

ardours and transports of devotion with which the glorious Mother of God assisted at these wonderful mysteries which we commemorate, but in which she acted herself so great a part. With what sentiments did Mary bear in her womb, bring forth, and serve her adorable son, who was also her God? with what love and awe did she fix her eyes upon him, particularly at his circumcision? who can express in what manner she was affected when she saw him subjected to this painful and humbling ceremony? Filled with astonishment, and teeming affections of love and gratitude, by profound adorations and praise she endeavoured to make him all the amends in her power, and the best return and acknowledgment she was able. In amorous complaints that he would begin, in the excess of his love, to suffer for us in so tender an age, and to give this earnest of our redemption, she might say to him: *Truly thou art to me a spouse of blood.*(1) With the early sacrifice Christ here made of himself to his Father, she joined her own, offering her divine son, and with and through him herself, to be an eternal victim to his honour and love, with the most ardent desire to suffer all things, even to blood, for the accomplishment of his will. Under her mediation we ought to make him the tender of our homages, and with and through this holy Redeemer, consecrate ourselves to God without reserve.

### THE LIFE OF ST. FULGENTIUS, B.C.

Extracted from his works; and from his life, accurately written by a disciple of great abilities, the companion of his exile: and dedicated to Felician, his successor in the see of Ruspa. The author declares himself a monk; consequently was not the deacon Ferrandus, as some critics imagine.

A.D. 533.

FABIUS CLAUDIUS GORDIANUS FULGENTIUS was the descendant of a noble senatorian family of Carthage: but much decayed in its splendour by the invasion of the Vandals. His father, Claudius, being unjustly deprived of his house in Carthage, which was made over to the Arian priests, settled at an estate belonging to him at Telepte, the capital city of the province of Byzacena. Our saint was born in 468, about thirty years after the Barbarians had dismembered Africa from the Roman empire. He was educated in sentiments of piety with his younger brother, under the care of his mother Mariana, who was left a young widow.

(1) Exod. iv. 25.

Being, by her particular direction, taught the Greek very young, he spoke it with as proper and exact an accent as if it had been his native language. He also applied himself to Latin, and all the useful parts of human literature, under masters distinguished for consummate abilities: yet he knew how to mingle business with study; for he took upon himself the regulation of the family concerns, in order to ease his mother of the burden. His prudent circumspection in all the affairs he transacted, his virtuous conduct, his mild carriage to all, and more especially his deference for his mother, without whose express orders or approbation he never did any thing, caused him to be beloved and admired wherever his name was known. He was chosen procurator, that is, lieutenant-governor, and general receiver of the taxes of Byzacena. But it was not long before he grew disgusted with the world; and being justly alarmed at its dangers, he armed himself against them by pious reading, assiduous prayer, and rigorous fasting. His visits to monasteries were frequent; and happening, among other books of spiritual entertainment, to read a sermon of St. Austin on the thirty-sixth psalm, in which that father treats of the world and the short duration of human life, he felt within him strong desires of embracing the monastic state.

Huneric, the Arian king, had driven most of the orthodox bishops from their sees. One of these, named Faustus, had erected a monastery in Byzacena. It was to him that the young nobleman addressed himself for admittance; but Faustus immediately objecting the tenderness of his constitution, discouraged his desires with words of some harshness: "Go," said he, "and first learn to live in the world abstracted from its pleasures. Who can well suppose, that you on a sudden, relinquishing a life of softness and ease, can take up with our coarse diet and clothing, and can inure yourself to our watchings and fastings?" The saint, with downcast eyes, modestly replied: "He, who hath inspired me with the will to serve him, can also furnish me with courage and strength." This humble, yet resolute answer, induced Faustus to admit him on trial. The saint was then in the twenty-second year of his age. The news of so unthought of an event both surprised and edified the whole country; many even imitated the example of the governor. But Mariana his mother, in transports of grief, ran to the monastery, crying out at the gates: "Faustus! restore to me my son; to the people,

their governor; the church always protects widows; why then rob you me, a desolate widow, of my son?" She persisted several days in the same tears and cries. Nothing that Faustus could urge was sufficient to calm her, or prevail with her to depart without her son. This was certainly as great a trial of Fulgentius's resolution as it could well be put to; but the love of God having the ascendant in his breast, gave him a complete victory over all the suggestions of nature; Faustus approved his vocation, and accordingly recommended him to the brethren. The saint having now obtained all he wished for in this world, made over his estate to his mother, to be discretionally disposed of by her in favour of his brother, as soon as he should be arrived at a proper age. He totally abstained from oil and every thing savory; from wine also, drinking only water. His mortifications brought on him a dangerous illness; yet after recovery he abated nothing in them. The persecution breaking out anew, Faustus was obliged to withdraw; and our saint, with his consent, repaired to a neighbouring monastery, of which Felix, the abbot, would fain resign to him the government. Fulgentius was much startled at the proposal, but at length was prevailed upon to consent that they should jointly execute the functions. It was admirable to observe with what harmony these two holy abbots for six years governed the house. No contradiction ever took place between them; each always contended to comply with the will of his colleague. Felix undertook the management of the temporal concerns; Fulgentius's province was to preach and instruct.

In the year 499, the country being ravaged by an irruption of the Numidians, the two abbots were necessitated to fly to Sicca Veneria, a city of the proconsular province of Africa. Here it was, that an Arian priest ordered them to be apprehended and scourged on account of their preaching the consubstantiality of the Son of God. Felix, seeing the executioners seize first on Fulgentius, cried out; "Spare that poor brother of mine, whose delicate complexion cannot bear torments; let them rather be my portion, who am strong of body." They accordingly, at the instigation of this wicked priest, fell on Felix first, and the old man endured their stripes with the greatest alacrity. When it was Fulgentius's turn to experience the same rigorous treatment, he bore the lashes with great patience; but feeling the pain excessive, that he might gain a little respite and recruit his spirits, he requested his judge to give ear to something he

had to impart to him. The executioners thereupon being commanded to desist, he began to entertain him with an account of his travels. This savage monster expected nothing more than some overtures to be proposed to him of an intention to yield; but finding himself disappointed, in the utmost rage, ordered his torments to be redoubled. At length, having glutted his barbarity, the confessors were dismissed, their clothes rent, their bodies inhumanly torn, and their beards and hair plucked off. The very Arians were ashamed of such cruelty, and their bishop offered to punish the priest, if Fulgentius would but undertake his prosecution. His answer was, that a Christian is never allowed to seek revenge; and for their parts it was incumbent on them not to lose the advantage of patience, and the blessings accruing from the forgiving of injuries. The two abbots, to avoid an additional effort of the fury of these heretics, travelled to Ididi, on the confines of Mauritania. Here Fulgentius went aboard a ship for Alexandria, being desirous, for the sake of greater perfection, to visit the deserts of Egypt, renowned for the sanctity of the solitaries who dwelt there. But the vessel touching at Sicily, St. Eulalius, abbot at Syracuse, diverted him from his intended voyage, on assuring him, that "a perfidious dissention had severed this country from the communion of Peter,"\* meaning that Egypt was full of heretics, with whom those that dwelt there were obliged either to join in communion, or be deprived of the sacraments. The liberality and hospitality of Fulgentius to the poor, out of the small pittance he received for his particular subsistence, made Eulalius condemn himself of remissness in those virtues, and for the future imitate so laudable an example.

Our saint having laid aside the thoughts of pursuing his voyage to Alexandria, embarked for Rome, to offer up his prayers at the tombs of the apostles. One day passing through a square called Palma Aurea, he saw Theodoric, the king of Italy, seated on an exalted throne, adorned with pompous state, surrounded by the senate, and his court, with all the grandeur of the city displayed in the greatest magnificence: "Ah!" said Fulgentius, "how beautiful must the heavenly Jerusalem be, if earthly Rome be so glorious! What honour, glory and joy will God bestow on the saints in heaven, since here in this perishable

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\* A communione Petri perfida dissensio separavit.—Vit. S. Fulg. c. 12

life he clothes with such splendour the lovers and admirers of vanity!" This happened towards the latter part of the year 500, when that king made his first entry into Rome. Fulgentius returned home in a short time after, and was received with incredible joy. He built a spacious monastery in Byzacena, but retired to a cell himself, which was situate on the sea shore. Here his time was employed in writing, reading, prayer, mortification, and the manual labour of making mats and umbrellas of palm-tree leaves. Faustus, who was his bishop, obliged him to resume the government of his monastery; and many places at the same time sought him for their bishop. King Thrasimund having prohibited by edict, the ordination of orthodox bishops, several sees by this means had been long vacant and destitute of pastors. The orthodox prelates resolved to remedy this inconveniency, as they effectually did; but the king receiving intelligence of the matter, caused Victor, the primate of Carthage, to be apprehended. All this time our saint lay concealed, though sought after eagerly by many citizens for their bishop. Thinking the danger over, he appeared again, but Ruspa, now a little town called Alfaques, in the district of Tunis, still remained without a pastor; and by the consent of the primate, whilst detained in the custody of the king's messengers, Fulgentius was forcibly taken out of his cell, and consecrated bishop in 508.

His new dignity made no alteration in his manners. He never wore the *orarium*, a kind of stole then used by bishops, nor other clothes than his usual coarse garb, which was the same in winter and summer. He went sometimes barefoot: he never undressed to take rest, and always rose to prayer before the midnight office. His diet chiefly consisted of pulse and herbs, with which he contented himself, without consulting the palate's gratification by borrowed tastes: but in more advanced years, finding his sight impaired by such a regimen, he admitted the use of a little oil. It was only in very considerable bodily indispositions, that he suffered a drop or two of wine, to be mingled with the water which he drank; and he never could be prevailed upon in any seeming necessity to use the least quantity of flesh meat, from the time of his monastic profession till his death. His modesty, meekness, and humility, gained him the affections of all, even of the ambitious deacon Felix, who had opposed his election and whom the saint received and treated

with the most cordial charity. His great love for a recluse life induced him to build a monastery near his own house at Ruspa, which he designed to put under the direction of his ancient friend Felix; but before the building could be completed, or he acquit himself to his wish of his episcopal duties, orders were issued from king Thrasimund, for his banishment to Sardinia. with others, to the number of sixty orthodox bishops. Fulgentius, though the youngest of this venerable body, who were transported from Carthage to Sardinia, was, notwithstanding, their sole oracle in all doubts, and their tongue and pen upon all occasions; and not only of them, but even of the whole church of Africa. What spread a brighter lustre on these amiable qualities, were the humility and modesty with which he always declared his sentiments; he never preferred his counsel to that of another, his opinion he never intruded. Pope Symmachus, out of his pastoral care and charity, sent every year provisions in money and clothes to these champions of Christ.(1) A letter of this pope to them is still extant,(2) in which he encourages and comforts them; and it was at the same time that he sent them certain relics of SS. Nazarius and Romanus, "that the example and *patronage*,"(3) as he expresses it, "of those generous soldiers of Christ, might animate the confessors to fight valiantly the battles of the Lord." Saint Fulgentius, with some companions, converted his house at Cagliari into a monastery; which immediately became the comfort of all in affliction, the refuge of the poor, and the oracle to which the whole country resorted for deciding their controversies without appeal. In this retirement the saint composed many learned treatises for confirming and instructing the faithful in Africa. King Thrasimund, hearing that he was their principal support, and their invincible advocate, was desirous of seeing him; and having accordingly sent for him, appointed him lodgings in Carthage. The king then drew up a set of objections, to which he required his immediate answer; the saint without hesitation complied with, and discharged the injunction; and this is supposed to be his book, entitled, *An Answer to Ten Objections*. The king equally admired his humility and learning, and the orthodox triumphed exceedingly in the advantage their cause gained by this piece. To prevent a second

(1) Anastas. in Symmacho. Bar. ad ann. 504. Flury, Liv. 31.

(2) Inter opera Ennodii. t. 4. Conc. Labb. col. 1300. (3) *Patrocinia*.

time the same effect, the king when he sent him new objections, ordered them to be only read to him. Fulgentius refused to give an answer in writing, unless he was allowed to take a copy of them. He addressed, however, to the king an ample and modest confutation of Arianism, which we have under the title of his *Three Books to King Thrasimund*. The prince was pleased with the work, and granted him permission to reside at Carthage; till upon repeated complaints from the Arian bishops of the success of his preaching, which threatened, they said, a total extinction of their sect in Carthage, he was sent back to Sardinia in 520. Being ready to go aboard the ship, he said to a Catholic whom he saw weeping—"Grieve not, Juliatus!" for that was his name, "I shall shortly return, and we shall see the true faith of Christ flourish again in this kingdom, with full liberty to profess it; but divulge not this secret to any." The event confirmed the truth of the prediction. His humility concealed the multiplicity of miracles which he wrought, and he was wont to say—"A person may be endowed with the gift of miracles, and yet may lose his soul—miracles ensure not salvation; they may indeed procure esteem and applause; but what will it avail a man to be esteemed on earth, and afterwards be delivered up to hell torments?" If the sick, for whom he prayed, recovered, to avoid being puffed up with vain-glory, he ascribed it wholly to the divine mercy. Being returned to Cagliari, he erected a new monastery near that city, and was exceeding careful to supply his monks with all necessities, especially in sickness; but would not suffer them to ask for any thing, alleging, "That we ought to receive all things as from the hand of God, with resignation and gratitude." Thus he was sensible how conducive the unreserved denial of the will is for perfecting ourselves in the paths of virtue.

King Thrasimund died in 523, having nominated Hilderic his successor. Knowing him inclined to favour the orthodox, he exacted from him an oath, that he would never restore their profession. To evade this, Hilderic, before the death of his predecessor, signed an order for the liberty of the orthodox churches, but never had the courage to declare himself of the same belief; his lenity having quite degenerated into softness and indolence. However, the professors of the true faith called home their pastors. The ship which brought them back, was received at Carthage with the greatest demonstrations of joy; the shore echoed far and near

with repeated acclamations, more particularly when Fulgentius appeared on the upper deck of the vessel. The confessors went straight to the church of St. Agileus, to return thanks to God, and were accompanied by thousands; but on their way, being surprised with a sudden storm, the people, to show their singular regard for Fulgentius, made a kind of umbrella over his head with their cloaks to defend him from the inclemency of the storm. The saint hastened to his own church, and immediately set about the reformation of the abuses that had crept in during the persecution, which had now continued seventy years; but this reformation was carried on with a sweetness that won sooner or later the hearts of the most vicious. In a council held at Junque, in 524, a certain bishop, named Quodvultdeus, disputed the precedence with our saint, who made no reply, though he would not oppose the council, which ordered him to take the first place. The other resented this as an injury offered to the dignity of his see; and St. Fulgentius, in another council soon after, publicly requested that Quodvultdeus might be allowed the precedence. His talents for preaching were singular; and Boniface, the archbishop of Carthage, never heard him without watering, all the time, the ground with his tears, thanking God for having given so great a pastor to his church.\*

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\* St. Fulgentius, in his first letter, to a gentleman, whose wife in a violent sickness had made a vow of continency, proves that a vow of chastity ought not to be made by a person engaged in a married state, without the free consent of the husband. In his second, to Galla, a most virtuous Roman lady, he comforts her upon the death of her husband, who, he says, was only gone a little before her to glory: and he sets before her the divine mercy, which by this means called her to a more heroic practice of all virtues in the state of widowhood, especially continence, plainness in dress, furniture, and diet, refuse alms-deeds, and holy prayer, the exercise whereof ought to be her most assiduous employment. Herein he warns her that vanity and pride are our most dangerous enemies, against which we must diligently watch and arm ourselves. In his third letter, addressed to the holy lady Proba, sister of Galla, consecrated to God by a vow of virginity, he shows the excellency of that virtue, and recommends, at length, temperance, penance, and perfect humility, as its essential attendants, without which it cannot render a soul the spouse of Christ, who chose her poor, and bestowed on her all she had. In his fourth letter, to the same lady, he again puts her in mind of the extreme danger of pride and vain-glory, and lays down excellent precepts concerning the necessity of assiduous prayer and compunction; in which spirit we are bound to weep continually before God, imploring his mercy and succour under the weight of our miseries, and to pay him the constant tribute of praise and thanksgiving for all his benefits and gratuitous favours. His letter to the abbot Eugypius, is a commendation of fraternal charity, a principal fruit of which is, to pray for one another. In the sixth letter, he congratulates with Theodorus, a senator, upon his conversion from the world, promising



About a year before his death, he secretly retired from all business into a monastery on the little island, or rock, called

himself that such an example would have great influence over many: for, "those who are raised above others by their rank in the world, either draw many with themselves into eternal damnation, or are to many an occasion of salvation." The saint strenuously exhorts him to the study of the most profound humility, which is the only greatness of a Christian; and is always attended with its sister virtue, meekness. The seventh letter of this father is addressed to the illustrious and venerable lady Venantia, and contains a strong exhortation to the spirit and practice of penance, with advice against despair. The sermons and homilies of St. Fulgentius are usually short: we have near one hundred extant, which bear his name, but some of these belong to St. Austin. The danger and evil of presumption and pride, are points which he takes every occasion to inculcate: he teaches, that it is impossible to know God, and his benefits and goodness, unless we have a true knowledge of ourselves, and our own frailty and miseries. (Hom. 14, p. 123. Bibl. Patr. Lugdun. T. 9, Part. 1.) In his sermons and letters, he frequently enforces the obligation of alms-deeds. His other works are chiefly polemical against the Arians, Pelagians, and Nestorians. In his books against the Sermon of Fastidiosus, (an Arian priest,) to Felix the Notary: On the Orthodox Faith, to Donatus, against Fabian: Three Books to King Thrasimund: Ten Answers to Ten Objections of the Arians, &c. he explains the trinity of persons in one divine nature, solidly answers the objections of the Arians, and frequently shows that prayers which are addressed to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Ghost, are addressed to the whole Blessed Trinity. (Lib. 9. contra Fabium, p. 620. &c.) Showing that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are equally to be adored, he distinguishes the worship of *Latria* or adoration, which is due to God alone, and that of *Dulia*, which is given to creatures. (Ib. lib. 4. p. 592.) Pinta, an Arian bishop, having published a treatise against our saint's books to king Thrasimund, St. Fulgentius answered him by a work which is lost. For that which we have among his writings, is the performance of some other Catholic controvertist of the same age, as the learned agree. This author's style falls short of St. Fulgentius's: he quotes the Scripture according to the Old Italic Version; our saint always makes use of the Vulgate. He understood not the Greek tongue, in which St. Fulgentius was well skilled. And the author of our saint's life mentions, that in his book against Pinta he referred to his books to king Thrasimund, which is not found in this work.

One of the most famous among the writings of St. Fulgentius, is that entitled, On the Two-fold Predestination, to Monimus, in answer to certain difficulties proposed to him by a friend of that name. In the first book he shows, that though God foresees sin, he predestinates no one to evil, but only to good, or to grace and glory. In the second book, he proves that the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood is offered not to the Father alone, as the Arians pretended, but to the whole Blessed Trinity. In this and the third book he answers certain other difficulties. In his two books, On the Remission of Sins, to Euthymius, he proves that sins can never be forgiven without sincere repentance, or out of the pale of the true church. When Peter, a deacon, and three other deputies from the Scythian monks in the East, arrived at Rome to be informed of the sentiments of the western churches, concerning the late errors advanced in the East, against the mystery of the Incarnation, and in the West, by the Sempelagians, against the necessity of divine grace, they consulted the sixty African bishops who were at that time in banishment, in Sardinia. St. Fulgentius was pitched upon to send an answer in the name of this venerable company of Confessors. This produced his book, On the

Circinia, in order to prepare himself for his passage to eternity, which he did with extraordinary fervour. The necessities and importunities of his flock recalled him to Ruspa a little before his exit. He bore the violent pains of his last illness for seventy days with admirable patience having this prayer almost always in his mouth\*—"Lord, grant me patience now, and hereafter mercy and pardon." The physicians advised him the use of baths; to whom he answered, "Can baths make a mortal man escape

Incarnation and Grace, in the first part of which he confutes the Nestorians and Eutychians, and in the second the Semipelagians. His three books, On the Truth of Predestination and Grace, addressed to John the Archimandrite, and Venerius, deacon of Constantinople, are another fruit of the leisure which his exile gave him. In the first part he shows, that grace is the *pure* effect of the divine goodness and mercy: in the second, that it destroys not free-will; and in the third, that the divine election both to grace and glory is purely gratuitous. In another treatise or letter, to the same John and Venerius, who had consulted the Confessors, in Sardinia, about the doctrine of Faustus of Riez, he confutes Semipelagianism.

In the treatise, On the Incarnation, to Scarilas, he explains that mystery, showing that the Son became man, not the Father, or the Holy Ghost, and that in God the trinity destroys not the unity of the nature. Ferrand, the learned deacon of Carthage, consulted St. Fulgentius about the baptism of a certain Ethiopian, who had desired that sacrament, but was speechless and senseless when it was administered to him. Our saint, in a short treatise on this subject, demonstrates this baptism to have been both necessary and valid. By another treatise, addressed to this Ferrand, he answers five questions proposed by him, concerning the Trinity and Incarnation. Count Reginus consulted him whether the body of Christ was corruptible, and begged certain rules for leading a Christian life in a military state. St. Fulgentius answered the first point, proving that Christ's mortal body was liable to hunger, thirst, pain, and corruption. The second part of moral instructions, which he lived not to finish, was added by Ferrand the deacon. St. Fulgentius's book, on Faith, to Peter, is concise and most useful. It was drawn up after the year 523, about the time of his return from Sardinia. One Peter, designing to go to Jerusalem, requested the saint to give him in writing a compendious rule of faith, by studying which he might be put upon his guard against the heresies of that age. St. Fulgentius executed this in forty articles, some copies add forty-one. In these he explains, under anathemas, the chief mysteries of our faith, especially the Trinity, Incarnation, sacrifice of the altar, (cap. 19. p. 475.) absolute necessity of the true faith, and of living in the true church, to steadfastness, in which he strongly and pathetically exhorts all Christians in the close of the work. (c. 44, 45.) For if we owe fidelity to our temporal prince, much more to Christ, who redeemed our souls, and whose anger we are bound to fear above all things, nay, as the only evil truly to be dreaded. The writings of this Father discover a deep penetration and clear conception, with an admirable perspicuity in the diction; but seeming apprehensive of not having sufficiently inculcated his matter, he is diffusive, and runs into repetitions. His reasoning is just and close, corroborated by scripture and tradition. The accurate F. Sirmond published part of his writings, but the most complete edition of them was given at Paris, in 4to. 1684.

\* Domine da mihi modo patientiam, et postea indulgentiam.

death, when his life is arrived at its final period?" He would abate nothing of his usual austerities, without an absolute necessity. In his agony, calling for his clergy and monks, who were all in tears, he begged pardon, if he had ever offended any one of them; he comforted them, gave them some short moving instructions, and calmly breathed forth his pious soul in the year 533, and of his age the 65th, on the 1st of January, on which day his name occurs in many calendars soon after his death, and in the Roman; but in some few on the 16th of May; perhaps the day on which his relics were translated to Bourges, in France, about the year 714, where they still remain deposited.\* His disciple relates, that Pontian, a neighbouring bishop, was assured in a vision of his glorious immortality. The veneration for his virtues, was such, that he was interred within the church contrary to the law and custom of that age, as is remarked by the author of his life. St. Fulgentius proposed to himself St. Austin for a model; and as a true disciple, imitated him in his conduct; faithfully expounding his doctrine, and imbibing his spirit.

#### ST. ODILO, OR OLON, SIXTH ABBOT OF CLUNI.

His family was that of the lords of Mercœur, one of the most illustrious of Auvergne. Divine grace inclined him from his infancy to devote himself to God with his whole heart. He was very young when he received the monastic habit at Cluni, from the hands of St. Mayeul, by whose appointment he was made his coadjutor in 991, though only twenty-nine years of age; and from the death of St. Mayeul in 994, our saint was charged with the entire government of that great abbey. He laboured to subdue his carnal appetites by his rigorous fasting, wearing hair-cloth next his skin, and studded iron chains. Notwithstanding those austerities practised on himself, his carriage to others was most mild and humane. It was usual with him to say, that of two extremes he chose rather to offend by tenderness, than a too rigid severity. In a great famine in 1006, his liberality to the poor

\*See Gall. Christ. Nov. T. 1. p. 121. and Baillet, p. 16. The written relation of this translation is a production of the tenth century, and deserves no regard; but the constant tradition of the church and country proves the translation to have been made. (See Hist. Liter. de la France, T. 6. p. 265.) The church in which these relics are venerated at Bourges is called St. Fulgentius's. The saint's head is in the church of the archbishop's seminary which was anciently an abbey, and named Monte-mayen.