

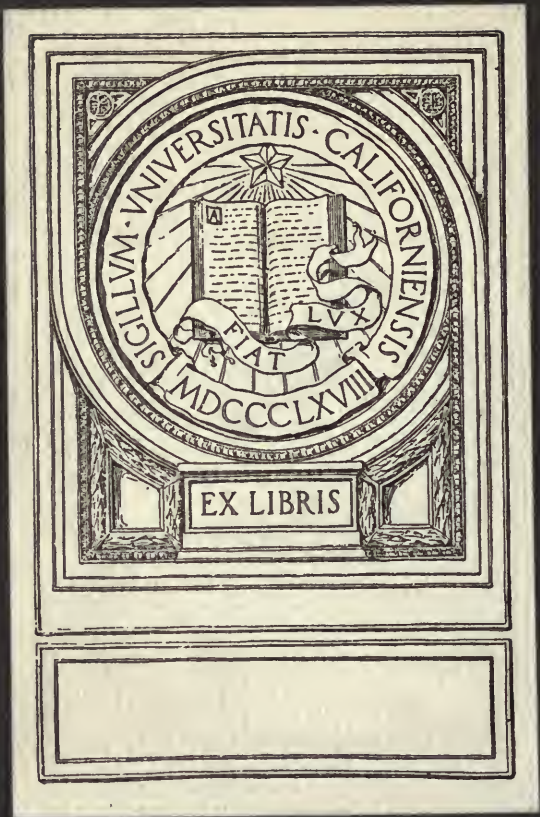
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ST. BRIDGET OF SWEDEN  
A CHAPTER OF MEDIÆVAL  
CHURCH HISTORY

BY

SVEN MAGNUS GRONBERGER

EDITED BY

JAMES J. WALSH, M.D., PH.D.

Reprinted from THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC QUARTERLY REVIEW, Vol. XLII,  
No. 165, pp. 97-148, Philadelphia, January, 1917

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## ST. BRIDGET OF SWEDEN—A CHAPTER OF MEDIÆVAL CHURCH HISTORY.

Sven Magnus Gronberger, the author of this, was a native of Sweden, who came to this country about thirty years ago, worked in a drug store in New York for a time, studied law in the offices of the late Judge Samuel Maddox, and gradually gave himself a higher education, until he secured a place on the library staff of the Smithsonian Institution. While there he wrote a series of monographs in anthropology and zoology, and was just about to receive his Ph. D. when he died of cancer, April 24, 1916. He felt himself that he owed his conversion partly to his studies, partly to the example of a Catholic employer who had been extremely kind to him when he first came to this country and worked in a drug store. Gronberger came to know him as a very faithful Catholic, whose life exemplified his faith. He was finally won over to the Church by the kindness of the good Dominican Sisters who when he was just past thirty nursed him through a severe illness at St. Catherine's Hospital, in Brooklyn. As I said in a sketch of him which appeared in the "Ave Maria" November 18 and 25, 1916, he knew enough to make him a Catholic before this, for he had studied the subject carefully; it is not the intellect that makes converts eventually, however, but the heart. "The charm of the simple, straightforward activity for the benefit of others of the good Dominican Sisters, and above all the spirit of abiding faith in all they did, touched Gronberger's heart until he finally felt compelled to become a Catholic."

The conversion of Gronberger is all the more interesting because he had an eminently scientific mind, and many people seem to think that science and faith are at least somewhat incompatible. Not long after his conversion Gronberger gave up the law and became assistant librarian at the Smithsonian Library in Washington. He knew practically all the modern languages, especially the Scandinavian, talked French like a native, because it was the family language at home, and knew Latin and Greek well. It is easy to understand how useful he was in the library, but he was not satisfied with work for others. He made a series of independent scientific researches. He wrote a series of papers on scientific subjects in Washington, one rather exhaustive monograph on the "Pale-arctic Birds of Greenland," another on "The Frogs of the District of Columbia," and he had written monographs on "The Origin of the Goths" and the use of museums for popular education. Instead of losing his faith in the midst of these varied scientific studies it became ever deeper and stronger, and as a form of thank offering for his conversion and the consolation that the Church had proved to him for more than a dozen years of busy scientific life, he wanted to write something particularly Catholic, so he devoted himself during leisure hours to a sketch of the life of one of the great old patron saints of his native country, Sweden, consulting all the available sources in this country as well as memorials from Sweden to make it as complete as possible.

St. Briggitt, or Brigid or Bridget, of Sweden is one of the great women educators as well as saints of the pre-Reformation period. The famous Monastery of Syon, where that beautiful cope was made which is one of the precious treasures of the South Kensington Museum, London, and whose library was recently brought into prominence by the republication of its catalogue by Miss Bateson, was a Brigittine foundation made from the famous mother monastery of Vadstena, in Sweden. The English and Swedish royal families intermarried then as they do now, and Philippa,

the English Queen of Sweden, wanted to benefit her native country by giving it the benefit of one of these foundations which she herself had found so interesting and valuable and which had proved such a refuge in the early days of her life in Sweden when she was homesick in a strange land. Very naturally a Swedish convert like Gronberger would turn to write the story of these glorious old Church times in Sweden; hence this life of St. Brigitt is a tribute of gratitude and an earnest of the good judgment of this very intelligent Swedish Catholic.

JAMES J. WALSH.

THE history of Scandinavia, when compared with that of the rest of Europe, commenced late. The earliest mention of that remote part of the world was made by Pytheas, a Greek navigator, born at Massilia, the present Marseille, in the fourth century before Christ. It should also be remembered that Tacitus, in his history entitled "Germania,"<sup>1</sup> referred to the inhabitants of Scandinavia as "Suiones," or "Swedes."<sup>2</sup> With the introduction of Christianity into Scandinavia in the ninth century by St. Ansgarius, otherwise known as St. Ansgar or Anskar, a French prelate from Corbie, near Amiens, in France, its history becomes better known, and toward the latter part of the eleventh century Adam of Bremen, in his remarkable work on the Archbishops of Hamburg and Bremen, devoted a great deal of attention to the condition of the northern kingdom. In the year 826 Harold the Sixth, King of Denmark, came to the city of Mayence, or Mainz, in Germany, accompanied by his wife and son, and asked for baptism and a priest to return with him to Denmark. It was then that St. Ansgar volunteered his services. After a long stay in Scandinavia the latter returned to Germany and was made Archbishop of Hamburg in 834 and of Bremen in 849. Four years later he went to Sweden and was received with open arms by the King and inhabitants, whereupon he returned to Germany, where he died, as Archbishop of Hamburg, in 865.

With the Christianization of Scandinavia, and especially Sweden, a new era commenced for that kingdom and heathen practices and worship were gradually relegated to the past—a process requiring perhaps several centuries. Toward the beginning of the fourteenth century, however, it may be considered that Christianity, the faith and teachings of the Catholic Church, had secured a firm foothold in that northern land. The religious and spiritual life of the period, which in the south of Europe had received the impulse of the noble and self-sacrificing faith of Christ from the beginning of the Christian era, or at least since the time of the Council of Nicea in 325 and the Christianization of the Roman Empire by Constantine the Great, had already commenced to show signs of moral weakness

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<sup>1</sup> "De Origine, Situ, Moribus ac Populis Germaniae."

<sup>2</sup> "Gotones" and "Gothini," Goths.



and decay, due chiefly to the maladministration of holy offices by a priesthood rendered corrupt by growing ecclesiastical wealth and luxury. One of the earliest voices to be raised against the moral degradation of the period was William Durandus, surnamed the Speculator, the famous prelate and jurist who suggested to Pope Clement V. that the Church needed rejuvenation and regeneration in all its members.<sup>3</sup> Another famous character who was to appear shortly after Durandus' time, and who is the subject of this sketch, is St. Bridget of Sweden, by many called the great St. Bridget, who, although always a loyal daughter of the Church, raised an earnest voice and uttered a loud note of warning against the disintegrating tendencies of the mediæval Church.

On the eastern shore of Lake Vetter in Sweden there is a small town named Vadstena, the picturesque outlines of which are beautifully reflected in the crystal clear waters of the lake. As the traveler approaches the town there loom up in the distance the towers of a splendidly preserved castle built by Gustavus Vasa, celebrated in Swedish history and folklore by the romantic adventures of the Princess Cecilia Vasa and her lover, Count John of Ostfriesland. The dungeon where the latter was confined for a number of years as a punishment for his gallantry is still pointed out to visitors, and a window is also shown from which, on a bright moonlight night, Gustavus' son, the demented Duke Magnus of Ostrogothia, enticed by the Lady of the Lake, is said to have leaped into the waters surrounding the castle. The greatest historical association connected with this little town, however, is the name of the great S. Bridget of Sweden. In this place may be seen to-day the original Brittine monastery with its picturesque walls and apple orchards, as well as the old monastery church adjoining it. When the visitor enters these ancient precincts permeated by the fragrance of mediæval mysticism and romance and stands upon the ground trod by a saintly woman whose name and achievements half a thousand years have been unable to efface, he is mentally and almost against his will carried back to a time when the name of Scandinavia's most famous daughter resounded throughout the Christian world. The period in which that woman lived was one of the most stirring in history, and remarkable from many other points of view than that here under consideration.

The ancestors of St. Bridget or, more properly, Birgitta or Brigitta, were the kings of the Folkunga dynasty of Sweden. One of these was Judge or "Lagman" Magnus Minneskjold, the owner of the beautiful castle of Ulfosa, on the southern shore of Lake Boren, in Ostrogothia. His son was the famous Birger of Bjelbo,

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<sup>3</sup> "Eam in capite, quam in membris."

or Birger Jarl, regent of Sweden during the minority of his son Waldemar (1250-1266) and founder of Stockholm. His brother Benedict of "Bengt," the heir of Ulfosa, had married a poor girl of noble family, and these were the grandparents of Birgitta. His wife was called "Skön Sigrid," or beautiful Sigrid, and her only daughter Ingeborg married Birger Peterson, a descendant of St. Eric and Judge or "Lagman" of Upland. It is said of Birger that he, being a very pious man, like his father and grandfather before him, intended to visit Rome, Compostella and Palestine in order to worship at the sacred shrines in these places. It appears, however, that he only got as far as Rome, where Pope Boniface VIII., for reasons unknown to history, dissuaded him from proceeding farther and enjoined him to return home. His wife Ingeborg had three sons, Peter, Benedict and Israel, and four daughters, Ingrid, Margaret and Catherine, the last being our Birgitta, or St. Bridget.

Although the exact year of her birth is not known with certainty, it is commonly believed that she was born in the year 1303 at the palace of Finstad (not Instad), in the district of Roslagen, Upland. She was spoken of in the bull of her canonization as "*Vidua Birgitta, quam vulgares Brigidam appellant,*" and her religious feast day was fixed on the eighth of October, or, as the "*Acta Sanctorum*" has it, "*Octava Octobris.*" Physically she seems to have been of somewhat small stature, and as a child remained mute until she was nearly four years of age, when, according to tradition, she suddenly commenced to speak with the perfection of an adult. It should be remembered that the history of St. Bridget of Sweden is surrounded with a good deal of obscurity, owing to the remote period and the comparatively little known country in which she lived, although in contrast with the somewhat legendary St. Bridget of Ireland she is an entirely historical personage. Probably in the year 1314, and before Birgitta was 12 years of age, her mother died and she was placed in the care of a maternal aunt named Ingrid, the wife of Lagman Knut Jonsson of Aspenäs, in Ostrogothia. This Ingrid is said to have been a woman of great austerity and opposed to all spiritual and sentimental exaggerations. Whether or not Bridget was taught to read and write under her supervision is not well known, but that she was made proficient in manual occupations, such as sewing, embroidery, etc., is quite certain. She early developed a strong religious tendency and is said to have had her first vision when about eight years of age. Christ's passion was her favorite subject, and thereafter she is said to have had almost constant visions or revelations. One night, as she was kneeling before a crucifix and trembling with the cold of her apartment, she was surprised by her Aunt Ingrid, who is said to have scolded her se-

verely for her folly in getting out of bed in the middle of the night for such a purpose and proceeded to apply the rod to the child. At the first touch, however, the rod broke and crumbled to pieces, after which event Ingrid changed her tactics in the treatment of her youthful charge. When she had reached her thirteenth year her father, according to the severe customs of the times, announced to her not only that he wished her to marry, but that he had selected a suitable young man as her husband. This youth was Ulf Gudmarson, the son of Gudmar Magnusson, a Lagman of Westrogothia and a close personal and political friend of her father. Ulf was then only a stripling of 19 years of age, but the customs of the period sanctioned early marriages. The wedding, which probably took place in 1316, was at first very much against Bridget's personal inclination and two years are supposed to have elapsed before the couple entered into the marriage relation. Bridget would very much have preferred to remain single and lead a strictly religious life, but her filial duty and devotion seem to have overcome any conscientious scruples she may have had. As time wore on, Bridget bore her husband no less than eight children, the oldest of whom was her son Karl, and then Birger, Martha, Gudmar, Catherine, afterward beatified as St. Catherine, the national saint of Sweden; Ingeborg, Benedict and the daughter Cecilia. Nils Hermansson, a priest, who afterward died as Bishop of Linköping, the episcopal seat of the diocese embracing Ostrogothia, was selected as tutor for her children.

The scene of the quiet and serene home life which now followed was the castle of Ulfosa, perhaps so named after Bridget's husband, Ulf. At this period Bridget had become widely known for her deep piety and charity, and at Ulfosa she assembled around her daily the women and children of her estate, whom she taught needlework, partly for the ornamentation of churches and partly to assist the poor, while she herself read to them passages from the Bible or from some of the religious books of which the period was so productive. Here also Bridget set apart a large house, in which the sick and the poor were given a hospitable asylum; she cared for them personally and is said to have washed their feet in imitation of the Saviour; nor did she shrink from attending those afflicted with contagious and loathsome diseases. Like all the rest of her family, she was an obedient child of the Catholic Church, and had selected as her spiritual adviser and father confessor one Mathias, Canon of the Cathedral of Linköping. This priest had graduated as master of theology and philosophy at the University of Paris, and Bridget caused him to translate the Bible into Swedish,



a fragment of which, a paraphrase from the Pentateuch, is still in existence.

Pilgrimages or visits to holy places, no matter how distant, formed one of the principal expressions of the piety of this period—a fact calculated to arouse our admiration in view of the primitive traveling facilities of that age. During the Middle Ages these consisted chiefly of foot-travel, horseback riding, the use of asses and donkeys and horse or oxcarts. The first pilgrimage which Bridget and her husband undertook was made to the tomb of St. Olaf, at Drontheim, or Trondhjem, in Norway, a saint of great renown in Scandinavia during the Middle Ages. This pilgrimage probably took place between 1335 and 1337 A. D. The second and by far the more important pilgrimage was made in 1341, according to one of Ulf's original manuscripts, to Santiago de Compostella, in Northwestern Spain, the journey being commenced on May 22 of that year. On the way to Compostella the pilgrims visited Cologne, the ancient Colonia Agrippinensis, where they worshipped at the tombs of the Magi; Aix-la-Chappelle, where the cathedral and the supposed burial place of Charlemagne became the objects of their attention, and Tarascon, where reposed the bones of St. Martha. At the latter place the pilgrims ascended Mont Saint-Baume in order to worship in the grotto where Mary Magdalen, according to tradition, had spent many years in solitude and meditation solaced by the angels. Finally Compostella was reached, and here the tomb of St. James was at once visited. This St. James, the elder one of that name, had been beheaded at the command of the Jewish King Herodes I. Agrippa and, according to an old Spanish tradition, had for some years previously labored as a Christian apostle in Spain. After his execution in Palestine his remains are said to have been brought to Northwestern Spain and interred there, and later, in the ninth century, they were disinterred and, at royal command, brought to Compostella and there entombed in a magnificent church. This tradition has been discredited by Protestant historians, but the fact remains that from the earliest Christian times the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostella has been looked upon as the final resting place of the relics of St. James, the national saint of Spain, and as such it has been and still remains the object of innumerable pilgrimages. From Compostella the pilgrims returned to Scandinavia, and it is said that, according to the custom of the period, each member of the pilgrimage had received a mussel shell, to be worn on the left side of the mantle, in token of the accomplished pilgrimage. At Arras, in Northern France, Bridget's husband, Ulf, fell dangerously ill and for a time his life was despaired of, but he eventually recovered, at least sufficiently to resume the homeward journey.

It has been maintained by some that upon their return to Sweden Ulf Gudmarson now became a confirmed invalid and his spouse resolved to resign the world and enter a convent. Such an intention on their part, however, is subject to considerable doubt, or at least it was not immediately realized. On March 19, 1343, Ulf was still "Lagman" in Nericia, and on that day visited the Cistercian Convent of Rieseberga, in which his daughter Ingeborg was a nun. On November 18 of the same year Ulf was present at the negotiations carried on between the Swedish King Magnus II., "Smek," and the Danish King Waldemar Atterdag. It seems, therefore, hardly probable that he could have had time to enter the Cistercian Monastery of Alvastra in the quality of a monk, and that he and Bridget had been enabled to carry out their resolution to abandon the world for the rest of their lives and devote themselves exclusively to the Church, even if such had been their intention while Ulf was still alive. The fact remains that Ulf died at Alvastra without, however, having assumed monastic orders, and was buried within the precincts of the monastery. Upon his death it seems that his widow, Bridget, immediately endeavored to sacrifice his memory as unworthy of one who had resolved henceforth to lead a strictly religious and spiritual life, unfettered by worldly attractions. Even the token of a ring which Ulf had placed upon her finger could not dissuade her from this purpose.

At the time of her husband's death Bridget's son Gudmar had already died, and her eldest daughter, Margaretha or Martha, who was born about 1320, had married, much against her mother's will, a nobleman by name of Sigvid Ribbing, a man of the world, whose reputation was none of the best. Benedict or Bengt had also died at an early age, but the sons Karl and Birger still survived. Birger was her favorite son, while Karl caused her much worry on account of his "worldliness" and gallant habits. The three youngest children were Catherine, who was born about 1332, and married to the Knight Eggard Lyderson van Kyren; Ingeborg, who became a nun in the Convent of Riseberga, in Nericia, about 1341, and Cecilia, who did not join the Church and was probably unmarried at the time of her father's death.

The reigning King of Sweden and Norway at this time was Magnus Eriksson, surnamed "Smek," on account of his effeminate manners.<sup>4</sup> Magnus had married Blanche, daughter of the Comte de Namur. It has been stated that Bridget was appointed Grand Mistress of the Palace or Mistress of the Robes to Queen Blanche, as in the Latin text of the "*Revelationes extravagantes*," chapter 59, a mention is made of the time when Bridget was "*Magistra*

<sup>4</sup> "Smek" or "smeka" in Swedish means to flatter, caress, cajole.



*Reginae Blancae quoniam Reginae Suetiae.*" This chapter is not found in the Swedish text, nor is the circumstance mentioned in any of the contemporaneous biographies, although the fact remains that she maintained intimate relations with the court. As a woman of high birth and a relative of the royal family, she naturally had access to the highest society circles and even to the court, although her connection with the latter seems chiefly to have been in the nature of a spiritual guide and teacher of morals. She even went so far as to lay down minute rules of conduct for the King, and in extenuation of the shortcomings of the latter it must be said that had he been able to guide himself entirely in accordance with Bridget's precepts, he would have deserved to share her own reputation as a saint.

Queen Blanche is said to have taken a great fancy to Bridget from the commencement of their acquaintance. The Queen soon began to look upon the older woman as a second mother, as she was then only 16 or 17 years of age, and had become a mother before she was 15. The fame of Bridget's piety had now spread far and wide, and many sought the assistance of one who was supposed to maintain such close relationship with God and His saints. But there were also many who were disagreeably impressed by her strict requirements of piety and purity, and especially was this the case with the higher aristocracy of the capital, Stockholm. It was even whispered that she was a witch, and serious harm might have befallen her but for the fear of her powerful family and gallant sons. An example of this may be cited, the truth of which has been vouched for: Squite Knut (Canute) Folkesson, a man of high birth and also a relative of Bridget, observed with secret displeasure that the King, guided by her counsel, was leading a better and more moral life, which naturally tended to lessen his own influence on the monarch. Knut did not hesitate to give free vent to his resentment. One day, as Bridget was walking along one of the narrow streets of Stockholm and passed by a house where Folkesson, knowing of her approach, had stationed himself, he opened one of the windows and emptied the contents of a vessel of dirty water on the head of the passing widow. This is only a minor instance of the humiliations which Bridget had to endure, but she bore all her trials with much patience and humility, and is said to have prayed for her enemies, after the teaching of Christ. Once Bridget was told that a certain priest had received a commission as taxgatherer and that he was very severe in his exactions from the poor people. She spoke to the King about the matter, and as a result the priest lost his job—a fact which he bitterly resented and took Bridget severely to task for her interference. After several

remonstrations and the priest still remaining obdurate, Bridget finally told him that unless he mended his ways and improved his morals, God would mete out a severe judgment to him. A short time afterward this priest perished in a miserable manner—in the founding of a church bell the mould burst and he was caught in the molten metal and burnt to death. Innumerable instances of a similar nature were related of Bridget and greatly added to her reputation as a prophetess and a foreteller of future events.

While still at the court of Stockholm Bridget had several revelations, of which the following is typical: "I saw the heavens very dim and darkened, although the sun and moon were shining brightly. Good and evil angels seemed to be fighting with the sun and moon. The bad angels did not get the upper hand until a terrible dragon appeared, before which the sun first paled and then became black and the moon fled behind the earth. And then, when I looked at the earth, I saw that it was full of reptiles and serpents which devoured everything on its surface and killed the inhabitants with their tails until the sun fell from the heavens and the place of the moon was found no more." This vision, which remained a mystery to Bridget for eleven years, and probably had reference to the future calamities of the Church, is a typical example of mediæval religious mysticism.

It is said that after leaving the court Bridget and Ulf returned to Ulfosa, although their movements at this period are somewhat obscure. Bridget, who had intended to fit up the old castle somewhat more luxuriously, is said to have experienced one day a violent blow on her head and heard a voice saying, "When I hung upon the cross, I had no place whereon to rest My head, but thou seekest comfort and rest for thine." From that time on she is said to have slept upon some straw covered with bearskin or on the bare floor, and to have worn a shirt of horsehair next to her body, which is known to be a very severe physical discomfort. At the time of the birth of her last child, which caused her much suffering, she had a vision of the Holy Virgin, who is supposed to have safely delivered her.

As already indicated, Ulf Gudmarson died at the Monastery of Alvastra in the year 1344. In this connection it should be mentioned that the Monastery and Church of Alvastra are situated about twelve miles from Vadstena, in a beautiful location at the foot of Mount Omberg, in Ostrogothia, near Lake Vetter, and the picturesque ruins of the monastery are still to be seen. Shortly after the death of her husband Bridget secured permission to take up her residence in a house situated on the northern side of the monastery church at Alvastra, and not, as has been stated, in a cell in the mon-

astery proper. This would have been quite impossible owing to the severe rules of the Cistercian Order, which required the strict separation of monks and nuns. According to a tradition, Bridget is said to have lived in this secluded retreat for a period of about four years, which is not strictly in accordance with the truth, as she seems to have been much inclined to travel, her lodging, of course, being reserved for her during these periodical absences.

Among other things, it appears that the prior or abbot of Alvastra had accorded Christian burial to an excommunicated person, which was considered a serious offense against ecclesiastical discipline. Bridget, who had been present at the Requiem Mass, was told in one of her visions that the prior had been tempted by avarice to this action and that God would soon cause the prior's death. When she had told the prior of these revelations he became sincerely penitent and died three days later, as it is canonically termed, "a good death." At Alvastra Bridget also met the monk Peter Olafsson, well known for learning and piety, who became her future confessor and accompanied her on her foreign pilgrimages.

In one of her visions at Alvastra Bridget claimed to have beheld her husband in Purgatory, and he told her that God had especially reproved him for his fondness of banquets, the fact that in his young days he had loved wine "not wisely, but too well," for his love of the chase, horses and hounds, rich clothing and furniture, etc.

Bridget's life at Alvastra was of a very austere nature. At the time of her husband's death she had donned a rope of horsehair around her body, tied into many knots, and from her knees to her ankles she wore the same kind of cords tightly bound. These were never removed, not even in illness. Over a shirt, also made of horsehair, she wore a dress of coarse homespun material, and the only linen she used was a veil; linen had at that period only recently been introduced in Sweden and must have been considered a luxury. She fasted on four days of the week and her nights were mostly spent in prayers. On Fridays she subsisted only on bread and water, and she was in the habit of chewing gentian root, in imitation of the gall and vinegar given to Christ on the cross. Every night she recited the Rosary, sometimes prostrate on the floor in the form of a cross, and at other times she used to kneel and kiss the ground at each Ave Maria.

While at Alvastra she is also said to have predicted the death of a lay Brother named Gerrechinus, one of the inmates of the monastery, who had appeared scandalized by the thought of a woman becoming a postulant there. He is reported to have said, "What would our holy father, Bernard (of Clairvaux), have said to this?"



He would not even look at his own sister unveiled." The Brother, however, did not give expression to his thoughts, but kept his own counsel. Finally it was announced to him in a vision that Bridget knew the secret of his thoughts, and that she would shortly predict his own death. Seeking an interview with Bridget, the latter at first refused to see him, but at length consented and told the Brother that he would die within one year, which he did while Bridget was still connected with the monastery.

After one year's seclusion in her cell it appears that she received a direct divine command to proceed to Stockholm, where she met her sons Birger and Karl at the court of King Magnus. As she had been assured in advance that God would inspire her speech, she intrepidly demanded an audience of the King. In a speech of burning eloquence she reprimanded him for his immorality and tyranny and threatened him with divine vengeance in case he did not abandon his evil course. At the request of Queen Blanche she remained at the court for some time, although subject to much persecution by certain people, who were either jealous of her prominence at court or entertained doubts as to her prophetic powers. Even among the clergy she had her enemies, and one of these was Hemming, Bishop of Abo, in Finland, who once invited her to dine with him and induced her to partake of some of the choice dishes that were served. At heart he was scandalized at the thought of a professed ascete indulging her appetite to such an extent, and shortly afterward his thoughts were revealed to Bridget through divine channels. She then told him of this revelation, reproved him on behalf of the Lord and their acquaintance later ripened into friendship.

Bridget's austere life and the many privations and tortures to which she voluntarily submitted herself at length undermined her health and she fell seriously ill. This was no cause for wonder, as we are also told that this frail little woman was in the habit of depriving herself of water to quench her thirst until she could hardly speak, and that on Fridays she used to drop on her bare arms the burning wax from the candles lighted before the altar in the chapel of the monastery. Although cared for by as competent physicians as the period afforded, her malady and subsequent convalescence were slow and tedious.

Shortly after Bridget's recovery from this illness she claimed to have received a divine command or inspiration to found a new religious order, and that the Lord had dictated its rules to her word for word. When the idea of establishing a new order first occurred to Bridget cannot now be definitely stated, but that it happened while her husband was still alive is shown by the fact that the lat-

ter before he died donated a house and lot to the intended convent. In addition to this, not less than thirteen distinct pieces of property were presented to Bridget for this purpose by King Magnus and Queen Blanche, but only the property at Vadstena eventually came into the possession of the convent. The new order, which was Bridget's chief religious accomplishment, has been variously referred to as the Order of the Most Holy Saviour (*Ordo Sanctissimi Salvatoris*), St. Salvator, the Order of St. Bridget, or the Brigantine Order, and was created in honor of the Virgin. It was to consist of sixty Sisters and twenty-five monks, the monks and nuns, however, to be kept in separate houses communicating with the church and the lower choir, and the nuns' choir was to be placed above in such a position as to enable them to listen to the offices of the monks. The number of priests was to be thirteen, in honor of the apostles, including St. Paul; four deacons, in honor of the four great Latin fathers of the Church, Saints Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory and Jerome, and eight lay Brothers, making twenty-five monks, together with sixty Sisters, or in all, eighty-five members, representing the thirteen apostles and the seventy-two disciples. Of these, the priests were to be occupied solely in the divine service, prayer and study; in addition to which they were to preach to the people every Sunday in the secular language. Severe, chaste and abstemious living and much fasting were strictly prescribed. On their vestments the members of the order wore the insignia or symbol of Christ's passion, consisting in the case of the Sisters of a circle of white linen worn over the veil with five small pieces of red cloth, in remembrance of the five wounds of Christ and His crown of thorns, and they also had to wear a gold ring as mark of their espousal of the Saviour.

The priests wore, sewn on the left side of their mantles, a cross made of red cloth with a piece of white cloth in the middle, in the form of a Host. The deacons had white rings on their mantles, on which were sewn four pieces of red cloth, resembling tongues and emblematic of the Holy Ghost. Finally, the mantles of the lay Brothers were marked with a white cross, on which were likewise five red patches.

The abbess was to be elected as general superior by the advice and consent of the Bishop of the diocese, and she was to choose a priest as confessor of the convent, with the consent of the full chapter, and he in his turn was to receive his credentials from the Bishop. To the former the monks should owe the same allegiance as the nuns to the abbess. The Bishop of the diocese was to be the general visitor or superintendent of both monks and nuns and their general arbiter; the reigning sovereign was to be their patron



and protector, but the court of last appeal was, of course, to be the Pope. In all matters not expressly dictated by the constitution or rule of the order, which consisted of twenty-four chapters, the rules of either St. Benedict or St. Bernard were to apply.

Bridget claimed that all of these rules and suggestions which applied to her order had been dictated to her personally by the Lord in her revelations, she writing them down in Swedish and Master Mathias translating them into Latin, a function which was later transferred to Brother Peter Olafsson. The latter, it appears, was troubled with conscientious scruples and doubts as to the genuineness of the revelations. Once when he was kneeling down before the Sacrament, beseeching God to enlighten him and had almost decided that he was too humble and unfit a creature for so holy a duty, he was struck a blow by an unseen hand which stretched him prostrate on the floor of the church and made him unconscious for some time. Upon recovering, however, he realized that God had chastised him in so effective a manner for his doubts, and he decided to comply with the divine command. What an incentive to righteousness if the Lord would walk about boxing people's ears as a fatherly correction in our own day, as He seems to have done in times of old! The following day Peter went to see Bridget about the matter, and she at once forestalled him by stating that God had already acquainted her with what had happened to his servant Peter. This episode is significant as indicating to what extent it was at that time popularly supposed that God interfered in the minute affairs and daily lives of men. Shortly afterward Peter was elected prior of Alvastra Monastery, during the occupancy of which office he continued to translate Bridget's revelations into Latin. In so doing he was commanded not to use his own discretion in the matter, but to follow literally the revelations as put down by the saint. The Lord, however, enjoined him afterward to write an explanation of the degrees of humility taught him by the rule of St. Benedict and a few other secular matters, which are contained in the "*Additiones*" to the rules of the Brigitine order.

It was about this time that the town of Vadstena was selected by divine command as the site for the first convent of the new order. Bridget now decided to visit Vadstena and she traveled to that town on horseback, accompanied by a few friends, as was the custom of the time. While absorbed in prayer on this trip she is said to have had one of her most wonderful visions, the original description of which is to be found in the fifth book of her "*Revelationes*," commonly called the "*Liber Questionum*." Upon her arrival at Vadstena she carefully inspected the apartments of what

some have called her ancestral castle, now to be transformed into a convent. While doing this, God is supposed to have given her minute and detailed directions as to the rebuilding and arrangements necessary for such a purpose.

We have now arrived at a most important epoch of Bridget's life and one which would prove the crowning point of her career. For a long time it had been her pious intention to make a pilgrimage to Rome. The objects which prompted her to undertake this long and for that period troublesome and expensive journey were several, the chief ones being to obtain the Papal sanction for her order and to secure a larger sphere of action for her mission which was the moral uplifting of the period.

It will be remembered that at this time the Roman Pontiffs, owing to the tempestuous state of Italian politics and especially the factional strife of the Roman nobility, had taken up their abode at Avignon. This city remained the seat of the Papal Court from 1309, when Clement V. established his residence there, until 1376, or three years after the death of St. Bridget, when Gregory XI. left it and returned to Rome. Immediately following the last mentioned date a period intervened which is called the great schism of the West, during which two anti-Popes, Clement VII. and Benedict XIII., took up their residence at Avignon, while at Rome, on the death of Gregory XI., in 1378, Bartolomeo Prignano was elected Pontiff by a majority of the Conclave under the name of Urban VI. This condition continued until the Council of Pisa in 1409, at which both Popes, the Roman Pope Gregory XII. and the Avignon Pope, Benedict XIII. (Pedro Luna) were deposed and Alexander V. was elected in their stead. The latter, however, died a few months later and was succeeded by John XXIII., who convoked the famous Council of Constance in 1414, at which John Huss was burned as a heretic, and during which not only the action of the Council of Pisa was confirmed, but John XXIII. himself deposed and Otto Colonna elected as his successor, under the title of Martin V. One of the claimants, however, Benedict XIII., maintained obstinately his right to the Papal chair and title until his death in 1424, although the schism may be considered to have come to an end in 1417 with the election of Martin V.

This digression from our subject has been necessary in order to comprehend the condition of the times and the difficulties which Bridget had to face. Peter Olafsson had asked and obtained from his superiors leave for himself and another monk also named Peter to accompany Bridget to Rome, both of whom from this time on remained her companions until the end. It was probably toward the close of A. D. 1346 that Bridget finally left Alvastra, never more

to return, taking also with her a third priest named Magnus Petersson and a retinue of a few pious Swedish women; some maintain, however, that she went to Rome accompanied by a much larger escort. In view of the primitive traveling facilities of the period, the extent of the journey and the variety of climates the pilgrims had to encounter, one can hardly refrain from admiring the pluck and religious zeal which must have animated this little party of northern pilgrims. In the Latin text of Bridget's revelations it is stated that the travelers passed through the town of Stralsund. As there existed considerable commerce between this city and Sweden, it is very likely that they arrived on some merchantman plying between the two places. Quite an extended stay was made at Milan, where Bridget performed her devotions at the shrine of St. Ambrose. One of her friends and companions, Ingeborg Lorensdotter (*Laurentii filia*, or daughter of St. Lawrence) married to one Nils Dannäs, died while the pilgrims were in Milan. Later manuscripts also mention a visit to Genoa, where Bridget is supposed to have secured passage for herself and company by sea to Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber, from which place they proceeded by foot to the Eternal City.

In the spring of 1347 the travelers are said to have reached Rome. This cautious statement is advisedly made, as historians differ as to whether she started on her journey in 1346, some maintaining and, as it appears, on good grounds, that it was in 1349, while still others fix the year 1350; but at any rate, it would appear that they had reached Rome before the close of the year 1349. The party found Rome in a state of deplorable desolation and bewilderment. According to Muratori, there was no respect for the law, no safety for person or property, no reverence for womanhood and no pity for the poor. All the churches were neglected, and in St. Peter's and St. John Lateran sheep, goats and cattle were grazing up to the very altar steps. Another contemporaneous historian sums up the condition of Rome at this time as follows: "The city of Rome was in the direst distress. There was no responsible government. Every day and everywhere there were fights and robberies. Men violated nuns, even children, and wives were torn away from their husbands. Outside of the gates of Rome laborers were robbed on their way to work. Pilgrims were plundered and murdered. Priests turned miscreants. There was no crime, no injustice which was not practiced without restraint. There was no security for life and limb. The power of the sword was supreme, against which self-defense, organized between friends and relatives, was the only alternative. Multitudes of armed people could be seen daily." This is a



graphic description of the condition of Rome when Bridget arrived in that city.

On August 18, 1349, Pope Clement VI. had invited all faithful Christians to Rome in order to celebrate the Papal jubilee fixed for the year 1350, although this event had originally been set for the beginning of each century only, the last jubilee of this character having been celebrated in 1300. It was partly in obedience to this summons that Bridget had decided to visit Rome, and her other motives are already known.

Upon their arrival the Swedish pilgrims took up their abode in a house near the Church of San Lorenzo in Damaso. The daily routine of Bridget's life remained practically the same as it had been in her cell at Alvastra, although she never lost sight of one of the main objects of her pilgrimage, viz., to bring about the return of the Pope from Avignon to Rome. Although, owing to her great modesty this task was somewhat distasteful to her, she claimed to have received a divine command to communicate God's desire to the Pope. This she did in a personal letter addressed to Clement VI., and the letter was delivered to the Pope by Alphonso de Vadaterra, Bishop of Jaen, one of Bridget's personal friends. It seems that the Pope, who was well acquainted with the virtues and reputation of the Swedish Princess,<sup>5</sup> was doing all in his power to bring about such an improvement in the state of affairs at Rome as to make it possible for himself to return to that city. The factional warfare between the Colonna and Orsini and other great Roman families and their partisans was but slightly checked by the patriotic efforts of the renowned Cola di Rienzi, "the last of the Roman tribunes" whose history and deeds have become better known through the famous novel of Bulwer Lytton. Rienzi, whose real baptismal name was Cola Gabrini di Rienzi, belonged to the plebeian strata of Roman society, his father having been an innkeeper. Having been able to devote some time to studies and the acquirement of knowledge, he was appointed by the Pope Apostolic Notary on the occasion of an embassy sent by some of the most prominent citizens of Rome to entreat the Pontiff to return to the Eternal City. Rienzi addressed the Pope with great eloquence, drawing with all the force of his knowledge and conviction a true and terrible picture of the cruelty and injustice of the Roman barons and of the great confusion, vice and disorder prevalent among all classes of society. This event took place in the beginning of 1343. At this time Rienzi's ambition, inflamed by a

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<sup>5</sup> Bridget was usually referred to under this title during her sojourn abroad, and by some of her biographers. The title was not quite correct, however, as she was not a member of the reigning house, but only of one of its branches.

private grievance, said to have been the murder of his brother by a faction of the nobles, so vividly described by Lytton in the first chapter of his novel, had led him to assume the rôle of a political reformer and social liberator. At about Whitsuntide, 1347, Rienzi was all-powerful in Rome, where he intended to establish a republican constitution after the pattern of the early Roman Republic. As by this time the majority of the Roman nobility had returned to their country seats for the summer, Rienzi deemed the time opportune to strike a decisive blow for the liberty of the Roman people. He issued a proclamation summoning the people to the Capitol, where he read to them the articles of a new constitution drawn up by him, having for object the restoration of peace and order, which was received with unanimous applause and enthusiasm. The people hailed him as their tribune, a title and office which he consented to share with Raymond of Orvieto, the Papal vicar. The new constitution having received the Papal sanction, the nobles did not as yet dare to interfere. The situation in Rome was changed with the suddenness of magic, the laws were again enforced, public safety respected, the churches restored and public depots established for the free distribution of grain among the poor. The story of this meteoric rise of Rienzi in popular favor and his equally sudden fall, occasioned by his offending the Pope through his attempt to elect a Holy Roman Emperor by direct popular suffrage, has furnished a fruitful theme for works of truth and fiction. He had almost succeeded in introducing order and safety into the city when his quickly acquired prominence brought about an attack of megalomania, which resulted in his fall, on December 15, 1347. Former conditions at once returned, and in an aggravated form, as the patricians now felt called upon to revenge themselves on the mob for its presumptions. To add to the general perplexity there occurred in Italy in 1348 a series of violent earthquakes, the effect of which was powerful at Rome; the Church of the Twelve Apostles as well as a gable of the Church of St. John Lateran were demolished, not to mention many other disasters of a similar kind.

Before leaving the subject of Rienzi, a few particulars concerning the ascendancy and fall of this remarkable man may be found interesting. About the middle of the fourteenth century the eyes of the world had become opened to the glories of the creations and culture of the ancients and their deep significance in relation to the progress of human civilization. A reunion of mediæval and antique culture and civilization seemed to take place, and with the conditions a new result was being effected. The spirit of the Middle Ages had already been in a state of slow development for



centuries, and it was this new culture, created by itself and largely nourished by its own resources, that at this time discovered the marvels of antiquity and found in them a new and worthy ideal. This movement has been called the Italian renaissance, as it commenced in Italy at this period and was followed later by the rest of Europe. Rienzi, a man of great although highstrung genius, greatly gifted by nature, an Italian by birth and instilled with the loftiest patriotism, devoted an enthusiastic attention and earnest study to the numberless relics of ancient culture then, perhaps more than now, to be found in Rome. Being also endowed with a magnificent eloquence, this fact together with the personal magnetism he exercised on all those who knew him contributed to make him an ideal hero of the masses, albeit he descended to the tactics of a demagogue when confronted with disaster. He assumed the title and power of a tribune and bombastically styled himself "*Nicholaus, severus et clemens, liberatais, pacis justitiaeque tribunus, et sacre Romane Reipublice liberator,*" and there is little doubt that Rienzi might have accomplished his purpose of delivering Rome from the tyranny of the nobles had not his sudden elevation turned his head. He was a personal friend of the great Petrarch, who on several occasions encouraged him and urged him on in his difficult and dangerous task.

But to return to St. Bridget of Sweden. She was now at liberty to pursue her favorite occupation, that of worshipping at the various churches and holy places that abounded in Rome, one of her most favorite shrines being the magnificent Church of St. Paul on the road to Ostia, which was afterwards burnt down as late as 1823. It appears that in this church there was a crucifix before which she often prayed. Once the figure of the Saviour on the cross is said to have become animate and to have spoken to her, promising a great reward to all who would recite fifteen prayers in honor of His passion, as it had been revealed to her at Alvastra. The Lord also told her from the crucifix to add one "Pater noster" and one "Ave Maria" to each of the fifteen prayers, and that by doing so for a whole year she would honor each of His sacred wounds, the number of which, according to this revelation, is 5,475. Up to within comparatively recent times the people of Rome venerated this crucifix as the one which "spoke to St. Bridget."

At this time in her career the saint, at the suggestion of her confessor, is said to have commenced the study of Latin, the grammar of which she appears to have found rather dry and difficult. She was in the habit of complaining that it kept her away from her religious duties, but she soon obtained sufficient knowledge of the language to express herself freely in it.

The following account of Bridget's daily life in Rome at this time is said to be authentic and therefore of great interest. She devoted herself almost entirely to pious exercises, confining herself to her private chapel or wandering about, visiting the many churches and shrines of the city, and also gave part of her time to works of charity. We know how her own time and that of her retinue was arranged during the stay in Rome (see "*Revelationes*," IV., p. 117). Four hours were allotted to sleep before midnight and as many hours after midnight (this would seem to be an ample allowance according to modern ideas). Whoever cut short the hours allowed for a night's sleep was entitled to a special increase in salary or other privileges. It is quite certain that Bridget habitually curtailed her own sleeping hours, and the day's work seems to have commenced at 4 o'clock in the morning. From 4 until 8 o'clock A. M. Bridget and her people were engaged in reading the canonical hours, i. e., the prayers fixed for the morning exercises, and devoted themselves to pious deeds, habits and useful "manners," so that no hour would be wasted in a useless or unprofitable way. The interval between 8 and 10 A. M. was occupied in partaking of the morning meal (this would also seem quite a liberal time allowance even judged by modern standards). A reduction of this time, however, would be graceful and acceptable to God. From 10 A. M. to 4 P. M. the time was devoted to legitimate, menial or necessary work, or such matters as were necessary and required for their daily needs. From 4 to 6 P. M. there were vespers, night service and other religious observances. The two hours from 6 to 8 P. M. were allotted to the evening repast as well as refreshment, recreation and the "permissible solace and relaxation of the body." At 8 o'clock everything pertaining to the daily duties was dismissed, night commencing at that hour. In the morning from 4 to 8 o'clock strict silence was observed; if words had to be spoken, they were to be short and succinct, and brief answers were to be made to necessary questions. As Bridget had priests and monks in her company, it was not necessary for her to attend public worship in the churches, but her devotions and those of her suite could be performed in their apartments.

At this period, or about A. D. 1348, the whole of Europe was afflicted with a terrible calamity, a plague which is known in history as the "Black Death." It was probably identical with the bubonic or pneumonic plague at present raging in the East, but at that period much more fatal in its ravages than at the present time, when medical science and sanitation have accomplished so much towards lessening its horrors. Indeed, we are told that almost all those seized with the malady were doomed to certain death within

two or three days from the first attack. Like the present plague in the East, that of 1348 is said to have originated in China or Tartary, whence it spread westward along the various caravan routes, reaching Constantinople by way of the northern coast of the Black Sea, and thence to the seaports of Italy and finally Rome. From Germany and France it spread to England, and from the latter country across the North Sea to Scandinavia, where its ravages were such as to depopulate entire parishes. Fully one hundred years later the ruins of deserted churches and chapels were accidentally discovered in the depths of the forests, indicating the former existence of populous and flourishing districts. Three years after the appearance of the plague it reached Northern Russia, where it gradually diminished in virulence and finally disappeared. It is estimated that about thirteen million people had perished in China from the scourge and twenty-four millions in the rest of the Orient, while in Europe it is said to have destroyed, according to a moderate estimate, over twenty-five million human lives. Even the sea was not exempted from this awful visitation, and history records instances of ships having been found adrift with their crews killed by the pestilence, piled up in putrefying heaps on the decks and carrying the curse of infection to the places where they landed. It was natural that such a universal calamity should have caused an almost entire paralysis of human energy and morality, as it tended to dissolve all human social and family relations. An overwhelming consciousness of sin appears to have overcome many in that superstitious age, and the religious confraternity of the "Flagellantes" is said if not to have originated, at least to have become most conspicuous at this period. They undertook to expiate the sins of the people and to avert the divine wrath by practicing bodily torture and the chanting of prayers and litanies. Bulwer Lytton quotes one of these in his "Rienzi":

"By the Mother and the Son,  
Death endured and glory won,  
Save us, sinners though we be,  
Miserere Domine!"

Processions of these people are said to have marched from city to city robed in sombre vestments marked with red crosses on the breast, back and cap, the latter covering their entire faces with the exception of the eyes. They habitually walked with their faces turned downwards, carrying triple scourges provided with iron points with which, at stated intervals they lacerated their bodies.\*

It is also a historical fact that at this period the unfortunate

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\* See Sir Conan Doyle, "The White Company."



Jews were subjected to a widespread persecution based on the prevailing belief, fanned by religious and racial prejudice, that they had caused the plague by poisoning the public wells. To add to the terror of the times, the people in some place rose *en masse* to exterminate the entire Hebrew race, and in the German city of Mainz alone no less than 12,000 individuals of this suffering race were put to a horrible death by fire, sword and drowning. Indeed, many of them seem to have preferred self-destruction to the tortures inflicted upon them by the fanatical and ignorant masses.

Bridget is said to have referred to this pestilence in her writings by the expression "the plague which overwhelmed the kingdom," and the remedy she proposed consisted in establishing rules of moral conduct, the abolishment of earthly vanity in the shape of extravagant clothes, the free giving of alms to the needy, and finally she advised all parish priests to celebrate Mass once a month in honor of the holy trinity, in order to avert the wrath of God. The advice offered by Bridget must have been rather ineffectual, and it appears that she escaped from Sweden just before the plague reached that country, and that when she arrived in Italy the pestilence had already spent most of its fury. At Avignon, where Pope Clement VI. remained during this awful visitation and gave great material assistance in alleviating the sufferings of the people, 120,000 persons are said to have perished from this cause, nearly double the number of the present day inhabitants of that city.

At Rome Bridget, assisted by her companions, devoted herself with untiring energy and charity to the relief of her suffering fellow-men, and it appears that none of her immediate company was ever attacked by the plague. Some characteristic anecdotes are related in connection with this trying period of the life of St. Bridget. A male scion of the great Roman family Orsini had been dangerously ill for some days, presumably from the prevailing disease, and was finally given up for lost by the physicians. The mother of the child, who was expecting its death at every minute, suddenly bethought herself of Bridget's alleged powers and exclaimed, "If only the Lady Bridget were here! Her touch would cure my son." A few minutes later, as if in response, Bridget herself unexpectedly entered the room, spoke a few words of comfort to the mother and finally requested to be left alone with the sick child. Bridget is said to have prayed earnestly at the bedside and to have ministered tenderly to the sick child. Finally she recalled the mother and told her that the child, upon awakening, would be cured. The event is said to have justified Bridget's prediction.

A certain woman who had led a life of dissipation and shame

had finally repented and expressed her desire to reform. According to tradition, she was so badly tempted by the devil that she was about to relapse into her old life, feeling powerless to resist the evil impulses which beset her. One day she met Bridget and confiding to her her tale of woe, asked for the saint's intercession. In the presence of several credible witnesses Bridget then walked up to the woman and in a loud and commanding voice exclaimed, "Depart, Satan; thou hast tormented this creature of God long enough!" The woman immediately recovered from her "devil-possession," and shortly afterwards, it is said, she "died a good death." A more enlightened age would probably have ascribed this and several similar incidents to so-called hypnotization or auto-suggestion, but a truthful account of Bridget's life would be incomplete did it not refer to any of the so-called "miracles" wrought by this saint, which perhaps earned for her the greater part of her contemporary fame. As a consequence of many real or supposed miracles of this nature, Bridget's reputation rose to a great height not only in Rome and Italy, but throughout Europe her name was on every tongue, and she was everywhere loved as a great and disinterested philanthropist and benefactress of the poor and distressed. However, she never allowed her fame to increase her self-esteem, but, on the contrary, she seems to have become even more humble and self-denying as the years passed by. She even went to the length of voluntarily parting with a considerable share of her fortune and joined the poor as a mendicant in the cause of religion and charity. Thus she literally followed the Saviour's advice, "Give away thy goods, and come and follow Me." She was also in the habit of lodging and feeding in her house poor and needy pilgrims from all parts of Europe, although, of course, she paid special attention to the needs of her own countrymen.

At this time Bridget had become the centre of spiritual life in Rome, and her influence extended to all classes and members of society. The poor loved her as a benefactress and personal friend, while the rich and noble considered it an honor to associate with a princess so closely related to the royal family of Sweden. At this time and particularly after the abatement of the great plague Rome was annually visited by an enormous number of pilgrims, who came partly to expiate their own sins and partly as a measure of thanksgiving to God for permitting them to escape as a measure. The Papal Legate, the Cardinal da Ceccano, exerted himself to the utmost in taking measures for the safety and comfort of the pilgrims and providing them with the necessaries of life, which could have been no small task in those days. Fearing a scarcity of food if the foreign influx became much greater, he decided to curtail the



time fixed for gaining the indulgences incident to a Papal jubilee year. This measure, however, aroused the ill-will of many selfish and mercenary people in Rome, as it tended to shorten the stay of the pilgrims in the Eternal City and diminish the profit to themselves. Finally, when the discontent of the Romans had grown to alarming proportions, Ceccano reproved the people in a spirited sermon for their selfishness and violence, which had made it impossible for the Pope to return to the Eternal City. Becoming more inflamed, the mob made an attack on the Cardinal's palace; some of his household were wounded and even his own life was attempted. At this juncture Bridget openly espoused the Cardinal's cause and raised her voice in reprobation of the people who thus had allowed themselves to desecrate the jubilee year then being celebrated in Rome. In a fervent appeal to the Papal vicar, the Bishop of Orvieto, she implored him to take rapid and vigorous action and punish the Cardinal's assailants without delay. The Papal vicar, however, resented her interference and persuaded himself and others that Bridget's revelations were merely the phantastic visions of a fanatical and excitable woman. The popular fury increased daily, and the only result of Bridget's advice was to turn the popular rage from the Cardinal to herself. She suddenly became the object of a most violent popular resentment and was insulted and slandered everywhere; finally she was accused of being a witch and the terrible cry was raised: "Burn the heretic!" With her accustomed composure, Bridget at once implored divine assistance, and in reply she received a direct command from God to remain in Rome and weather the popular storm, being told that no harm would befall her. At the same time she was consoled by a vision of the Virgin Mary, who enjoined her and her companions to sing the hymn "Ave Maris Stella" ("Hail Star of the Sea") in her honor every evening, a practice which is still continued by the members of the Briggittine order. Shortly afterward, however, the tide of popular resentment turned and the love and veneration of the fickle Romans for the saintly Swedish woman became stronger than ever before. At this juncture, undoubtedly inspired by a divine suggestion, she suddenly decided to repair to Castel Nuovo, a dependency of the great Abbey of Farfa, considered third in rank of the great Italian monasteries, the two others being Nonantula and Monte Cassino. This great Benedictine abbey had undergone many vicissitudes of fortune during its long existence, and a deplorable moral degeneration had been caused by the great prosperity and enormous revenues which it enjoyed. Such was the state of affairs at the time of Bridget's visit, and with the zeal and promptitude so characteristic of her she determined, if pos-

sible, to institute reforms. During Bridget's stay at Farfa she must have reflected on the life of the pious and austere Benedict of Nursia, the founder of monasticism in Italy and the Occident. The mental parallel which she drew between the latter and abbot then in charge could not have resulted in favor of the latter. The abbot very seldom celebrated Holy Mass; he did not wear the dress prescribed for the Benedictines, and to use Bridget's own words, "his heart, in which God should dwell, belonged to a wanton woman; he did not consider his own property sufficient, but was covetous of that of others; he had promised to practice self-denial, yet consulted his own pleasure and comfort in everything." She addressed the following remonstrance to him: "Thou, reverend abbot, who shouldst be a model for the other monks, art a worshipper of courtesans, as witness thy sons, for the sake of whom thou art in ill repute. Thou shouldst be an example for the poor and take care of the needy, but thou showest thyself as a great man, thanks to the alms that thou hast received. Thou livest rather in palaces than in a monastery. Thou shouldst be a teacher and as a *mother* to thy brethren, but thou hast become a church warden and a stepmother. Thou amusest thyself in pleasures and magnificence, but they repine in sorrow and affliction all day long. Therefore, if thou dost not return to the paths of rectitude, God shall drive thee out of the palace, thou shalt not commune even with the least of thy brethren, but thou shalt not, as thou believest, return to thy native land (France), nor enter the kingdom of God." It is reported that the abbot did not need Bridget's warning, but was deposed from his office and died a miserable death without benefit of clergy. The abbey, however, is said to have undergone a thorough reform and house cleaning as a result of Bridget's visit.

While at Farfa Bridget experienced a great happiness: her daughter Catherine located her there and paid her a visit. It seems that the desire of seeing her mother again and of being present at the jubilee celebrations had decided Catherine to undertake the long journey to Rome. She appears to have been of a very impulsive nature, and this desire must have become so overwhelming that she could neither eat nor sleep. Finally her husband gave a reluctant consent to the pilgrimage and, accompanied by two ladies and a male relative, the Chevalier or Knight Gustavus Tunesson, of the famous Syure family, and servants, Catherine set sail across the Baltic to Germany, and in due course arrived in Rome. In the extreme heat of a Roman summer and agitated by the greatest anxiety, she wandered with her escort during eight days through the streets of Rome and visited its holy places, but nowhere was her mother to be found, nor was there any indication of her where-

abouts. Their joy and happiness can therefore easily be imagined when one day they met Bridget's father confessor, Peter Olafsson, at a service in St. Peter's. It appears that during his stay at Farfa Peter had experienced a mysterious foreboding which prompted him to go to Rome, where he found Catherine and relieved her distress.

Some historians assert that when Catherine arrived in Rome her mother Bridget was in Bologna, while others maintain that the latter was still in Farfa, where she was visited by Catherine. However this may be, it seems that after leaving Farfa, Bridget proceeded to Bologna, in order to visit the great Dominican monastery in that city. The latter she found in almost as unsatisfactory a condition as that of Farfa, although here she was received with hospitality and courtesy by the prior, who had heard of her fame and been forewarned of her arrival. This fact naturally made her task the more difficult, as efforts were made to conceal from her the true state of affairs. At last she intimated to the prior that deception and concealment were all in vain, as she was well aware of the condition of things at the monastery; the prior at once took alarm, having heard of the fate of the others, and became very repentant, outwardly at least. Falling on his knees before Bridget, he offered to resign the office which he had maladministered and to take his place as a simple monk in the ranks of his brethren, but Bridget refused to sanction this step. On the contrary, she quieted his fears by telling him to go to work earnestly and endeavor to effect reforms. Historical records show that the prior, at least partially, succeeded in this task.

Mother and daughter now returned to Rome and it was decided that, Catherine's young husband having just died in Sweden, she should remain in Rome with her mother and that, having fore-sworn the world, she should become her mother's companion and associate in her pious and charitable activity. At Rome they took up their lodgings in a house owned by Cardinal Hugo Roger, brother of Pope Clement VI., Bridget having removed from the house near the Church of San Lorenzo in Damaso, at the Campo dei Fiori, where she had resided during the first four years of her stay in Rome.

We are told that at times Bridget and her daughter found themselves in reduced financial circumstances due in a measure to their own reckless charitable donations, their lavish hospitality and the irregularity of the remittances sent them from their own country. This circumstance is easily explained in view of the extraordinary conditions in Rome at this period.

After the death of Pope Clement VI. in December, 1352, In-



nocent VI. was elected as his successor, but with this Pope Bridget was not personally acquainted. She knew, however, that he was firmly resolved to bring about the return of the Pontiffs from Avignon to Rome. The condition of the *Patrimonium Petri* was most unsatisfactory to the Church, and the temporal authority of the Pope had become a mere shadow of its former self in many of the districts. A resort to arms was therefore deemed inevitable, and this undertaking was intrusted to the famous Spanish Cardinal Egidius Alborno. Bulwer Lytton in his famous novel refers to this prelate as proudly styling himself "Prince of Aragon, Cardinal of Spain." The Pope delegated his authority in Italy to Alborno, with the exception of Naples and Sicily. Within the short space of four months Alborno restored the Duchy of Spoleto and the whole of the patrimony to the Church by prudent diplomacy as well as good generalship.

Quite characteristic of prevailing conditions at Rome were the precautions taken to protect Bridget's young daughter Catherine, who was only eighteen years old, on her arrival in Italy, and said to have been very beautiful. While the mother, accompanied by her confessor, made the daily rounds of the various churches to perform her devotions, Catherine was generally obliged to stay at home, in order to avoid dangerous attention. It even happened when she went out in company with others that she was exposed to insult or danger from undesirable suitors, as is shown by the following incident. One day Catherine, in company with some Roman ladies, went to the Church of St. Sebastian outside the Walls in order to attend Mass, their way leading through a vineyard, when it was noticed that one of Catherine's rejected admirers was lying in ambush for her. All of a sudden, however, a frightened stag or deer rushed past the company and the man gave chase, while the party of ladies effected their escape. Catherine encountered many other adventures of a similar nature, but managed to escape them all unscathed.

A very large part of Bridget's work in Italy consisted of attempts to reform the clergy, and in this respect she was a true forerunner of the reformers. In this fact her real greatness is to be found and that which most of all has entitled her to fame and the remembrance of posterity. Nevertheless, she was a very pious Catholic and did not, like the later reformers, advocatē any changes in the Catholic creed or ritualistic practices. For this reason she did not lay herself open to the serious charge of heresy, which brought so many of her followers to excommunication and the stake. Unfortunately, Bridget's advice and admonitions went unheeded by the authorities of the Church, and it is quite safe to as-

sume that had the efforts of this remarkable woman and others animated by the same spirit been crowned with success, subsequent events in the history of the Church and the Christian world would have been greatly modified, and the great cataclysm which overwhelmed the Church in the sixteenth century would at least have been partially averted.

Bridget's reforms commenced in the very highest places. With unsparing severity she rebuked the moral laxity and worldly tendencies of the princes and Bishops of the Church, and history records several instances of her success in this direction. Encouraged by this success, she is said to have formulated under divine inspiration a collection of rules for the guidance of Bishops which was distributed far and wide and in many instances produced beneficial results. In doing this she insisted upon the importance of the maxim "practice what you preach," and exposed the fallacy of the recitation of high-sounding litanies and verbose prayers destitute of the living spirit of charity and true contrition for sins. In a word, she advocated a religion and a faith of the heart combined with good deeds and moral conduct and not a religion of mere empty and hollow ritual, mummerly and mouth-worship.

Bridget's great reputation for sanctity and her high social position facilitated her admission into convents and other ecclesiastical establishments, which fact enabled her to observe the rule she had laid down for her own guidance, i. e., to begin her reforms at the top. She was aware that the admonitions of superiors are worse than useless unless accompanied by good example, and she therefore made it a point to become intimate with the superiors, and wherever she succeeded in this, the very best results were generally obtained. Bridget's utterances were characterized by the greatest energy and fearlessness, nor did she spare the very vicars of Christ themselves. One of these, Clement VI., who has already been mentioned, reigned at Avignon between 1342 and 1352. He was a Frenchman by birth, a man of learning and a lover of science and art; he surrounded himself with regal magnificence while the Papacy was becoming more and more subservient to the French monarchy and life at the Papal Court was distinguished by everything but virtue. Far from meditating a return to Rome, Clement instead acquired the city of Avignon by purchase. His successor, Innocent VI., also of French nationality, whose reign lasted from 1352 to 1362, did not walk in his predecessor's footsteps. Innocent was a serious-minded, austere and just man, who endeavored to cleanse the Papal Court and restore order within Italy. Toward the latter part of his life he experienced a desire to visit Rome, but this

was never carried out, owing to the feebleness of his advancing age. After Innocent's death another Frenchman was elected Pope, under the title of Urban V., and he finally came to Rome in 1367, only to again return to Avignon toward the end of the year 1370. His successor, Gregory XI., at last transferred the Papal residence to Rome. Primarily, however, it was not the needs and interests of the Church, but political reasons which prompted the visit of Urban V. and the final return of Gregory XI. We shall later return to the subject of Bridget's admonitions to Clement VI.

It appears that the companionship and assistance of her daughter Catherine were of the greatest importance to Bridget, who had now grown old, as the daughter was a living example of what the mother's teachings could accomplish under favorable conditions. Catherine is described at that time as a very beautiful girl of a dazzling clear northern complexion and blue eyes, and as forming a sharp contrast to the somber and almost shabby weeds of her mother. Catherine proved herself a powerful auxiliary to the older saint in her missions to the magnificent Roman *palazzos*, as in addition to her beauty she possessed a charming attractiveness and natural grace of manner and conversation which were much appreciated by the Roman aristocracy. Her cheerful presence was always welcome to the poor patients in the Roman hospitals, and within a short time she had formed quite a club or society of patrician disciples who emulated her charitable example.

Outside of her own immediate family circle one of Bridget's greatest friends in Rome was Alfonso, or Alphonsus de Vadderterra, Bishop of Jaen, a Spaniard by birth, who has already been mentioned. Alphonso's relatives had for many years resided in Siena, and with him Bridget became very intimate, as he seemed to be in closer sympathy with her work and herself personally than even her own countrymen and companions. After Bridget's death Alphonso became one of the most zealous champions of the truth of her revelations as well as a most trustworthy eye-witness of her virtues and miracles.

It may be well for the purposes of this account of Bridget's life to turn our attention for a moment to the events transpiring in Sweden during Bridget's absence abroad. Eric, the second son of King Magnus and Queen Blanche, as well as the Queen herself, died in 1363, and it was rumored that they had died of poison, in Eric's case administered by his own mother, and the Queen by an unknown hand at the wedding of her eldest son Haakon to Princess Margaret of Denmark. This princess afterward became known as the great Queen Margaret, surnamed the Semiramis of the North and celebrated as the founder of the Union of Calmar. That



famous historic event brought together under one monarch the three Scandinavian kingdoms of Sweden, Norway and Denmark and took place in 1397. The union continued until 1523, when Gustavus Vasa, prompted by the cruelty of the Danish King Christian II., surnamed the "Tyrant," finally established the political independence of Sweden. King Magnus himself had become an object of aversion to his subjects and, having been excommunicated by the Church, was dethroned and put into prison. His nephew, Albrecht of Mecklenburg, was now made King of Sweden. After an imprisonment of seven years, Magnus is supposed to have been drowned while crossing the sea to Norway. Bridget's brother Israel, who refused the royal dignity offered to him upon the dethronement of Magnus, had participated in one of the latter's expeditions against the infidel Finns and Russians. These crusades had been undertaken chiefly at the instigation of Bridget, who in this respect was, as in many others, merely a child of her own time. Having joined the army in Livonia during Magnus' second expedition, which was a crusade in name only, Israel died in the city of Riga in the year 1351, after Bridget had left Sweden.

At about this time (probably in the autumn of 1365) Bridget claimed to have received a divine command to proceed to the south of Italy and visit Naples. Before that, however, she had undertaken a journey to Assisi, where she visited the tomb of St. Francis, the famous founder of the order of Franciscans. Other places visited about this time, although the dates of the visits as well as their connection with the Naples journey are rather doubtful, were Amalfi, where she worshipped at the shrine of St. Andrew; Benevento, where reposed the relics of St. Bartholomew the Apostle, and Ortona on the Adriatic, where the remains of the Apostle St. Thomas had been preserved since the year 1258. She also visited Monte Gargano, rendered famous by a pretended apparition of the Archangel Michael; Manfredonia, also on the Adriatic, somewhat south of Monte Gargano; Bari, where rested the remains of St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra in Asia Minor, and Salerno, where the great Pope Gregory VII. (Aldobrandeschi) died in exile in 1085, because, as he said, "he had loved justice and hated iniquity." It is probable that Bridget proceeded to the south of Italy along the eastern or Adriatic coast and that Naples was her headquarters, whence she made excursions to Sorrento and Amalfi, and probably also Benevento.

In Naples peculiar conditions prevailed at this period. The country was governed by the famous Queen Joanna, a daughter of Duke Charles of Calabria. She had first been married to King Andrew of Hungary, afterward with Louis of Tarentum, and was

at this time the consort of James of Mallorca. The last named, however, was excluded from any share in the government of Joanna's kingdom. The court of Naples was a brilliant one and famed for its luxurious habits and aristocratic manners as well as its preferment of literature and art. The moral reputation of the Queen seems to have been somewhat doubtful, although at this day it is difficult to determine the exact truth in the matter. That she displayed great fondness for pleasures and enjoyments seems beyond a doubt, but this fact did not prevent her from paying the most flattering attention to Bridget, who about this period had reached the summit of her fame. Catholic biographers of St. Bridget are, as a rule, very severe in their judgment of Queen Joanna, although they acknowledge the fact that she extended every possible courtesy and attention to the saint.

While in Naples Bridget was once visited by a young man named Eleazer, who requested her assistance and advice. The following letter was written by Bridget in reply, and as it is very characteristic of the saint and of the period in which she lived, it is here reproduced with but a few changes and abbreviations: "As it is thy desire to have for thy only object obedience to the will of God and to honor Him, so far as possible, in word and deed, to devote thyself to Him with thy person, goods and all thy energies, as long as thou shalt live, in order to give thy soul into the keeping of thy Creator, and to preserve it pure and clean from all filthy desires of the flesh: thou must carefully watch the foundation, i. e., thy reason, so that nobody shall be able, to the detriment of thy soul, to undermine that foundation. By those endeavoring to undermine it I mean the persons who will say to thee: 'Sir, remain a layman, and marry a beautiful, noble and rich woman.' Perhaps others will say: 'If thou wishest to become a priest, study the fine arts (i. e., science), and become a Master (*Magister*), obtain as much as possible, by prayers or gifts, of the goods and revenues of the Church, and thou shalt become honored by the world for thy knowledge, and thou shalt be glorified by thy worldly friends and many servants for thy abundance of riches.' Should any persons try to persuade thee in such a manner, then thou must cause the watchman, i. e., thy reason, to reply that thou wouldst rather brave all the temptations of the flesh than lose thy chastity. Say furthermore that thou wouldst acquire a knowledge of science and the fine arts for the glory of God, in defense of the true faith, for the benefit of good men, in order to correct the failing and erring ones, and for the advantage of all those who need thy counsel and instruction. Thou must not covet more in this world than what is required for the support of thy body and thy neces-

sary servants, nor that which is superfluous, because a desire for the latter springs from empty vanity. Thou shalt also say that in case thou, through the mercy of God, obtainest some high and dignified station, thou shalt use it entirely for the benefit of thy neighbor and the glory of God. Thus will the watchman, the reason, drive away those that seek to undermine the foundation, or thy good will. Besides, reason must carefully see to it that nobody endeavors to surmount the high wall. By the high wall I mean love, which is higher than all the virtues. Thou must be convinced that the devil has no greater desire than to leap over that wall, for which reason he continuously uses his best efforts to overcome divine love with worldly love, the love of the flesh. Therefore, my dear sir, as often as worldly love endeavors to gain precedence in thy heart over the love of God, then immediately let the watchman reason say, in accordance with the commandment of God, that thou wouldst rather die, soul and body, than offend God, who is so good, by word or deed. Do not think about thy own life or goods or property, nor the favor of relatives or friends, but only seek to please God and honor him in everything. Thou must voluntarily expose thyself to all kinds of difficulties rather than to cause harm and misery to befall any of thy relatives. I have spoken about walls. By these I understand the four felicities of the heavenly Kingdom, which man should wish for in his heart with a meditative vigilance. The first is, to fervently desire in one's own heart to behold God Himself in His eternal glory and the imperishable treasures which he who has once received them, shall never lack. The second is a desire always to hearken to the lovely voices of the angels in praising and glorifying God, without intermission. The third is the desire to praise God eternally, like the angels, out of the fulness of the heart, and with a fervent ardor. Finally, the fourth is to eagerly desire the eternal consolation of the angels and the holy and blessed souls in heaven. Just as a man who always is in a house, wherever he turns, has four walls surrounding him, so shall he also have who, night and day, of all his heart desires these four things: to behold God in His glory, to listen to the angels praising God, to love God in common with them and to participate in their consolation; in reality, wherever he turns and whatever he may be doing, he shall always remain unharmed within these four walls, nay he shall already in this life and in the society of angels, enjoy the association with God. My beloved sir, how much do not enemies wish to break through these walls, deprive the heart of such inward joy, and instead to turn thy desires in another direction, which may be very injurious to the soul. Therefore reason must carefully watch the two roads



through which the enemy usually approaches, namely, sight and hearing. Through the ears there enter into the heart the enjoyment of worldly songs, of various musical instruments,<sup>7</sup> of useless fiction and the praise of men. The more man, by means of the first named, rouses his own pride, the farther he becomes separated from the humble and lowly Christ. The watchman reason protests against such a pleasure by saying, 'as the devil hates all the humility which the Holy Ghost instills into the heart of men, so shall I, with the powerful help of God, detest all the pomp and worldly vanity which the evil spirit, with his destructive fire, makes alluring to the heart. This shall be unto me like the loathsome stench of a corpse!' Through the sense of sight the enemy approaches bringing with him various tools, in order to break through the walls, such as many kinds of metals made into several different shapes and forms such as precious stones, gorgeous clothes, palaces, castles, real property, lakes, forests, vineyards and a great many other things which afford great revenues and prosperity. Therefore the watchman reason must, before such things penetrate into the heart, arm himself for defense and say, 'if any such goods come into my possession I shall preserve them in a place where neither thieves nor moths need be feared, with the help of God I shall not offend my Lord by coveting the goods of others, nor segregate myself from the society of those who serve Christ.' By the doors of this house I mean everything which is necessary for the body, such as food, drink, sleep, vigil, occasional grief, and occasional happiness. The watchman reason must therefore carefully guard these doors. In the consumption of food and drink great care must be taken that the foe does not lead to excess and luxuriousness, which render the body useless for the service of God. One must also be carefully on guard against the insinuation of the foe in the shape of an excess of abstemiousness, which renders the body incapacitated for all manner of actions. The watchman must also see to it that thou dost not become guilty of luxury for the sake of worldly honor and the favor of men, whether thou be all alone with thine own or in the presence of strangers, and for the love of God, treat every one with sufficient hospitality, avoiding, at the same time, too many and dainty dishes. The watchman should also carefully direct moderation as regards sleep, even as thou shalt be moderate with respect to food and drink, in order that the body may be comfortable and alert for the honor of God, and in such a condition as to be fit for the vigilant service of God and all honorable work. Should any sorrow or bitterness befall thee, then the watchman

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<sup>7</sup> No sacred or organ music was ever allowed at the services in the Briggittine convents.

reason, accompanied by his friend piety, should hasten to aid so that thou mayest not be dangerously induced to forsake the grace of God, through wrath or impatience, and thereby arouse God's anger against thee. And further, should thy heart be filled with joy and happiness, let the watchman so much the more earnestly enjoin thee, through the grace of Jesus Christ, to observe moderation in thy comfort and contentment."

It will be seen that this letter of Bridget's is not without a certain blunt literary merit and tends to prove the assertion that her influence on mediæval Swedish language and literature was of great importance. Young Eleazer remained a most devoted friend of the Swedish princess, took holy orders and was at the time of his death a Cardinal of the Church.

Bridget's journey to Naples and her stay in that city were of some duration and it is important to fix its date so far as possible. Hammerich believes it was commenced in 1369 or 1370, alleging as evidence a Papal passport for Bridget and her children dated November 13, 1369, wherein besides Karl, Birger and Catherine, Bishop Thomas of Weixio (Växjö) was also mentioned. On his return to Sweden Bishop Thomas found King Magnus in prison and the kingdom in great confusion. In addition to this it appears that Catherine, in her testimony given in connection with the investigation of Bridget's claims to beatification, mentions the year 1370 as the date of her mother's first visit to Naples. There exists at least an intimation that this date was not the one originally given.\* There is no original statement or tradition to the effect that the sons accompanied the saint during her first visit to the Neapolitan kingdom. The passport mentioned refers, without a doubt, to the second journey to Naples, which was continued to the Holy Land. That Bishop Thomas participated in the first journey is also quite certain. He went to Rome on a short visit, but was persuaded to remain somewhat longer than he had intended. Bridget was in Rome in the month of July, 1365, and Bishop Thomas visited the town of Abo, in Finland, at midsummer of the same year and is not mentioned after that time in any Swedish original manuscript until the end of August, 1366. In the meantime he could have had sufficient time to visit Italy. On the whole, it seems most probable that Bridget commenced her first journey to Naples in the fall of 1365. In part 2, p. 196, of the Roman edition of her "*Revelationes*" (1628), it is said that she received a summons to proceed to Jerusalem in May, 1371, at which time she had lived in Rome for many years after the return from the first pilgrimage to the Neapolitan Kingdom. If Bishop Thomas had re-

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\* See Comtesse de Flavigny, "*Sainte Brigitte de Suede*," p. 334.

turned to Sweden at a time when the King was in prison and the kingdom in great confusion, it would be quite inconsistent with a return in the fall of 1366, and hence the first expedition to Naples must have been undertaken before the return of Pope Urban V. from Avignon to Rome.

The last mentioned event is of great importance for the history of the period. Urban V. left Avignon April 30, 1367, and set out for Italy. The cities of Naples, Venice, Genoa and Pisa sent fleets to Marseilles to transport and accompany the Pope, constituting a squadron of twenty-five galleys. He landed at Genoa, Pisa and Corneto and paid a visit to Viterbo, where Cardinal Albornoz, who was on his deathbed, expired before the departure of the Pope. The latter was received everywhere with great homage and jubilation. On October 16, 1367, Urban made his solemn entry into Rome. First in the Papal procession, at the head of a thousand horsemen, rode Nicolo d'Este, Count of Ferrara, followed by the entire College of Cardinals and the Pope in person, the bridle of the Pontiff's horse being held by the Duke of Savoy. Then followed the ecclesiastical banner floating high over the head of the Pope, carried by Rodolfo di Camerino. The number of priests and members of religious orders alone in the procession was estimated at two thousand. The Pope at once proceeded to the Basilica of St. Peter's and, having mounted his throne, distributed indulgences to all present. On the 18th of October he took possession of the Church of St. John Lateran, and on the 30th the Pontiff officiated at High Mass in St. Peter's, for the first time since the reign of Boniface VIII.

Although Bridget is not mentioned in any of the manuscripts describing the Papal entry into Rome, her enthusiasm over the glorious period which now seemed to dawn for the Church may be easily imagined. Her hopes and expectations were, however, doomed to disappointment, although at this time she could not have entertained any serious forebodings. It is quite certain that she witnessed the triumphal procession, as she was in Rome at the time, and some of her many aristocratic friends must have afforded her an opportunity of beholding the inspiring spectacle. Although the political authority of the Pope was no longer the same as of old, yet some of the ancient glamour must have returned at this time. Urban was personally visited by Queen Joanna of Naples, the King of Cyprus and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. On the 21st of October the Pope and Emperor made their joint entry into Rome, the Pope riding on horseback and the Emperor and the Count of Savoy walking at his side and holding the bridle of his horse. During the Solemn Mass at St. Peter's the Emperor



officiated as deacon, and in the course of the following year Urban was visited by the Byzantine Emperor.

As early as 1353 Bridget is reported to have received a divine command to stay in Rome until she should be allowed to behold the Pope and the Emperor in the Eternal City, to both of whom she was to convey the commandment of God. It will be admitted that Bridget was not deficient in courage or initiative, a feature of her character which would have done honor to the most independent and liberty-loving American of our day. She visited Urban V. at Montefiascone, where the Pope had retired in order to escape the intense heat of a Roman summer. She was presented to him by her friend, Nicolas Orsini, Count of Nola, who according to his own statement had to serve as interpreter, Bridget not being well versed in grammar and not understanding French, the Pope's native tongue. She proceeded to tell him of the many years she had awaited his return to Rome, not only with a view to the welfare of the Church, but also for a particularly cherished object, that of securing the Papal sanction for her new order. Urban received Bridget with special marks of esteem and attention, but the sanction could not be granted immediately. On behalf of the Saviour she made the following statement to the Pope: "Thy time is short and thou must take care to save the souls which have been confided to thy care. I am giving thee this rule of a new order which I have personally dictated and which shall be inaugurated and maintained at the Convent of Vadstena, in Sweden. As thou art my vicar on earth, it is my desire that thou shalt confirm and strengthen this order with thy blessing. I have endowed this convent with a spiritual gift, bestowing on it all the indulgences to be obtained at the Church of St. Peter's in Vincoli, at Rome. Confirm, therefore, before men on earth that which has been sanctioned and decided upon for all of my Heavenly Host. The fact that thy soul received spiritual consolation when thou for the first time obeyed my command may be a token to thee of the truth of my words." The Emperor was next requested to bestow his sanction on the order and at last, on August 5, 1370, a Papal bull was issued in which the Archbishop of Upsala and the Bishops of Strängnäs and Växjö were commanded to assist in the constitution and arrangement of Bridget's new establishment. The latter should submit to the general rule of St. Augustine, with certain minor changes and additions, but Urban reserved to himself a more detailed scrutiny and consideration of the new rule.

Bridget's anxiety to secure the Papal sanction was intensified by the fact that rumors were commencing to circulate to the effect that Urban had the intention of again abandoning Rome. These

rumors were subsequently verified, and on the 22d of May, 1370, Urban was visited at Montefiascone by emissaries from Rome who earnestly entreated him to return to the capital. In reply to this the Pope said that the Holy Ghost had brought him to Italy, but that the same Spirit now required his presence elsewhere for the glory of the Church, and that if he were not bodily with the Romans, he would always be with them in the spirit.

Bridget, thoroughly alarmed lest her entire mission should fail, decided to send an admonition to Urban through some emissaries. Nobody, however, could be found plucky enough to undertake this dangerous task, and therefore Bridget resolved to attend to the matter in person. Her message, which was a sharp one, read somewhat as follows: "Urban, who was tired and disgusted with the labor in God's service, preferred his physical comfort; his native country, France, was too dear to him, his earthly friends allured him, and the latter countenanced his predilections and wishes more than the honor and will of God or the benefit of his own soul. Should he return to the country in which he had been elected Pope, he would soon be so badly stricken as to make him grind his teeth, his sight would be dimmed, all his limbs would be trembling, the flame of the Holy Ghost would gradually become extinguished within him, all the prayers of God's friends in his behalf would be without avail, the love of his people for him would become null and he would be called to account before God for two things—first, for what he had accomplished during the time that he had occupied the chair of St. Peter, and, second, for what he had omitted to do of all that which he in his great office had been enabled to perform for the glory of God." Little wonder that Bridget met with difficulties in finding persons willing to convey such a message to the visible head of the Christian Church. Her own courage in personally admonishing the Pope is certainly to be admired, and we may indeed wonder in what manner Urban could have received such a severe and threatening message.

The warning was, however, without effect. On the 7th of September, 1370, Urban V. boarded a ship at Corneto and arrived in Marseilles on the 16th of the same month. On the 19th of December following he died. It should be borne in mind that these events are emphatically stated in the "*Revelationes*" as written down by herself in the order of their occurrence, and that all of the others are details of historically proved authenticity. As Urban's successor was elected Pierre Roger de Beaufort, who assumed the name of Gregory XI. and who had been present at the time of Bridget's severe address to Urban V. In 1377 Gregory XI. finally returned to Rome, but Bridget was then dead and Gregory him-

self died the following year, 1378, from which time dates the commencement of the great schism of the West.

Bridget also visited Gregory XI. repeatedly and delivered to him one written exhortation and solicitation after the other. Time and space prevent a detailed description of these, although most of them are still in existence. It may be added, however, that Bridget was not alone in her desire that the Pope should return to Rome; the great poet Petrarch and St. Catherine of Siena were of the same opinion and animated by the same hope. Before leaving the subject of Bridget's addresses to the Popes, it should be mentioned that she had already approached Clement VI. and Innocent VI. with very sharp demands for needed reforms in the Church, in which she fearlessly describes the corruption and immorality of the clergy and the moral condition of the period. Her language is that of the most impassioned reformer; she did not scruple to call things by their proper names, spared nobody and wielded a merciless and unrelenting lash on the vice and degeneration into which the Church apparently had sunk.

As a proof of the fact that Bridget had no intention of returning to her native country may be cited the visit paid to her by her two sons, Birger and Karl, both of whom were interested in the politics of the Scandinavian Kingdoms. In Swedish original manuscripts there is no mention of Karl's presence subsequent to February 25, 1369. The approximate date of their arrival in Italy is established by the fact that they were presented by their mother to Pope Urban V., who returned to France on April 17, 1370, and their arrival in Italy must therefore probably have taken place toward the latter part of 1369 or the early part of 1370. The tradition of their meeting with the Pope and documents relating to that event were carefully preserved in the convent at Vadstena. According to an ancient custom, Birger appeared dressed in long clothes, which was at this period of transition from ancient to modern customs still considered as the best and most correct form, and wore a girdle; in short, he was clad "in the most becoming manner." Karl, on the contrary, was attired in the costume of a knight, together with a silver belt, collar and other ornaments and a tunic of ermine. Attached to this tunic there were a number of animal skins, which must at least have been partially stuffed as they were said to have looked very life-like; they were arranged in double rows, one above and the other below the belt, every other animal having its head turned upward and the other downward, and each had a gold ring in its mouth and a jungle at the neck. For a few moments the Pope scrutinized the two brothers and then said to Birger: "Thou art thy mother's son;" and then to



Karl: "Thou art a son of the world." The mother fell on her knees before the Pontiff, imploring the remission of their sins, whereupon the Pope, lifting the heavy belt which Karl wore, replied: "It must be sufficient penance for him to wear this great weight." Bridget at once retorted: "Holy Father, just take away his sins. I will take good care to relieve him of the belt."

In a petition to Pope Urban Bridget requested his sanction for a new devotion termed the Brigittine Rosary, and in its confirmation by him and later Popes many indulgences and favors were conferred upon it. This rosary consisted of ten decades, each ending with a "Credo" instead of the usual "Gloria," and the whole concluding with three Ave Marias, to represent the number of sixty-three years, which is generally believed to have been the age of the Virgin Mary at her death. Bridget subsequently addressed a petition in writing to the Emperor Charles IV. in order to secure his sanction of the new order, which was considered necessary, and this petition she forwarded early in 1368 to the Emperor, who was then in the city of Prague, Bohemia. In the month of October of the same year Urban again visited Viterbo to receive the Emperor, who as already stated, accompanied the Pope to Rome, where the former gave an audience to Bridget and received her with distinguished attention. After a space of twenty years Bridget had thus accomplished her mission and beheld the fulfilment of the Virgin's promise that she should live to see both the Pope and Emperor at Rome and be allowed to address them personally. Bridget had been none too prompt in obtaining the Papal and Imperial sanction for her new order. The conditions in Rome were far from improving; the Church had taken a false step in the creation of six French Cardinals, and Urban, who had for some time been discouraged and disgusted with the feuds and disorders of Rome, announced, in the spring of 1370, his intention of returning to the city of Avignon. In the meantime war had again broken out between France and England, adding to the disquiet and turmoil of the times. In the town of Montefiascone, while on his return journey to Avignon, Urban issued the bull which granted the confirmation of the Brigittine order. It authorized her to found monasteries and convents for both men and women on the plan outlined by her, and confirmed at the same time the now completed cloister at Vadstena. Until sufficient time could be had to examine closely into the details and merits of the new order, its convents were to be governed provisionally by the Augustinian rule. The official title of the order was *Ordo Sancti Salvatoris, or Sanctissimi Redemptoris*, but it was popularly called the Order of St. Bridget or the Brigittine Order. The Bollandists, however, are

authority for the opinion that Urban V. confirmed the Brigittine rule also, but Bishop Gonsalvo Durante in his preface to the rule maintains that Urban VI. was the Pontiff who formally confirmed it. It appears that both Urban V. and Gregory XI. examined the rule, but they died before it could be confirmed. The wording of the bull of canonization also supports this view. Within a comparatively short time the new order was recognized throughout the greater part of Christian Europe and had representatives in Portugal, Italy, Poland, Finland, Esthonia, England and Norway. At the present day six Brigittine convents are in existence, exclusive of the Spanish congregations founded by Maria de Eschobar—namely, one in Bavaria, at Altomünster, two at Weert and Uden, in Holland, two in Mexico and one at Chudleigh, in England. In one of these there still exists a souvenir card printed with figures of St. Bridget and her daughter, St. Catherine. On the reverse of St. Bridget's card is the following legend:

*“Rosa, rorans bonitatem,  
Stella, stillans claritatem,  
Birgitta, vas gratiae,  
Rora coeli pietatem,  
Stilla vitae puritatem  
in vallem miseriae.*

*V.: Ora pro nobis, beata mater Birgitta, sponsa Christi predilecta,  
R.: Ut ad coelestem patriam sit ipsa nobis via recta.”*

Only second in importance to the original mother convent at Vadstena was the celebrated Brigittine monastery of Syon House at Isleworth, in England, which was during the fifteenth century like its prototype at Vadstena an ecclesiastical centre of great importance and influence. As a measure of thanksgiving for his celebrated victory over the French at Agincourt in 1415, Henry V. of England founded two royal monasteries on the banks of the Thames, one of which was the Brigittine monastery of Syon House, now at Chudleigh, in Devonshire, and the other the Carthusian Monastery at Sheen. For the purpose of initiating the new Syon House Monastery, Queen Philippa, the consort of Eric XIII. of Sweden, surnamed “of Pomerania,” and daughter of King Richard II. of England, sent a company of Brigittine monks and nuns from Vadstena to England. Philippa herself lies buried in one of the vaults of the monastery Church at Vadstena, where her tombstone, containing an inscription reciting her great piety and a testimony of the love in which she was held by the people, may still be seen.

Let us again return, but for the last time, to Bridget herself. She was now well advanced in age, her seventieth year fast ap-

proaching, and she felt herself divinely inspired to accomplish another duty which still remained undone, i. e., a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.<sup>9</sup> Her preparations for this long journey were very few and quickly made, two of the articles which she brought with her being still kept as relics in the Brigittine Convent of Altomünster, in Bavaria. One of these is a staff of rough hawthorn wood and the other a drinking cup of boxwood, on the bottom of which were carved the words, "*Jesu Naz. Rex Jud. Miserere.*" This latter expression she is said to have used whenever she drank water. She is also reported to have planted the tree from the wood of which the cup was made, and a tradition to this effect has been handed down to posterity in the following verse, carved in type on the outside of the cup, but now almost obliterated by age:

*"Hujus erat ligni satrix Birgitta beata  
Hoc vase digni viventes cum pace grata."*

As traveling companions, Bridget brought with her the two sons, Birger and Karl, her daughter Catherine, her friend Alphonso of Jaen, Prior Peter of Alvastra and her confessor, Peter Olafsson. At the commencement of the journey Bridget was accompanied as far as Naples by one of her most loyal and faithful friends, the young Roman noble Latino Orsini. Her journey through the Kingdom of Naples appears to have been somewhat in the nature of a triumphal progress, and the inhabitants flocked around her everywhere, endeavoring to prevail upon her to remain with them. At Naples she was even more enthusiastically received than during the former visit, the Archbishop of that city being now an old and valued friend of hers. When Queen Joanna was informed of the approach of the Swedish Princess, she immediately sent her generous supplies and provisions for the coming pilgrimage and entreated her also to pray for her while in the Holy Land. The Queen, who was a true disciple of Boccaccio, had in spite of her moral shortcomings a genuine affection and admiration for Bridget. This fact the latter did not readily appreciate, as no doubt the Queen appeared to the saint a very wicked and sinful creature. It may be mentioned in passing, however, that Queen Joanna's name is still remembered among the peasantry of Provence, of which she was hereditary Countess. In spite of her solemn pledge to the Barons at Aix not to alienate any of her estates in Provence,

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<sup>9</sup> For further information relating to the Brigittine Order consult a recent religious publication of great value, entitled "St. Bridget of Sweden," by Francesca M. Steele (Darley Dale), published by Benziger Brothers, New York, chapter vii., pp. 48-57, and for information regarding the Syon House Monastery at Chudleigh, England, see Sir William Dugdale's "Monasticum Anglicanum."



Joanna had sold the city of Avignon to the Popes. But as she was the first of the rulers of Provence to give free grants of lands to the peasants and also built the canal which brings water to the town of Draguignan, her memory is held in loving remembrance by the peasants of Provence.

On the occasion of Bridget's last visit to Queen Joanna an incident of great human interest occurred which throws an amusing sidelight on the sombre and austere character of her life contrasted with the gay and luxurious atmosphere of Southern Italy. It appears that Bridget proceeded to the palace accompanied by her two sons, in order to pay their formal respects to the Queen. On being admitted to the audience chamber they were required, in conformity with the strict rules of etiquette of the court, to kneel and kiss the Queen's foot, and according to a tradition preserved in the monastery at Vadstena, Bridget had carefully taught her sons how to perform this act of homage. It is probable that Birger observed her mother's instructions to the letter, but when the turn came to Karl, he rose from his knees, beheld with admiration the handsome face of the Queen, who is said to have been still beautiful at the age of forty-five and, stooping down, applied a resounding kiss to the lips of the lovely Joanna. Instead of being offended by this sudden and impulsive exhibition of undue admiration, the Queen was clearly delighted with such a frank tribute to her charms, and at once fell in love with the handsome and reckless young Northerner. She told him she would be most pleased to have him remain in Naples as her favored guest, and even went to the length of declaring that she would like to marry him some day. It is easier to imagine than describe the effect of this "painful" incident on poor old Bridget, who told the Queen that not only was her wish a grievous sin in itself, as her own husband was still alive, but that Karl himself was a married man. Her reproof of the Queen and her son's conduct was, however, quite in vain and only seems to have rendered Joanna more obstinate in her purpose.

Bridget's case was surely one of an offended and virtuous parent, and she implored the assistance of heaven by means of fervent prayers. Her pious requests were soon granted, although in an unexpected manner. Karl was suddenly taken ill and died after a short illness of two weeks. Alphonso of Jaen gives us a faithful description of his death. It seems that he and others were present at the deathbed, where the last rites of the Church were about to be administered. About eight or ten steps from the bedside Bridget was seated in a chair and as her son breathed his last she arose and approached him, but no sound escaped her nor did she shed a tear. She simply sat quietly with her hands uplifted, evidently prais-

ing God, Who had prevented a great intended wrong. After a period of useless grief Joanna gave orders for a funeral on a magnificent scale and caused the dead man's remains to be interred with great pomp and ceremony in the Naples Cathedral. Karl died on March 9, 1372. In the funeral procession Joanna and Bridget walked side by side behind the coffin; weeping and wailing were heard everywhere, but the old mother appeared calm and unmoved, externally at least, giving no outward sign of sorrow. According to Alphonso of Jaen she was an "immovable pillar of patience," and he expressed her thoughts in the following words: "Depart on thy pilgrimage, my son, blessed by God and by me."

On March 11, 1372, Bridget, accompanied by her surviving son Birger, her daughter Catherine and the others of her party, embarked for the Holy Land on a ship in the harbor of Naples. Difficulties arose immediately, however; the ship was not able to leave the harbor until the 14th, and after a five days' voyage, the pilgrims reached Messina, where the party stayed for a week. At that period mariners dreaded and avoided, so far as possible, the open sea, and in this instance the coast of Greece was closely followed for protection in case of storms. On March 30 the pilgrims arrived at the island of Cephalonia of the Ionian group, where they rested for two days. After leaving that place they encountered a violent storm, from which they sought refuge at Kos, on the coast of Asia Minor; on April 8 they left the harbor of that island, and on the 13th of April, 1372, after having been tossed about at the mercy of the storm for five days, the pilgrims landed at Famagusta, in Cyprus.

Since the close of the twelfth century the island of Cyprus had been governed by members of the house of Lusignan from the west of France. The most famous of these was Guy de Lusignan, the founder of the dynasty of that name in Cyprus, which had been ceded to him by Richard Coeur de Lion in consideration of his abdication of the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1192. Bridget, whose fame had preceded her, was received at Famagusta with open arms by the Queen, Eleanor of Arragon, and her people. They prevailed on the Saint to remain in Cyprus for a few weeks, in spite of her objections to the splendor and luxury of the court, the lawlessness of the inhabitants, and no doubt her own impatience to reach the object of her pilgrimage. It appears that Queen Eleanor applied to Bridget for counsel and advice in her precarious position as actual ruler of the island, as her dominion had for a long period been distracted and torn by dynastic troubles and civic dissensions. Bridget gave her all the assistance in her power, and for a short time acted as the Queen's counsellor and friend.

Before leaving Cyprus for Palestine, Bridget had been advised by many to assume a disguise and stain her face a dark color, in order to avoid danger from the Saracens, but Bridget disdained to act upon this advice, although the conspicuous beauty of Catherine is said to have inclined her in a measure to yield to these entreaties.

Another of Bridget's most remarkable revelations bears the date of this period. She was shown in a vision how her dead son Karl had been received by God in the last judgment. This revelation is said to have occurred to the saint in what might be termed installments or successive stages, like acts in a play, commencing before she left Naples and continuing until her arrival in Jerusalem. The vision represented her son as the accused before the judgment bar of God, the Virgin Mary as his advocate, Satan as his chief accuser and God the Father as the final arbiter and judge. The devil was utterly discomfited and Karl at last acquitted and admitted to the eternal glory of the Pearly Gates chiefly or at least to a great extent owing to the great virtues, ceaseless prayers and severe penance of his mother. This is said to have been one of Bridget's greatest revelations, if not the greatest, and to have continued at intervals during the whole of her pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

At last Bridget and her companions landed at Jaffa, and starting from this point the party passed through Ramleh, the ancient Arimathia, and Latron, at that time known as the "*Castellum Boni Latronis*." On the third day the Holy City dawned upon their ecstatic vision. At Jerusalem, which she entered on Ascension day, May 13, 1372, Bridget took up her abode and that of her company in the Pilgrims' Hospice; and the holy places which had been purchased from the Sultan of Egypt by King Robert of Sicily and by him committed to the care of the Franciscan Fathers were now thrown open for the inspection and worship of the pilgrims. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre seems to have been her favorite place of meditation and prayer. She also visited Bethany, Genesareth, the Sea of Galilee and Bethlehem, Nazareth, the tomb of the Virgin in the Valley of Jehosaphat and most of the other places memorable in connection with the life and passion of Christ. It does not appear that Bridget devoted herself exclusively to the adoration of relics, a custom at that time perhaps even more prevalent in the Church than to-day. At Bari she had in a wonderful manner secured a piece of bone of the Apostle Saint Thomas; and although she did not make it an object to collect relics, she gathered together a few souvenirs from the places visited, very much in the manner of the ordinary tourist of the present day. As already stated, a couple of these relics are still preserved in the monastery at Alto-



münster, and a list of these and other valuable objects preserved in that place and prepared in 1654 mentions "something" (without specifying its nature) from the place where Christ taught the Lord's Prayer to His disciples and "something" from the place where St. Peter shed bitter tears of repentance after having repudiated his Master.

During the stay in the Holy Land Bridget had an attack of illness, aggravated by her advanced age, her long life of asceticism and self-denial and the discomforts and privations of a long and perilous journey. The exact nature of her malady has never been ascertained, but it was destined to be her last. After a stay of over four months in Palestine, the pilgrims prepared to return to Italy by way of Cyprus, where they again landed at Famagusta on October 8, 1372, and were received with great cordiality by the Queen and the young King. On this occasion Bridget is reported to have addressed a severe admonition to the inhabitants of the island, in which she made a special effort to convert the schismatic Greek element of the population to the Church of Rome, threatening them with dire calamities and the vengeance of God if they did not improve their morals. The house of Lusignan continued to reign in Cyprus until the year 1489, when Queen Catherine Cornaro delivered the government of the island to her native city, Venice.

In the month of October the return of the pilgrims to Italy was resumed, and on her arrival in Naples, Bridget took up her residence in the royal palace, at the invitation of Queen Joanna. The pestilence had again broken out in that city and the Queen and the Archbishop greeted Bridget with the most effusive cordiality, no doubt believing her able to bring about its abatement. As usual, Bridget attributed the reappearance of the scourge to the sins and worldly manners of the population and the court and preached her customary penitential sermon. Her chief points of accusation are very characteristic of the period. The human features were painted in different colors, like senseless images and idols; people desired to appear more beautiful than God had made them; their clothes had an indecent cut and fit; men and women were distorted from their original shapes, and this was done from pride and a desire to appear more beautiful and frivolous than God had created worldly desires. Little heed was given to the passion of Christ, them, in order to excite in the spectators various temptations and how He stood at the pillar while being scourged, hung naked on the cross, covered with wounds and blood up to His eyes, dimmed with darkness, blood and tears, and so forth. The women of Naples conducted themselves like courtesans who loved sensuality, but did not trouble to bear children. When they discovered themselves to

be in a state of pregnancy they procured abortion by means of drugs and herbs, in order to be able to continue their life of pleasure. If those who lived in that manner desired to be saved, they should in the first place repent of their sins with all their hearts; in the second, confess all to their spiritual advisers, and, in the third, partake of the Holy Communion. To Archbishop Bernhard of Naples St. Bridget spoke of two other sins. Many heathen slaves were bought at Naples, but no attempts were made to convert them to the Christian faith or baptize them. In the case of such slaves as were baptized their masters did not provide for their instruction as to what the Church commanded in her sacraments; they sinned in various ways, but did not know how their sins might be expiated. There were men who considered their female slaves no better than bitches and either sold them to others or what was worse, delivered them to houses of ill-fame in order to receive a shameful and abominable profit, or otherwise they kept them in their own houses for the use of themselves and others. There were some who treated their servants so badly as almost to drive them to suicide. God, however, loved these unfortunates, because He had created them and because He came into this world Himself in order to save them. Some resorted to magicians and other miracle-workers in order to gain the affection of men and women as well as of their masters; others desired to elicit from such accursed people information as to what the future might have in store for them, and still others hoped to be cured of their diseases by such people. All such counsellors, male and female, were an abomination unto God, etc.

Bridget also severely reprimanded Queen Joanna. She (Joanna) should confess everything she had done from her childhood up and conform herself to the instructions of her confessor. She should particularly reflect on the manner in which she had conducted herself during her married life and in the administration of her government, because for what she had done she would be called upon to render an account before God. She should pay her debts and return that which she had unjustly acquired and not promise more than she could fulfill. She should not encumber the public with new taxes, but be satisfied with the customary revenues, because God listens to the cries and lamentations of the poor. Her advisers should be righteous and not influenced by greed. She should intrust jurisdiction to those who loved the truth and not be partial, nor try to enrich herself, but be satisfied with what was necessary. Each day, at stated times, she should meditate on the wounds and passion of Christ, because thereby love would be inspired in her heart. At certain times she should assemble around her the poor, wash their feet and console them. She should treat all her sub-

jects with sincere love, reconcile those who were at odds with one another and comfort those who had suffered injustice. She was to give alms in a rational manner and according to her ability, and not oppress some and favor others, but give wise assistance without injuring others. She should not so much consider the amount of penalty imposed as its justice; in the matter of crimes she should take into consideration the nature of the criminal, and wherever she could discern more of the human side of life, there she should bestow her greatest sympathy. She was to provide for the safekeeping of her kingdom after her death, as she could not expect to have any children. She should be satisfied with her natural complexion and the beauty of feature which God had given her, because unusual and gaudy colors are extremely displeasing to God. She must endeavor to acquire greater humility and a deeper repentance of her sins, since she would appear before God as having robbed Him of his souls, wasted His goods and caused His children anguish. In her heart she should always entertain a great fear of punishment, because she had led the life of a prostitute rather than that of a Queen. She was to lay aside all worldly habits, dismiss all female flatterers and use the remainder of her life, which was quite short (Joanna was about 45 years old at this period) for the glory of God, because up to that time she had conducted herself as a person who paid no heed to her sins. She must consider God as her judge. If she paid no attention to the divine voice, God would judge her not as a Queen, but as an ingrate and a renegade and chastise her from the crown of her head to the tip of her toes.

The foregoing is a good example of the frankness and fearlessness which characterized Bridget's advice to both high and low, and the fact that Joanna seemed to take no offense at Bridget's scoldings—for such they must have been—speaks volumes for her character. On the contrary, the Queen continued to befriend Bridget, who was at this time almost destitute of means, and Joanna's generosity alone enabled the saint to return to Rome. Bridget is said to have been deeply grieved at the abominable moral conditions which prevailed in beautiful Naples, but this was not the only fact which caused her distress, as the return of the Pope to Rome, which was her cherished dream, had not yet been brought about. In fact, she did not live long enough to witness it.

Toward the end of February, 1373, Bridget and her companions once more returned to Rome. This time she took up her lodgings in a house at the Piazza Farnese, which was to be her last. She was now utterly broken in health and her physical strength was almost wasted away. It is quite probable that it was this bodily



weakness which caused the many temptations to which she is said to have been exposed during the Lent of 1373. Honored by the great and powerful of the world, she felt tempted to pride on account of her high birth; the desires of the flesh, which had been strangers to her during her early life and marriage, commenced to harass the old woman (she must certainly have imagined them more serious than they were), and even doubts found their way into her soul, hideous doubts, as, for example, whether the Host which was elevated before the congregation during Mass *really* was the body of Christ. Upon the arrival of Easter, however, she at last obtained relief from her obsessions; the warm season was now approaching, and with it her remaining strength ebbed away hourly. On the 17th day of July she had a vision of Christ standing in front of the altar in her room, and He finally released her from her bondage of doubt and anxiety, stating that she was now to become His bride and plight her troth to Him before the altar. As His bride she was also to spiritually preside as mother superior of the convent at Vadstena. In the early morning of July 23, 1373, after having received Holy Communion, administered, according to some, by her friend, Alphonso of Jaen, Bridget expired, uttering the words, "*Domine, in manus tuas commendo animam meam.*" ("Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.")

As soon as the news of her death had spread in Rome, it is said that almost the entire city crowded around her apartments and the vicinity of her house in the Piazza Farnese. On the afternoon of the same day, notwithstanding the humble wish to be buried quietly at night (she had commanded them to bury her secretly at night, but on account of the crowd this could not be done; see "Bollandists," October, p. 461), a long cortege composed of great numbers of the clergy and the highest of the Roman nobility accompanied the body to the convent church of the Poor Clares of San Lorenzo, in Panisperna, on the highest point of the Viminal Hill, which had been a favorite resort of the saint during her life. The body was enclosed in a wooden coffin, and as it was the desire of her relatives to convey the remains to Sweden to be preserved in the convent she had founded, it was also wrapped in cloth. Her son Birger, who during his stay in Palestine had been made a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre; Latino Orsini, the Count of Nola and others affixed their seals to the seams of the cloth, in order to avoid future complications. The coffin was then deposited in a marble sarcophagus in the Church of San Lorenzo, in a place which Bridget herself had selected for that purpose.

It should be mentioned that at the time of Bridget's death many writers have stated that her intimate friend Bishop Alphonso de

Vadaterra was absent from Rome on a visit to the Pope in Avignon on some mission on behalf of Bridget, but this does not agree with the statement that the saint had received Holy Communion at the hands of Alphonso just before she died. According to the best authority, however, the Bishop of Jaen was in Avignon at the time of Bridget's death. Upon his return, preparations were immediately made to transport the remains to Sweden, and at the expiration of five weeks everything was in readiness for the journey. There seems to have been some difficulty in connection with the transportation of the coffin and it was therefore decided, after consultation with Bishop Alphonso, to have the flesh removed from the bones before commencing the journey. This task was assigned to the priest Magnus Petersson, who was an experienced anatomist, assisted by some Roman surgeons. The proceeding to be adopted for this purpose—the method appears rather gruesome—was the placing of the body in a tank of boiling water, together with some aromatic herbs. When, however, the hour for this operation had arrived, the seals broken and the coffin opened, it was found, according to the contemporaneous testimony of the above-mentioned Magnus, who was present at the time, that the flesh had entirely disappeared from the bones which were contained in the shroud, white and polished like ivory, as if the body had been in the grave for a period of ten years. The Catholic tradition, moreover, was to the effect that an exquisite fragrance proceeded from the coffin, and that the shroud which had contained the body was preserved dry and intact and did not present a single stain. The relics were now placed in a precious casket, with the exception, it is said, of the right arm, which was donated as a souvenir to the convent in Panisperna. Early in September the pilgrims left Rome, where they had resided for nearly twenty-eight years, embarked at Ancona for Triest and thence proceeded through Carinthia, Lower Austria, Poland and Prussia to Dantzic, where they embarked for Sweden.

While crossing the Baltic a strange incident appears to have occurred, which one of the party described as follows: "As we were on the sea which separates Sweden from Germany (the Baltic), and were quite uncertain, on account of the war, at what port of Sweden we might make the most convenient landing, there appeared suddenly in the sky about midday a dazzlingly brilliant star. It was first observed by a sick child on board, which showed it to us. We were greatly astonished at beholding such a bright star at the hour of noon, in full sunlight, and it seemed to precede and guide our ship." The party finally landed at the little harbor of Söderköping, in Ostrogothia, on June 29, 1374, less than a year after

Bridget's death. It is of interest to know that this little town, which at that time was quite a considerable seaport, now lies far inland, at a distance of several miles from the sea, proving the truth of Ovid's famous sentence:

*"Vidi factas ex aequore terras,  
Et procul a pelago conchae jacuere marinae,  
Et vetus inventa est in montibus anchora summis."*

In the mountain overlooking this little town and shown in the accompanying illustration iron rings have been found riveted in the rocks, indicating the mooring places of ships belonging to a legendary viking named Ramunder, who had his stronghold in this mountain and for whom it has been named.

From Söderköping the funeral procession, accompanied everywhere by vast crowds of people, proceeded to Linköping, the ancient seat of the Bishop of the diocese, and here Bishop Nicholas Hermansson received the pilgrims and the relics, which were afterward exposed for public veneration in the renowned Cathedral of that city. On July 4, 1374, as tradition has it, the procession reached Vadstena, Bridget's home town. The pilgrims carrying the remains of the famous saint proceeded to the convent gates, which were thrown wide open, the bells sounded their solemn salutation from the tower of the convent church and all the monks and nuns assembled to receive them. According to tradition, the relics were exposed for public veneration in the church for eight days, but the actual enshrinement did not take place until June 1, 1393. The remains of the saint still repose in the same casket in which they were transported across the continent of Europe, and to-day, after a lapse of nearly six hundred years, the bones may be viewed in the sacristy of the "*Klosterkyrkan*" (convent church) upon application to the sexton.

Of Bridget's pilgrim companions the two Peters returned to Alvastra, Magnus Petersson entered the Brigittine order, her own son Birger died in 1390, a year previous to the canonization of his mother and her daughter Catherine was subsequently beatified under the name of St. Catherine of Sweden and worshipped as the national saint *par excellence* of that country during the remaining part of the Catholic period. Meanwhile Catherine, again accompanied by Prior Peter of Alvastra and Peter Olafsson, had returned to Rome at the request of Bishop Nicholas of Linköping, in order to inaugurate and attend the canonization proceedings in that city. Arriving in Rome in the year 1376 (the year of the death of Gregory XI.), the two fathers took up their abode in the Cistercian monastery, while Catherine was again cordially received



by the Poor Clares of San Lorenzo, in Panisperna. Catherine at once secured an audience with Pope Gregory, shortly previous to his death. On the occasion of this visit she was attended by Peter Olafsson who carried the "*Liber Attestationum*," containing an account of all the miracles wrought by Bridget before and after her death, whereupon the usual committee of Cardinals was appointed to investigate into the merits of the case. This committee was headed by the famous Cardinal Joannes de Turrecremata (Spanish, Torquemada.) Meanwhile Gregory XI. died and Bartolomeo Prignano was elected at Rome as his successor, under the title of Urban VI., while at Avignon Robert of Geneva, who styled himself Clement VII. was elected anti-Pope. This gave rise to the so-called great schism of the West. The bull of confirmation of the Brigittine order was issued in December, 1378, Cardinal de Sabran having been appointed to reëxamine it. The prime mover in the cause of the Brigittine order as well as the matter of Bridget's beatification was the daughter Catherine, who labored with this end in view, assisted by another famous saint, Catherine of Siena. St. Catherine of Sweden died, however, on March 24, 1381, long before her filial task could be finished.

Bridget's canonization finally took place on October 8, 1391, accompanied by much ecclesiastical pomp and in the presence of a great number of priests and nobles. From 6 o'clock in the evening of October 6 and throughout the night announcement of the impending event was made by the tolling of all the church bells in Rome; at 7 o'clock the next morning the doors of the Papal chapel in the Vatican were thrown open, Pope Boniface IX. celebrated Solemn High Mass in person and delivered a statement giving the reasons entitling Bridget to a place among the saints of the Church. A solemn procession passed through the Apostolic Palace, many already invoking the blessing and assistance of the newly created Saint, and a plenary indulgence was granted to all who would visit the churches for the purpose of adoring the new saint. At the conclusion of the Mass and sermon Bridget's name was inscribed by Boniface IX. in the "*Liber Sanctorum*," and at midnight thirty thousand lamps were lighted in St. Peter's, in addition to innumerable candles and torches. According to an old account, the Holy Roman Emperor and all the kings, princes and a great number of the prelates of the Catholic world assisted in person at this celebration.

The memory of Bridget is still kept alive in Rome at the monastery church of San Lorenzo in Panisperna, where she once lived, in the Catacombs of St. Sebastian and in the Basilica of St. Paul's, where she had made frequent pilgrimages and where several of her

revelations occurred. The crucifix which she adored is still in existence and is uncovered on the first day of each month and on Wednesday of "Holy Week."

At the general or Oecumenical Council of Constanz, held from 1414 to 1418, during which Johann Huss suffered death at the stake, the great French theologian Jean Gerson, the energetic antagonist of religious mysticism, announced his doubts as to the genuineness of Bridget's revelations and the propriety of her canonization. At the subsequent Council of Basel, which commenced its labors in December, 1431, two Germans and one Spaniard submitted no less than 123 extracts from the "*Revelationes*," which they did not consider truly orthodox. The members of the Council were divided into four nations, i. e., the Italian, sections or by committees, one of which was assigned to the consideration of articles of faith. Each of the nations was represented in the last named committee. The aforementioned Cardinal Turrecremata, a Dominican prior, professor of theology and *Magister Sacri Palatii*, residing in the Apostolic Palace, Papal Delegate at the Council; Heymerich de Campo, vice-chancellor of the University of Cologne; Joannes Roberti, Cistercian abbot and professor of theology, and Luigi de Pirano, of the Order of St. Francis and also professor of theology, all of them men of great prominence within the Church, pronounced themselves convinced of the genuineness and truth of the "*Revelationes*." The decision of this Council, however, was adverse to Bridget's cause; the "Revelations" were not approved and the seal of the Council's disapproval was also, and with much greater reason, placed on the pretensions of the Brigittine monks that her Revelations should be entitled to the same credit as the Evangelists. But the effect of this decision was insignificant, in view of the existing schism. Pope John XXIII., whose election and authority were doubtful, confirmed the bull of canonization issued by Boniface IX., as well as the rules and constitution of the new order of St. Salvator. Finally, after the schism had ceased, Pope Martin V. (Otto Colonna) confirmed both the canonization and the rule in the year 1419.

Bridget's chief title to fame and the remembrance of mankind lies not so much in her visions or revelations, which have been doubted by many, as in her efforts to bring about reform not from without, but from within the Church. That these were largely unsuccessful was not her fault, but that of the period. As a reformer of the morals of her time and the customs and manners of the Church she holds and should hold an equal rank with such men as Savonarola, Erasmus of Rotterdam, Dante, William Durandus and others of equal fame, while her great piety and devotion to

religion have throughout subsequent ages endeared her name and memory to all the members of the Roman Catholic Church.

Tourists in Sweden should not fail to visit the beautiful town of Vadstena, which contains so many interesting relics and places of historic interest dating from a time when the New World was still unknown to European civilization. From a religious and sentimental point of view, it should also become an object of ambition on the part of the faithful to endeavor to obtain possession of the ancient monastery founded by St. Bridget, now desecrated to the uses of a lunatic asylum, as well as the monastery church, which contains many and precious relics from a period when the entire Christian world recognized the See of Rome as its supreme religious authority.

SVEN MAGNUS GRONBERGER.

Washington, D. C.











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