excavated stone in the high altar of the church. Below this stone in which the bones were enclosed, was a cavity into which fell drops of the oil, sometimes greater, sometimes less, which were received in a silver shell." He also says "that this oil flows more freely at the moment of consecration and of the elevation of the Host. It does not always drop, but only in winter from October 12th the feast of her translation, to February 25th, the day of her death."\*

This oil is collected in tiny bottles at the present day, and sent all over the world, and has worked innumerable miracles even in our own unbelieving days. It has several peculiar properties besides its healing powers; it evaporates if treated with disrespect; if the shell into which it flows is removed it never falls to the ground, but hangs in clusters

\* Gretserus, S. J., Boll., Feb. 27th.



until the vessel is replaced ; and if the little bottles in which it is sent away are upset, it does not fall out, though the cork is removed.

The inhabitants of Eichstadt were under the impression that all the precious bones of their Saint had been taken to Monheim, and they were greatly distressed to think that they had been deprived of so precious a treasure ; miracles and pilgrimages which made their town famous would, if this were true, inevitably cease, and their distress grew to anger, till the attitude of the burghers of Eichstadt assumed alarming proportions, and threatened to develop into a serious rebellion. To avert this catastrophe, Bishop Erkanbold ordered the place, in which the remaining relics were kept under the high altar, to be re-opened in the presence of a large congregation and the relics to be shown to the people to calm them. Wolfhard relates that he learnt this from an eyewitness who saw the tomb opened and the relics exposed, and then replaced in their former resting place under the high altar of the new church at Eichstadt which Bishop Erkanbold had built.\*

Later, in 1042, under Bishop Heribert, who, with the help of Leodegard, had restored and

\* Migue, Pat. Lat. CLVII.

beautified the church which Erkanbold had built, the breast-bone of the Saint was placed over the high altar in the excavated stone, as described by Father Gretser, S.J., and then for the first time was the miraculous flow of oil visible to the public as it fell.

## CHAPTER XI

### HER RELICS

THE Abbess Liobila had not prevailed easily on Bishop Erkanbold, to allow some of the relics of St. Walburga to be removed to Monheim ; perhaps he foresaw what the attitude of the people of Eichstadt was likely to be if they were deprived of the precious relics, so he refused for some time to grant her request, but Liobila would not leave a stone unturned, certainly not the one that enclosed St. Walburga's remains, to obtain her desire, so she appealed to the reigning king of Germany, Arnulf, who, as she knew was a relation of Erkanbold and much beloved by him, and begged him to intercede for her, and Arnulf succeeded in getting the Bishop to grant her request.

The sacred relics were received with the greatest rejoicing at Monheim. There was a grand procession of clerics and the inhabitants, with banners ; psalms and hymns were

sung, and in the presence of a large congregation the relics were placed with due pomp and ceremony, with lights and incense, in a beautiful altar specially erected to receive them, in the convent church of St. Saviour, Monheim.

The joyful expectation of the people of the blessings, both temporal and spiritual, which they hoped to receive from the presence of the Saint's remains was amply fulfilled; for several centuries cures were worked on the faithful of the district, through St. Walburga's oil and intercession.

Two miracles are specially recorded at Monheim which happened at the time of the translation of the relics. A boy who suffered from epileptic fits, or as they called it then, the falling sickness, was healed as he touched the relics on their arrival in the village.\*

Another little boy named Rudolf, who suffered from the same disease, was brought by his mother to the church to see the ceremony, and as he touched the holy relics was healed, and lived to the time of Wolfhard and assured him of his cure.\*

Wolfhard mentions numerous people who were cured by St. Walburga's relics, and in-

\* Schmid, A., S.J., "Heilige Walburga," p. 73.

\* Schmid, S.J., *op. cit.*

tercession, in or near his own times, some living at Eichstadt, others at Ingoldstadt, Thuringen, Bergen, Kempen and the Rhine district\*.

A little while after the arrival of the holy relics at Monheim, the Abbess Liobila was suffering from a bad attack of gout, and was confined to her bed and unable to move, when one night she had a dream or vision, in which a certain priest appeared to her, and told her St. Willibald desired to know what she had done with the relics of his holy sister, and that she must get up and go to the church and tell him. Liobila immediately got up and walked to the church, and found she was cured, but the story does not tell us whether she found St. Willibald's ghost there, the fact of her cure seems to be the reason this somewhat fragmentary legend has come down to us. It rather looks as if St. Willibald had disapproved of the removal of the relics of his sister from Eichstadt.

These relics were placed in a coffin which was silver-gilt, and carried every year in solemn procession round the church at Monheim, until the Protestant Reformation, when here in 1542 the Catholic religion was for a time abolished.

\* Migne and Boll., *op. cit.*

Before the Abbess Liobila died, she left the church and monastery and all the property belonging to it, with the consent of her sister Gerlinde, and the four other nuns who had accompanied her from Heidenberg, to the Bishop of Eichstadt, and every year the nuns had each to pay a small nominal rent of one penny to the Bishop of Eichstadt, on St. Martin's day, for the property was left on condition that he should let it to the Monheim nuns again.

It is believed that at the Reformation, the holy relics were secretly taken away by some pious Catholic from Monheim, to prevent them from being desecrated or lost, as they were in some other places, in England for one.

In the year 1492, in the reign of King Henry VII. some of St. Walburga's relics, together with some legends, her office and responsories, and those of SS. Richard, Willibald and Winibald, were sent to England to the King, by William of Richenau, Bishop of Eichstadt, who appointed one of the Eichstadt Canons, Bernard Adelman, to bring them over. Henry VII. received them most gratefully, and especially appreciated some of the oil of St. Walburga which was sent with them. The relics were then taken to Canterbury

cathedral, and placed in a reliquary, and Henry appointed a day to be kept in honour of these Saints, and also ordered a Mass to be said daily in the cathedral in honour of them, saying he was himself a descendant of King Richard, being of his race and lineage. At the Reformation the relics with so many others were scattered and destroyed.

The legends and miracles of St. Walburga recorded by Wolfhard are too numerous to be quoted here, but one or two which are also interesting, as throwing a sidelight on some of the customs of those far-off days, when the habits and customs of the people were so different from ours, may be quoted.

The following legend is recorded by the learned Gretserus. There was a certain fuller of Eichstadt, who suffered from purblindness but could see a little light in broad daylight. He was a very charitable man and appears to have been of moderate means, and after suffering for two years very patiently, during which time he never allowed his wife and children to send any blind person away from his door without giving them an alms, there came one day to Eichstadt a quack doctor,

NOTE.—The sequence of St. Walburga, edited by Gretserus, and found in the "Life of St. Willibald," is printed at the end of this book.

evidently a great impostor, and he promised to cure the fuller's blindness if he bought some of his remedies. The good man allowed himself to be imposed upon, and tried some of his lotions, but they only made him worse and so far from curing him, they plunged him into total blindness. For four years he remained totally blind, unable to distinguish day from night or light from darkness, and then he was told of the oil of St. Walburga, and was advised to try it and to pray to her to heal him.

He procured some oil from the monastery or convent at Eichstadt, and anointed his eyes with it ; he did this for three days and on the third night after he used the oil, he dreamt that his sight would be given back to him. When he woke he felt his sight had returned, and rising from his bed he went down alone to the kitchen, and there to his joy and amazement he saw the pewter plates and dishes hanging on the wall, and he woke his wife and children, and called to them to come down and rejoice with him for his eyesight was restored. He lived for another five years after this, and during that time he could see to do anything. He offered a waxhead to St. Walburga as a thankoffering for his cure\*.

A somewhat trivial anecdote, the miraculous

\* Boll., Acta Sanctorum, III., Feb. 27th, 574.



part of which could be easily explained away by sceptics, is told by Bishop Philip, who had a great devotion to St. Walburga. We repeat it here because it shows the reverence with which churches and monasteries were treated in those days, when it appears to enter them without removing your gloves was considered a mark of disrespect. A certain Frenchman, who seems to have been a pilgrim, for he was evidently well off, and yet came to Eichstadt on foot, to visit St. Walburga's shrine in the convent-church. He entered the monastery church without removing his gloves, and without making the accustomed reverence. But whether he did this from forgetfulness or irreverence, Bishop Philip will not presume to say.

Presently remembering himself, he tried to take off his gloves, but they suddenly vanished, and although he spent some time looking for them, nowhere could they be found. Astonished and puzzled at the occurrence, he made his devotions, and when he had finished, walked home to France and arrived there a fortnight later. At dinner, relating his experiences during his pilgrimage, he told the story of the gloves to his family and servants, who according to feudal customs were seated at the lower table.

As he was speaking, the gloves suddenly reappeared, and they all decided unanimously that they must be given to the church as a votive offering to St. Walburga, for they were expensive luxuries in those days, as in these, and they were to be seen in the church at Eichstadt in Bishop Philip's day.

To relate all the miracles\* mentioned by Wolfhard and the early biographers of the Saint, through her relics and intercession would take up many pages, while so widely spread is the fame of St. Walburga and so numerous are the cures and miracles worked by her, which rest on indisputable authority and amount to thousands of cases, that the learned German author F. Schmid, S.J., of a recent life of the Saint, says he found it impossible to make a selection of them. It is a case of an *embarras de riches*. Some may be found in the German writer Luidl's large volume on the Eichstadt Sanctuary and Relics; others in J. E. Reichmier's translation into German of the life of St. Walburga of Bishop Philip. Other miracles are constantly occurring in places where her relics still exist, or where she is held in high veneration by the people, and in all parts of the world to which her oil is sent by the nuns at Eichstadt at the present

\* Boll. Acta Sanctorum, Feb. III.

day, who are frequently rewarded by hearing of the blessings received from it.

Some of her relics are still kept in the Jesuit church at Cologne, these were given to Anno Archbishop of Cologne by Bishop Gundekar II., of Eichstadt. Some were at Magdeburg, but have been moved to St. Peter's, Munich, and are placed near the bodies of the SS. Cosmas and Damien, MM.

In France there are some at the monastery of Cluny in Burgundy, and those at Rheims have doubtless been preserved during the Great War as all relics and other treasures were removed to a place of safety before the bombardment. The relics now at Rheims were originally at Attigny in Champagne, but were taken to Rheims for safety for fear of the Hungarians.

There are some at Wittenburg, in Saxony, and there was a grand procession here every year at which the relics were taken from their shrine and carried in the procession, but like so many other relics these were lost in the Reformation.

A similar fate befel the relics of St. Walburga, St. Willibald, St. Winibald, and their father, St. Richard, in Canterbury Cathedral, during the Reformation, when they were desecrated and destroyed.

Some of her relics were at Wasserburg, in Thuringia, at Prague and Winburg, in Bavaria, and in the bishopric of Eichstadt there are still many churches dedicated to her, and before the Reformation there were even more than at present.

There were altars dedicated to her at Mayence and Verdun, a monastery in Alsatia, the parish church near Trêves was dedicated to her. There were formerly altars erected in her honour in some of the churches of Lyons.

Belgium was formerly very rich in her relics. There is a magnificent church at Furnes dedicated to her, which had some of her relics and attached to this church was a celebrated College of Canons. The relics were translated here on August 4th, 1459, by Gertrude, Countess of Flanders. There are relics of her at Bruges, and there were some at Ypres, but it is most unlikely that these still exist, seeing the awful destruction this unhappy town suffered during the Great War.

In the north of Holland, at Gröningen, there is a very old church with a quaint, old, round tower dedicated to her.

At Zutphen, further south, the most important building is St. Walburga's church, which dates from the twelfth century; it contains a very old brass font, a Gothic

candelabra of gilded iron ; bas-relief sculpture on the pulpit, and monuments of the Counts of Zutphen. The original towers were destroyed by lightning, and the present one dates from the sixteenth century.

At Arnheim, still further south, the capital of Guelderland, the principal church is dedicated to St. Walburga, to which St. Walburga's Street leads up ; it contains a handsome Gothic pulpit. There is a quaint old motto attached to the people of Guelderland which runs as follows :—

“ Great in courage, poor in goods, sword in  
hand,

Such are the people of Guelderland.”

Brussels and Tille in Brabant also possess relics of her.

She was specially honoured in Wurtemberg at Waldburg-Zell named after her and apparently a small convent existed here. She is also held in pious memory at Monheim, and at the church of St. Emmerau, in Regensburg, in which province Monheim stands.

In the bishopric of Augsburg, there is a celebrated church dedicated to her, to which a pilgrimage is attached ; another church in her honour is in Lemburg, near the town of Cham, in the Palatinate.

Churches and altars dedicated to her are to be found in the bishopric of Luxembourg; at Vienna in Austria, in the bishopric of Raab in Hungary; in Basle, Strasburg, Constanz, Worms, Freising, Hildesheim, Hamburg, Munster and Olmuz.

In England, of recent years (in 1850-1866) a beautiful church has been built and dedicated to her at Preston in Lancashire, in memory of a great favour obtained through her intercession, so she is not altogether forgotten in this her native country.

Strange to say we can find no trace of any church dedicated to either St. Walburga or either of her brothers in England in pre-Reformation times \*, it was in Germany where they laboured and on the continent, that they were best known and most honoured. There is, however, no authoritative list of dedications of English churches published, those that are in existence do not pretend to be exhaustive, so it is possible and probable, that there were at some time churches dedicated to one or all of these Saints.

St. Walburga led at Wimborne a wholly contemplative life, hidden with Christ in God; it was not till she went to Germany as a missionary that her active life began, and even

\* Bond, Francis, "Dedications of English Churches."

there she led a contemplative life as much as was compatible with the work she was called upon to do.

The contemplative life is a life in which the contemplation of Almighty God is the chief object, and according to St. Gregory, it is more meritorious than the active life, it is as Our Lord said the "better part" chosen by Mary. St. Walburga was a born contemplative, but in obedience to the call of Almighty God, which she heard in the chapel at Wimborne, she sacrificed her own inclination to remain sitting at Our Lord's feet with Mary, and went out to a distant foreign land to labour in His vineyard, and being a great Saint, whether working or praying, she lived a life of union with God, which is the end of all contemplation.

Several emblems are attributed to her ; oil, as we should anticipate, seeing how famous her oil was and is, is one ; oil is also attributed as an emblem to St. Remigius and St. Vitus. A vial is another of her emblems, presumably for containing the oil, or it may be as in the case of SS. Cosmas and Damien, with whom she is associated in the church at Zutphen, the vial is emblematic of her healing powers as it is in the case of these martyred physicians ; a third emblem with which St. Wal-

burga is sometimes represented is three or five ears of corn, but we can give no reason for this.

St. Walburga was by no means the only oil-yielding saint, similar phenomena are told of the relics of St. Andrew the Apostle, at Amalphi in Italy; of the holy Bishop St. Nicolas, of Bari in Apulia, of the Blessed Euphemia in Chalcedon, and in the bulls of canonisation of St. Theresa and St. Magdalen, of Pazzi, the miraculous flow of oil from their remains is mentioned. In Montalembert's life of St. Elizabeth of Thuringen, we read that on the day of her solemn translation, her coffin when opened was found filled with oil which flowed from her bones. No one has ever been able to offer any natural explanation of this mysterious oil. In the case of St. Walburga, the flow of oil at Eichstadt was subjected to a severe examination some years ago, when the learned scientist and Professor of Natural History at Munich University, Herr von Ocken, was sent there to investigate the matter. He was shown the sepulchre containing the relics of the Saint, and the oil as it dropped from them, and told all the particulars of its flowing, and after a thorough examination, he professed himself quite unable to explain the dropping of the so-called oil



in any natural way, or to describe it as a natural appearance. He took some of the oil with him to Munich, to have it chemically examined, and afterwards wrote to Eichstadt to say he could not describe the liquid as either water or oil, nor was he able to explain the appearance of it by any laws of nature\*.

This testimony will not, of course, convince the sceptical, but so long as the oil continues to prove beneficial to so many, who have faith in it in so many parts of the world, this is of no importance.

“ There are more things in Heaven and earth,  
     Horatio,  
 “ Than are dreamt of in your philosophy,”  
 or in ours, of the twentieth century.

\* “ Die Heilige Walburga,” Schmid, F. A. (S.J.).

## CHAPTER XII

### ST. WALBURGA AS AUTHORESS

ST. WALBURGA, as we have said, is believed to have been the first English authoress,\* if we can so describe an Englishwoman, who did not write in English or Anglo-Saxon, but in Latin. No one seems to have questioned that she wrote the life of her younger brother, St. Winibald. Her devotion to him and the facts that she spent her early youth at home with him, and from the time she went to Germany till the day of his death, she was constantly associated with him, they were co-founders of Heidenheim, and he was her confessor and director, made her the most capable and suitable person to write his life. She probably knew him better than anyone

\* "Catholic Encyclopædia"; Drane, "Christian School and Scholars."

else, and had more opportunities than others of judging his character and admiring his sanctity.

It is certain that one of the nuns at Heidenheim wrote the life and travels of St. Willibald, from his dictation, and the probability is that this anonymous Heidenheim nun, as the internal evidence goes to show, was St. Walburga, whom her brother would most naturally select to be his amanuensis. The title of this book, the "Hodœporicon" or "Travels" was most likely St. Willibald's, and as it is one of the earliest and most interesting books of Christian travel in the Holy Land, we propose to translate it here for the benefit of those who have not access to the original.

The humble tone of the preface certainly points to St. Walburga as the authoress. After saying "that she addresses herself to all deacons, priests, bishops and monks and the Pope and scholars of St. Willibald, for whom she has freely composed this work," (by these scholars of St. Willibald she means the pupils in the school he founded at Eichstadt), she then continues thus:—

"I, an unworthy woman of the Saxon race, newly arrived here\*, and in comparison with

\* That is at Heidenheim.

my companions, not only in years but also in virtue, only a poor, miserable, little woman, who am about to string together a few things concerning the early life of St. Willibald. But nevertheless it pleases me, though only a woman of the fragile sex, corruptible in foolishness, supported by no prerogative of wisdom, not as elated by any great powers of industry, but forced by the violence of my will to choose, to put together, and to edit a few things, from the many trees of varieties of leaves, flowers and fruits for your remembrance.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            \*

“ These things we know are not apocryphal, nor are they related in a wandering manner, but we are appointed to write them from his own dictation, he seeing and relating, and two deacons listening with me as witnesses on this 9th day of July.”\*

Further on she says that “ she is of the same family as these blessed and venerable men, though unworthy herself,” meaning as the learned Bollandist editor explains in a note, SS. Willibald and Winibald.

The first part of the “ Hodœporicon ” tells of the early life of St. Willibald, and his first pilgrimage with St. Richard and St. Winibald,

\* Boll., Julii VII., p. 501, *et seq.*

of which we have already given a summary in the text, we therefore now proceed to his second pilgrimage from Rome to Palestine, henceforth translating the original.

THE HODŒPORICON; OR, TRAVELS OF  
ST. WILLIBALD

BY A HEIDENHEIM NUN, PROBABLY ST.  
WALBURGA

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*Translated from the Latin.*

When the solemnities of Easter were over, St. Willibald, with two companions, set out from Rome to Jerusalem. And they came first to Terracina, and stayed there two days, and then they went to Cajeta\*, which is on the coast, and then, landing, they were transhipped to Beneventum, and then, leaving the ship in which they had travelled, they remained there a fortnight.

These cities belong to the Romans. And then as Divine Providence is accustomed to act, they found a ship there from Egypt, and going on board they sailed to Calabria to the city of Regia. And staying there two

\* Caieta, *i.e.*, the modern Gacra between Terracina and Naples.

days, they arose and went to Sicily, in which is the city of Catania, where rests the body of St. Agatha.

And there is Mount Etna, and when it happens that the fire from it wishes to spread itself over that region, then the citizens quickly take the veil of St. Agatha and spread it against the fire and it ceases.

They were there three weeks and sailing thence they came beyond the Adriatic to Manafaccia in the Morea\*.

And thence they sailed to an island called Chios, leaving Corinth on their left. From thence they went to Samos, and sailing thence they arrived at Ephesus. Thence they walked to St. John the Evangelist's, in a beautiful place near Ephesus. Thence they walked to a place where the Seven Sleepers rest. And from there they walked two miles to a large town which is called Sigila†. And begging bread they went to a fountain in the middle of the town, and sitting there upon the wall, they dipped their bread in the water and thus they ate.

\* NOTE.—The text says "Slavinica," but Mr. Beazley in his interesting book "The Dawn of Modern Geography," explains that it means the Morea. The Bollandists for brevity's sake adhere to the original names of places unless otherwise stated.

† Sigila, apparently now Sighajik, north of Ephesus

And thence walking by the coast, they came to Stroboli, an exceedingly high mountain. From there they went to a place called Patera\* and stayed there until the horrible cold winter frosts had passed. And afterwards they sailed to a city called Miletus. There was a certain danger from the waters. And two solitaries sat on a pillar (stylites) that was among the ruins, and it was strengthened by a great wall exceedingly high, and the water could not hurt them.

And when they were suffering from starvation, and torn inside with hunger, they feared the day of death was imminent. But the omnipotent Shepherd of the poor deigns to offer food to His poor. And sailing thence they came to Cyprus, which is between the Greeks and the Saracens, to a town called Paphos, and they were there a week after the new year. And then they went to Constantia or Majuma†, where St. Epiphanius rests, and they stayed there till the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. And sailing thence, they came to the region of the Saracens to the city of ‡Tharrata, near the sea. Thence they walked

\* Patara, one of the chief cities of Lycia in S.W. of Asia Minor.

† NOTE.—Mabilion says Constantia was called Majuma before the time of Constantine the Great. Annotata 507.

‡ Tharrata was. probably the modern Tartoos on the coast of Syria, about 50 miles west of Emessa.

nine or twelve miles to a place called Arahe, where there was a Greek Bishop, and then they had the Litany according to their custom. And thence they walked to Emessa, twelve miles\*, there is a great church built by St. Helena in honour of St. John the Baptist, and his head was there for a long time; this is in Syria.

At this time there were with St. Willibald seven companions, and he was the eighth. And by and by the Pagan Saracens, finding that unknown men had come there, they took them prisoners, because they did not know from what country they were, but judged them to be spies. And they led them prisoners to a rich old man, that he might see and know from whence they came. And the old man asked them whence they came, and to what legation they belonged. Then they answered and told him all the reason of their journey. And the old man answered and said:—

“Frequently I see men come here from those same parts of the earth as these, they seek no harm but desire to fulfil the law of their gods.”

Then, walking thence they came to the palace, and asked them the way to Jerusalem.

\* St. Willibald's miles were much longer than English miles, they were German miles probably.



And when they were in prison, by the dispensation of Almighty God, Who deigned to protect His little ones among the darts and torments of the barbarians, there was a man, a merchant, who, as an alms for the redemption of his soul, wished to redeem them, and snatch them from prison that they might go free where they liked, and he could not do so. But he sent them daily dinner and supper, and on Thursdays and Sundays, he sent his son into the prison, and he took them to the baths, and led them back again. And on Sundays he took them to church for a bargain, that they might see something which pleased them, and he might obtain from them something as his reward.

The citizens of that city were accustomed to come there, and look at them, because the youths were handsome and clothed in fine dresses.

Then there came to them in the prison a Spaniard, and he talked with them, and inquired diligently of them, who they were and whence they came. And they told him all things concerning their travels.

This Spaniard had a brother in the King's palace, who was chamberlain of the King of the Saracens. And then the magistrate who had cast them into prison, and the Spaniard

who visited them in prison, and the skipper in whose ship they had arrived when they sailed from Cyprus, all three came at once into the presence of the King, whose name was Mir-mumnu. And when the conversation turned on their cause, the Spaniard told his brother all things which they had told him in the prison, and asked him to point them out to the King, that he might protect them.

And when this was done, the King asked whence they came. And they told him, "From the western shore where the sun sets, but we know of no land beyond theirs, nothing but water."

And the King said: "Why should we punish them? They have done no harm against us. Set them free, and let them go." Other prisoners had to pay a tax when they were liberated, but he let them off this.

The Cypriotes lived between the Greeks and the Saracens, and were unarmed, because there was a great peace and friendship between the Greeks and the Saracens. This was a great and extensive kingdom, and there were twelve episcopal dioceses there.

And presently being free, they travelled 100 miles to Damascus\* and there rested St. Ananias. This is in Syria. They stayed

\* This is about the distance, it is less as the crow flies.

there a week and then went two miles and there was a church, and there was Paul first converted, and the Lord said to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

And praying there they walked into Galilee, to the place where Gabriel first came to St. Mary, and said to her "Ave gratia plena," etc. There is now a church. And the town in which the church stands is Nazareth. Christian men have often bought this church from the pagans, when they wanted to destroy it. And then commending themselves to the Lord, they walked thence and came to Cana, where the Lord turned water into wine. This is a great church, and in it stands one of the six vessels which the Lord commanded to be filled with water, and it was turned into wine, and they communicated from that wine. They were there one day and going thence, they came to Mount Tabor, where the Lord was transfigured. There is now a monastery of monks and this church is dedicated to the Lord and Moses and Elias. And the citizens call that place Agemons, that is Holy Mount.\*

Thence they went to the city of Tiberias, this stands on the shore of the lake where the

\* There was a Cluniac monastery subject to the Abbess in the time of Peter the Venerable, Mabillon says.

Lord walked once with dry feet, and Peter walking on the sea sank.

Here are many churches and synagogues of the Jews, but great honour of the Lord. And they were there some days, and there the Jordan runs into the sea\*. And thence they went round the lake and came to the town of Magdala. And thence they came to Capharnaum, where the Lord raised the ruler's daughter. There was the house and a great wall. And the people told them that Zebedee and his sons were buried there. Thence they went to Bethsaida, whence came Peter and Andrew; there is now a church where the house originally stood.

And remaining there one night, in the morning they came to Choraizim, where the Lord cured the demoniac and sent the devils into the herd of swine. There was a Christian church. And praying there, they went thence and came to a place, where two fountains flow from the earth, Jor and Dan, and they come from a mountain behind, and collected together they make the Jordan. And they stayed there a night between the two fountains, and the shepherds gave them some milk to drink, and there were wonderful oxen with a long back, short legs and large horns and they

\* The Lake of Tiberias.

were all of one colour. The purple marshes here are deep, and when in summer, the great heat of the sun comes to the earth, these cattle go to the marsh and plunge in their whole body except their heads.

And thence we came to Caesarea\*, wher ewas a church and a multitude of Christians. Thence they went to the monastery of St. John the Baptist, and there were twenty monks there. They remained there one night, and thence they went over a mile to the Jordan, where the Lord was baptised.

Above it there is now a church of stone columns, and under the church is now dry land, where the Lord was baptised. They now baptise in this place. A wooden cross stands in the middle, and a small course of water is directed into it, and a rope stretched over the river is fixed here and there. Then at the Epiphany the infirm and the sick come, and taking hold of the rope dip themselves into the river. And sterile women come there and receive the grace of God.

And going thence they came to Galgala,† this is five miles, and there is a small wooden church with twelve stones in it. These twelve stones are those which the sons of Israel

\* Cesarea Philippi.

† Gilgal, Judges iv.

took from the Jordan, and carried to Galgala, over five miles, and placed them there as a memorial of their transmigration. And praying they went thence to Jericho, over seven miles from Jordan. There a fountain sprang forth at the root of the mountain, which before was dry and it was useless to man, until the prophet Eliseus came and blessed it. And afterwards it spread and divided all that region into fields, and gardens and everything necessary for the people; and everything watered by that spring profited, and was fertile because of the blessing of Eliseus.

And they proceeded to the monastery of St. Eustacius, which stands in the middle of the country between Jericho and Jerusalem. And from here Willibald went to Jerusalem, to the spot where the Holy Cross of the Lord was found. There is a church in that place which is called the place of Calvary. And this was outside Jerusalem. But Blessed Helena, when she found the Cross, placed it inside Jerusalem. And there stand three wooden crosses by the side of the wall, in the eastern part of the church in memory of the Holy Cross of the Lord, and of the others who were crucified with Him. They are not inside the church, but they stand

under a roof outside the church. And by the side of it is a garden in which is the sepulchre of the Lord. This sepulchre was cut out of stone, and the stone stands above the ground, and it is square at the bottom and pointed at the top. And a cross now stands at the top of that sepulchre, and a wonderful house is now built over it; on the east side in the stone of the sepulchre is a gate, through which men enter into the sepulchre to pray. And inside there is the bed in which the Body of the Lord lay. And there stand in the bed fifteen golden lamps, burning with oil night and day. The bed in which the Body of the Lord lay is on the north side of the sepulchre, and on the right hand of a man entering the sepulchre to pray.

And there before the gate lies a great square stone, like the first stone which the angel removed from the door of the tomb.

And Willibald came here on the feast of St. Mark. Presently as he left, he began to be ill, and he lay sick till the week before the Nativity. And then when he was restored a little, and was better from his sickness, he rose and went to the church, which is called Holy Sion, it stands in the midst of Jerusalem. And praying there he went thence into Solomon's porch. There is a pool and

there lie sick people, expecting the movement of the water, when the angel shall come and move it, and he who goes in first is cured. This is where the Lord said to the paralytic, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk."

And likewise St. Willibald said, that before the gate of the city stood a great column, and at the top of the column was a cross as a sign, and in memory of where the Jews wanted to take away the body of St. Mary. When the eleven Apostles were bearing the body of St. Mary, they carried it from Jerusalem, and immediately when they arrived at the gate of the city, the Jews wanted to seize it, and directly those men who stretched out their arms to the coffin, and attempted to carry it away, their arms were held back as if glued and stuck to the coffin, and they were unable to move, until by the grace of God and the prayers of the Apostles, they were set free again, and then they let them go.

St. Mary departed from this world in that place in the middle of Jerusalem which is called Holy Sion. And there the eleven Apostles carried her, as I said before, and then the angels coming, took her from the hands of the Apostles and carried her into Paradise.

And the Bishop St. Willibald, descending thence, came to the valley of Jehoshaphat.



This stands close to Jerusalem on the eastern side. And in that valley is the church of St. Mary, and in the church is her sepulchre, not because her body rests there, but to her memory. And praying there he went up to Mount Olivet, which is near the valley on the east side. That valley is between Jerusalem and Mount Olivet. And on Mount Olivet is now a church, where the Lord prayed before His Passion, and said to His disciples: "Stay ye here and watch while I go yonder and pray." And he came to the church in the same mountain, where the Lord ascended to Heaven. And in the middle of the church is an altar, beautifully sculptured in brass. And it is square. This stands in the middle of the church where the Lord ascended to Heaven. And in the middle of the altar there is a square, and there is a glass lamp and round the lamp, the glass is closed everywhere, and it is so closed that it is able to burn always in rain and in sun.

This church is open above and without a roof, and there stand two columns inside the church near the north wall, and opposite to the south wall. They are there in memory of the two men who said: "Why stand ye here gazing, ye men of Galilee?"\* And the man who

\* Acts i. 7.

is able to get between the wall and the column is free from his sins.

Then he came to the place where the Angel appeared to the shepherds, saying : " I announce to you great joy." And he came to Bethlehem, seven miles off Jerusalem, where the Lord was born. This place where Christ was born was formerly a cave under the earth, and now it is a square house, cut out of stone, and the earth is dug out round it, and projects thence, and above this now a church is built. And where the Lord was born, there stands above it now an altar, and another smaller altar is so made, that when they wish to celebrate Mass within the cave, they take the little altar with them and carry it into the cave at the time Mass is celebrated and again afterwards they carry it out. That church where the Lord was born, which stands above, is a glorious house built in the shape of a cross. And adoring there, they went thence, and came to a great town which is called Thecua\*, a place where the infants were formerly slain by Herod. There is now a church and there sleeps one of the prophets.

And he came thence to the Laura Valley†. There is a great monastery and the Abbot reigns

\* Tekua, about ten miles south of Bethlehem.

† The Laura of St. Saba, Canisius.

in the monastery, and he is the janitor of the church, and there are many other monks in the same monastery, they live round it on the slope of a hill. And they had cut out of the stony slope a little hut here and there. This mountain encircles the valley. And the monastery there is built in the valley, and there rests St. Saba.

Thence he came to the place where St. Philip baptised the eunuch. And there is a small church in the great valley between Bethlehem and Gaza.

And thence they went to Gaza. Praying there they went to St. Matthias. There is great joy there on Sunday. And when Holy Mass had been celebrated, our Holy Bishop Willibald standing there lost his sight, and he was blind two months. Thence they went to St. Zacharias the prophet, not the father of St. John, but the other prophet. And thence they went to the town of Aframia\*, there rest the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their wives.

Thence they came again to Jerusalem and entered into the church where the Holy Cross of the Lord was found, and his eyes were opened and he recovered his sight. And re-

\* Canisius calls this Afrimia a cave and mausoleum. Acta Sanc., ibid 510.

maining there some little time, they departed and came to Lydda\*, to St. George, this is ten miles from Jerusalem.

Thence they came to a town where is the church of St. Peter the Apostle. And there St. Peter raised and converted the widow who was named Dorcas. And praying he departed thence, and came to the Adriatic Sea, far from Jerusalem to the towns of Tyre and Sidon. There are six (?) miles between them and they are on the sea-coast.

Thence they went over Mount Lebanon and came to Damascus, thence to Caesaria, and then for the third time to Jerusalem, and he was there the whole winter.

Thence he went to Ptolomaida†; this is on the extreme borders of Syria, and he was there all Lent; he was ill and unable to travel. His companions who were with him, travelled to the King of the Saracens, whose name was Murmannus, for they wished to ask for a permit to travel, and they could not find him, because he had fled out of the country from the plague, which was in that region. And when they could not find the King, they returned and

\* Diospolim, in the text, Canisius calls it Lydda and Tigrida. Acta, 510. It is now Ludd.

† Salamancha, according to Gretser, *ibid.* This is now Salamayi, in the Syrian desert, east of Emessa.

stayed in Ptolomaida till the week before Easter.

Then they went to Emessa, and they asked the Governor to give them a letter (passport) for each couple, for they were not able to travel together but in pairs, because it was thus easier to get food.

Thence they went to Damascus, and then for the fourth time they came to Jerusalem. They stayed there for some little while, and thence they went to Sebaste, which formerly was called Samaria, but after it had been demolished they rebuilt the town, where Samaria first was, and called it Sebaste.\*

There rest St. John the Baptist, Abdias and Eliseus the prophet. And there is the well near the town, where the Lord asked water from the Samaritan woman. And above that well is now a church, and the mountain in which the Samaritans worship is there. And that woman said to the Lord: "Our fathers worshipped on that mountain."

Then worshipping they travelled over Samaria into the extreme borders, to a large town where they stayed the night.

And thence they travelled over a great field of olive trees, and there went with them

\* St. Jerome says that Samaria was called Sebaste in honour of the Emperor Sebastian. Acta, 510.

an Ethiopian, with two camels and a mule, who was guiding a woman through the wood. And as they were travelling they met a lion, who opened his mouth, roaring at them and threatening to seize and devour them, which frightened them exceedingly! Then the Ethiopian said to them: "Do not be afraid; let us advance." And immediately they went on, and drew near to the lion, but he by the help of God, quickly turned aside and allowed them to continue their journey. And they said that afterwards as they went on, they heard that lion give a great roar as if he would devour many of those, who were travelling to collect the fruit of the olive-trees.

From here they came to a city called Thalamartha on the sea-coast. And walking on they arrived at the top of Lebanon where that mountain goes into the sea, and it is a promontory.\* There is a tower of Lebanon. And whosoever comes here without a free pass, he cannot enter the place, because that place is guarded and enclosed, and if they come without a permit, the citizens take them and send them to Tyre. This mountain is between Tyre and Thalamartha. And then the Bishop came again to Tyre.

† This is Mount Carmel, not Lebanon, which is nowhere near the sea. Carmel runs into it at Haifa, south of Tyre.

The Bishop St. Willibald, when he was in Jerusalem bought some balsam for himself, and filled a gourd\* with it. And he took another gourd which was concave, and he had some string. And he filled this gourd with oil of petrol, and he put it inside the other gourd, and he tied the little one to the other so that the margins of both seemed to be alike full, and then he closed the mouth of the gourd. And when they reached the city of Tyre, the citizens seized them, that they might examine all their luggage and find if they had anything hidden, and if they found anything they quickly punished them, murdering them.

And when after searching everything they found nothing except the gourd which St. Willibald had, opening that they smelt what was inside it. And when they had smelt the petrol which was inside the gourd on the top, and they did not find the balsam which was in the gourd under the petrol, so they let them go. They were there many days waiting until a ship should be ready.

And afterwards they sailed the whole winter from St. Andrew's day to the week after Easter. Then they reached Constantinople where rest

\* Mimerba, *i.e.*, a kind of gourd of the cucumber tribe scooped out like a calabash. Fr. callebasse. Boll.

three saints, Andrew, Timothy and Luke the Evangelist, in one altar. And John of the Golden Mouth (Chrysostom) rests there, before the altar where the priest stands when he says Mass; there is his tomb.

Our Bishop was there two years, and he had a place inside the church, where he was able to see daily where the saints rested. And from here he went to Nicæa, where formerly the Emperor Constantine had a synod. And there were 318 bishops at that synod. And that church is the daughter of the church on Mount Olivet, where the Lord ascended to Heaven. And in that church were the images of the Bishops who were at that Synod. And St. Willibald went there from Constantinople that he might see in what way the church was built, and he came back to Constantinople. And after two years they sailed thence with the Papal and Imperial Nuncios into Sicily, into the city of Syracuse.

And there he went to Catania, to the city of Regia\* in Calabria. And sailing thence they went to the island Vulcania†; there is the Hell of Theodoric‡. And when they arrived they landed that they might go and see what

\* Reggio.

† The pot of Vulcan it is called by St. Gregory. Boll.

‡ Stromboli.



this hell was like. And immediately St. Willibald, more curious to see what was inside this hell, wished to ascend to the top of the mountain, under which the hell was, and he could not because the hot ashes, ascending to the margin from the stinking depths, were lying winding round the crater. And just as snow, when it is snowing, is accustomed to heap together the white snowy multitudes falling from the sky, so the ashes, heaped together on the top of the mountain, prohibited St. Willibald from ascending. But nevertheless he saw the black and terrible and horrible flames, breaking forth from the lava, and at the same time thundering, thus he watched the great flame and vapour of smoke ascending sublimely and exceedingly high. That pumice-stone which writers are accustomed to use, he saw ascending from that hell, cast out with the flames and thrown into the sea, and then thrown out from the sea on to the dry land, and men pick it up and carry it away. And constantly afterwards, that horrible and terrible fire burnt, vomiting flames and foetid smoke in a wonderful manner. Having seen and explored this sight, they left and sailed to the church of St. Barnabas\*, which stands on the seashore and reached those mountains

\* On the west coast of Italy.

which are called Didimus. And sailing thence they came to a city called Naples, there they stayed many days. There is the seat of an Archbishop, and he has great honour there. And near there is the town where rests St. Severinus\*.

And from thence they reached Capua. And that Archbishop sent him to another city to the Bishop there, and that Bishop sent him to St. Benedict's.

When he reached St. Benedict's†, it was autumn. And this was now seven years since he left Rome, and altogether it was ten years since he left his own country. And when the venerable man St. Willibald and Diapertes, who had travelled with him all the time, reached St. Benedict's, they only found a few monks there and the Abbot named Petronaceus. He with great moderation and a genius for teaching, admonishing in frequent lectures, had taught the happy community of brothers not only by words but by gentle manners in exhortation, and he gave them the form of a right constitution, and a rule of monastic life, showing an example in himself; so that

\* Mabilion says there was an oratory or monastery here dedicated to St. Severinus. The town is ten miles north of Salerno.

† i.e., Monte Cassino.

he succeeded in rousing love and fear of himself in all.

And the first year St. Willibald was sacristan of the church there and the second year he was dean in the monastery. And afterwards for eight years he was porter in both monasteries, for four years he was the porter in the monastery which stands on the top of an exceedingly high mountain (Cassino) and the other four years in the monastery which stands below near the river Raphito.\*

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And thus ten years† having been spent at Monte Cassino, the venerable man St. Willibald had attempted to keep in every way, as much as he was able the sacred rule of the regular life of St. Benedict, by the help of Almighty God and the support of those things which he had sought over long distances and vast tracts of country, for the redemption of his soul in the strength of this present life. And not only himself, but he led others with him to walk in the venerated steps of the regular life.

And after these things, a priest who came from Spain stayed at St. Benedict's, and

\* This was an exceedingly responsible post at that time.

† That is from the autumn of 729 to the autumn of 739. Boli.

asked leave of Abbot Petronaceus to go to Rome. And immediately leave being granted, he asked St. Willibald to go with him, that he might lead him to St. Peter. And he promised to go as soon as leave was granted.

And when travelling they reached Rome, they entered the basilica of St. Peter, and begged for the patronage of the Keeper of the Keys of Heaven, and commended themselves to the pious patronage of his prayers.

Then the holy Pontiff of the Apostolic See, Gregory III., having found out that St. Willibald was in Rome, commanded him to come to see him\*. And when he arrived there he fell prone on his face to the earth before the holy Pontiff, and saluted him and straight-way he, the pious observer of the people, began to inquire of him the order of his journey, asking in what way he had journeyed for seven years in distant lands ; and how for a long space of time he had avoided the pernicious depravity of the pagans ; all this he inquired diligently of him.

And immediately the servant of Christ speaking humbly, told to the glorious governor of nations, the story of his travels in order ;

\* The learned Bollandist thinks St. Willibald was sent for to come to Rome by Gregory III., and that he did not come merely as a companion to the Spanish monk.

how sometimes he had made his way through many of the mansions of this world, and how asking the power, he had walked and travelled over and worshipped at the place in Bethlehem of the Nativity of the Creator. And no less had he examined the other country of His Baptism in Jordan, and visited it and bathed there himself ; and he had also been in Jerusalem in Holy Sion, where the High Priest, the Saviour of the world, hung on the Cross, and was sold and buried. And afterwards He ascended into Heaven from Mount Olivet. Four times he went there and prayed, and commended himself to the Lord. All these things he explained to the Pope. And after they had discussed all these things, talking and communicating delightfully together, the Pope in sober words intimated to Blessed Willibald, that St. Boniface had asked him, that St. Willibald should be sent from St. Benedict's, and that he should send him immediately, and make him a co-operator in the evangelisation of the Frank nation. And when Pope Gregory III. had pointed out to St. Willibald these desires and wishes of St. Boniface, asking and teaching him in quiet exhortations to agree that he would go to Boniface, then that illustrious servant of Christ, St. Willibald, immediately and dis-

cretly promised to obey the petitions and commands of the Pope, if according to the discipline of the Regular life, he should obtain leave from his Abbot, Petronaceus, to do so. And at once the High Pontiff of holy authority answered, that he was safe from any anxiety if he obeyed him, since he had told him to go, saying: "Because if it pleases me to transfer anyone anywhere, he certainly has not leave to contradict me nor the power."

Immediately then St. Willibald answered showing his consent to these exhortations. And he promised to go not only there but anywhere, in any part of the world; where-soever he deigned to transfer him, he promised to go. After these things St. Willibald, who had gone there on the Nativity of St. Andrew, left in Easter week, and Diapertes remained at St. Benedict's monastery. And Willibald went to Lucca, where his father rested. And thence he went to Ticino\* and thence to Brixia.† And thence to a place called Charta. And then he went to Duke Odilo, and he was there a week.

From thence he went to Suitgarius,‡ and stayed with him a week, and then Suitgarius

\* Catholic province in Italian Switzerland.

† Brixen, in Austrian Tyrol.

‡ Gretser calls him Swigerus, and says he was Count of Seville. Boll.

went to Liutrat, and St. Willibald to St. Boniface. And Boniface sent them to Eichstadt, that he might see how Willibald could settle there. Suitgarius gave the region of Eichstadt to St. Boniface for the redemption of his soul. And St. Boniface gave that district to our St. Willibald, which was still a wilderness, so that there was not a house there, except that church of St. Mary which stands there still, and it is smaller than the other church which St. Willibald afterwards built.

And when these two, Willibald and Suitgarius had been some time at Eichstadt, they chose, by exploring, a place suitable for habitation, and afterwards they went again to St. Boniface in Frisia. And they were with him until they both returned to Eichstadt, and then St. Boniface ordained St. Willibald to the degree and dignity of a priest. The day on which our Bishop Willibald was ordained priest was the 11th kalends of August,\* and the Nativity of St. Mary Magdalene and Apollinaris.

And after one year had passed, St. Benedict ordered him to come to him in Thuringia, and immediately that holy man St. Willibald, according to the command of St. Boniface, went to Thuringia, and in the house of his

\* This means the 22nd of July. Boll.

brother Winibald, received hospitality, because he had not seen him now for the space of eight years, and it was nine and a half years since he left him in Rome. And now they rejoiced in meeting and both congratulated each other. It was in the autumn when St. Willibald went to Thuringia.

And immediately after he arrived there St. Boniface the Archbishop and Burchard and Wise, consecrated him to the authority of the sacred episcopate. And after he was endowed with the highest honour of the sacerdotal state, he was there one week and afterwards he removed again to his appointed place of sojourn.

St. Willibald, when consecrated Bishop, was 41 years old. And then it was autumn and about three weeks before St. Martin's day; he was consecrated in a place called Saltzburg.

And now the long account of the journey of St. Willibald being finished, which he underwent travelling for seven years, those things we have now attempted to tell and explain in an exhaustive manner, and they were not gathered from another witness, but they were heard from himself, and we wrote them down at his own dictation, in the monastery of Heidenheim, one of his deacons and some other of his juniors being witnesses



with me. And I say this that no one may say that this was frivolous.

After he came from Rome to this province with three companions, being then forty-one, and now being expert and old, he accepted the dignity of the episcopate, and in the place called Eichstadt, began to build a monastery and there followed the holy discipline of the monastic life, to which he had been accustomed in his early youth, and which he saw at St. Benedict's, and not only there but in many other monasteries, which he himself shrewd and wise had explored, travelling in many countries, showing in himself their rule and venerated manner of life. And when with a few helpers in sowing the wide and spacious field of the Supernal Word with the sacred plants of the Divine seed, he brought it to harvest. And as the prudent bees from the purple blossoms or violets, and little yellow flowers, and the strong smelling flowers of olives, dissolve the poison and distil the sweet juice of nectar, and thus with their legs and all their bodies covered, they return to the hive bearing it, thus the blessed\* star Willibald, choosing the best in all things, which he saw

\*NOTE.—The authoress uses a Greek word "parilion," which Canisius interprets as a luminous cloud like the sun in colour and shape. Boll.

illuminating widely with their own lights, he seized for all his own subjects the art of a right conversation in living, in speech, in putting obstacles to vices, in goodness, in patience, in abstinence, and gave them the rule he had brought back with him.

But very soon after this strenuous servant of God began to dwell in the palace of his monastery, immediately, from all the provinces of the district and also from long distant regions, people began to flock to his wise teaching, which he in the same way as a hen, who is accustomed to bring up her chickens under her wings, so that holy father Willibald, like a mother bore to the Lord His adopted children, protecting many belonging to the Church with the shield of His piety. And as a nurse is accustomed to nourish her infants, so he nourished his pupils with the milk of Divine piety and gentleness, till strengthened by him, taught from their infancy, they grew up to manhood well educated.

And now after the example of this master, adopting the holy gifts of his teaching they shine with many sparks.\*

\*NOTE.—It is not right to infer that this was written after the death of the Saint, because no mention is made of his death, nor of the burials of his brother and sister. Boll, 512.

## EPILOGUE.

Behold St. Willibald, who with the small means of his first followers had begun this holy work, at length with innumerable soldiers, fighting in many ways, gained a worthy people for the Lord. And widely through the vast province of Bavaria, by pushing the plough, sowing the seed, reaping the harvest, with many harvesters labouring with him, through the green fields of Bavaria, with churches and priests and relics of the saints, he offered worthy gifts to the Lord.

From this new antiphon sound and lessons result ; hence an illustrious crowd of faithful people proclaim loudly the holy miracles of Christ and speak the most celebrated praises of the Founder.

What shall I now say of St. Willibald, my master ? and your teacher ? Who is more illustrious in piety than he, more excellent in humility, purer in patience, more rigid in continence, greater in meekness ? Who

was ever before him in the consolation of sorrows, and who superior to him in generosity to the poor, or who quicker in clothing the naked?

All these things are said not boastingly, but as I saw and as I heard, Deo gratias, not done by man, but according to the Apostle's saying: "Who will glory let him glory in the Lord."

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NOTE.—St. Walburga's Life of her brother Winibald is unavailable; it is to be included in the last volume of the "Acta Sanctorum," but the plant of the Bollandist press was destroyed in the Great War by the Germans.

FROM THE OFFICE OF ST. WALBURGA.

EDITED BY FR. GRETSER, S.J.

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SEQUENCE.

Ave flos virginum, soror magnorum fratrum,  
Willibaldi et Winibaldi,  
Ave virginea sponsa decoris.  
Inter innumeros, quos misit Sanctos, te laetam  
genuit, laetamque misit  
Florem Angelicum, Angliae Mater,  
Te Mater Domini, Mater et Virgo choresi  
Virginum, Filioque suo sponsa dicavit.  
Ingressa thalamum Regis coelorum, audis angeli-  
cum carmen jucundum ;  
Intra virgo, tui gaudium Sponsi ;  
Laus Tibi Trinitas, laus et potestas,  
Te laudent virgines quinque prudentes ;  
Tu ora pro nobis, Virgo Walpurgis. Amen.

FROM THE LIFE OF ST. WILLIBALD.