

ST. MERIADEC, BISHOP OF VANNES, CONFESSOR.

WHILST he lived in the world, he employed the revenue of a great estate of which he was master, in charitable works, and at length stripped himself of it principally in favour of the poor. From that time he lived a recluse in a desert place, a mile from the castle of Pontivi in the viscounty of Rohan in Brittany. The viscount himself visited the saint, and had the greatest veneration for his sanctity.* The canons and people of Vannes, seconded by the bishops of the province, compelled him much against his will to fill the episcopal see of that city. With this dignity his charity to the poor received a great increase; for he looked upon himself by that sacred character as it were anointed the father and comforter of all the distressed. Under his episcopal ornaments he wore a rough hair shirt, and had no better covering to his bed than sackcloth. The legend and ancient lessons of Treguir place his death in 1302. In the old Breviary of Nantes, in that of Vannes, &c., an office is appointed in his honour on the 7th of June. He is titular saint of the chapel of the castle of Pontivi, and of several others in Brittany. See Henschenius, t. 2, Junij, p. 36, and Lobineau, Vies des SS. de Bretagne, p. 242.

JUNE VIII.**ST. MEDARD, BISHOP OF NOYON, CONFESSOR.**

From his life, written by Fortunatus, bishop of Poitiers, one in verse, another in prose, and from St. Gregory of Tours, L. de Glor. Conf. c. 95, and Hist. Franc. See also a life of St. Medard, though of less authority, compiled by a monk of St. Medard's at Soissons, about the year 892, published by D'Achery, Spicil. t. 8, and the Bollandists. Henschenius and Papebroke, t. 2, Junij. p. 78, and another written by Radbod II. bishop of Noyon and Tournay, who died in 1082, ib. p. 87. Cointe, Annal. Franc. Gall. Christ. Nov. t. 9, p. 979.

SIXTH AGE.

St. MEDARD, one of the most illustrious prelates of the church

* This circumstance ascertains the age in which St. Meriadec lived. For the title of Viscounts of Rohan in Brittany was not known before the twelfth century. That derives its chief honour from the marriage of the Viscount John II. with Mary, daughter of Francis I. duke of Brittany, and his wife Isabel Stuart, daughter of James I. king of Scotland, in 1445.

of France in the sixth century, was born at Salency, in Picardy, about the year 457. His father Nectard was a noble Frenchman, who made a figure in the king's court; and his mother, Protogia, was descended of an ancient Roman family which was settled in Gaul. She brought to her husband several great estates, and among others that of Salency, situated about a league from Noyon. She was a lady of extraordinary piety, and the saintly education and early virtue of her son were the fruit of her attention and example, which was seconded by the authority and influence of her husband, whom she had gained to Christ from idolatry. She instilled into Medard from his infancy, the most tender compassion for the poor. At Salency he one day gave his coat to a blind beggar that was almost naked, and when he was asked what he had done with it, he answered that the sight of the distress and nakedness of a poor blind man, who was a fellow-member in Christ, had so strongly affected him that it was not in his power not to give him part of his own clothes. When he was employed in looking after the cattle in his father's grounds, according to the custom of that age in France, even in good families, as among the ancient Hebrews, he often deprived himself of his dinner to divide it among the necessitous. Fasting was his delight in an age in which children seldom know what it is to curb their appetites. These virtues were supported by an uncommon spirit of prayer and retirement, and a great purity and innocence of manners. When he was old enough, he was sent abroad to be initiated in the higher studies: he went first to Augusta Verumanduorum,* the capital of the province, and afterwards to Tournay, where King Childeric I. is said to have kept his court. Pomp and splendour, which so much dazzle the eyes of worldly men, had no charms for the saint, whose soul loathed everything in which he did not find his God. His parents, delighted with his happy dispositions for virtue, called him back to the city of Vermand, and entreated the bishop to instruct him in the sacred science of the holy scriptures. The scholar astonished the master both by his rapid progress in learning, and still more by the fervour of his piety, his assiduity

* The Latin of Vermand.

in prayer, his tears, with which he continually watered his cheeks at his devotions; the readiness of his obedience; his extraordinary humility, and the austerity of his mortifications: in concealing which he was most ingenious. Yet all his exercises appeared to him no better than sloth and imperfection; and it was his constant complaint that he was not allowed to do penance. Being promoted to the priesthood in the thirty-third year of his age, he became a bright ornament of that sacred Order. He preached the word of God to the people with an unction which touched the hearts of the most hardened; but the influence of his example, by which he enforced the precepts which he delivered from the pulpit, seemed irresistible. He employed in holy contemplation and prayer all the time which his exterior functions did not claim. His fasts were continual and severe; but the perfect mortification of his will and passions by meekness and humility, seemed that virtue by which he was rendered most admirable. No man seems ever to have been more perfectly master of himself, or to have possessed a more constant evenness of temper. He never appeared elated with joy, or dejected and sunk by sadness upon any vicissitude in human affairs; was always patient and silent in adversity; sweet, courteous, and humble in prosperity, affable and beneficent to all, especially to the poor.

In 530, Alomer, the thirteenth bishop of that country, dying, St. Medard was unanimously chosen to fill the see, and was consecrated by St. Remigius, who had baptized King Clovis in 496, and was then exceedingly old. Our saint's new dignity did not make him abate anything of his austerities, but added to them the solicitude of his pastoral charge; and though at that time seventy-two years old, he thought himself obliged to redouble his labours. Though his diocese was very wide, it seemed not to suffice for his zeal, which could not be confined wherever he saw an opportunity of advancing the honour of God, and of abolishing the remains of idolatry. He rejoiced in calumnies and persecutions, and always triumphed over them by silence and patience. He had the affliction to see his diocese cruelly ravaged by the Huns and Vandals; but this calamity was to him a great spiritual harvest, by the opportunities it afforded him of exerting his charity and courage. He was, under that

deluge of miseries, the refuge, support, and comfort of all the distressed. The ancient city of Augusta Verumanduorum being, by the fury of wars and other misfortunes, brought to a ruinous condition, and lying open to the incursions of barbarians, St. Medard transferred his see to Noyon, a strong walled town. From that time the old capital, which had been so flourishing in the times of the Gauls, fell entirely to decay; and at present nothing of it remains except a borough with a Premonstratensian abbey, which still retains the name of Vermand. The neighbouring town of St. Quintin is now become the capital of that part of Picardy.*

Other provinces envied the happiness of the Vermandois in possessing so great a pastor, and earnestly desired to share in the same. The clergy and people of Tournay, being supported by King Clotaire I., the son of Clovis the Great, after the death of St. Eleutherius in 532, would have no other person for their bishop. In compliance with their desire, St. Remigius, their metropolitan, thinking this necessary for the propagation of the gospel, with the approbation of the pope, commanded St. Medard to govern both those great diocesses, which from that time remained united under the same bishop for the space of five hundred years. Till then, some parts of the diocese of Tournay lay benighted under the shades of idolatry. St. Medard visited them all, and though he was often threatened, and sometimes seized by the Pagans with a view of taking away his life, he overcame all obstacles, and by his zealous labours and miracles, the rays of the gospel dispelled the mists

* The present Vermand is a small town or village, with an abbey of the Order of Premontr , three leagues from St. Quintin's, and four from Peronne. Nicholas Sanson has demonstrated this borough to have been built on the spot and from the ruins of the ancient Augusta Verumanduorum. Adrian Valois and the Abb  de Longuerue object, that according to the ancient life of St. Quintin, that martyr's body was buried at Augusta Verumanduorum. But the author evidently gives that name to the new town of St. Quintin's only because the inhabitants of Vermand had removed thither their households and city. For the old city having been destroyed by the barbarians about the year 531, St. Medard translated his see to Noyon, C sar's Noviomagus. Part of the inhabitants retired to Noyon; but the greater part founded the new city of St. Quintin. See Nic. Sanson, In Pharum Galli  Disquisitiones Geographic ; Index Alphabeticus, et Exercitationes Geographometric  ad utrumque Itinerarium Romanum per Gallias. Also Sanadon, Clavier, &c.

of idolatry throughout the whole extent of his diocesses. What rendered this task more difficult and perilous, was the savage and fierce disposition of the ancient inhabitants of Flanders, who were the most barbarous of all the nations of the Gauls and Franks, as the original historians frequently take notice. The Greeks and Romans civilized the western part of the world, by teaching the barbarous nations to cultivate their minds with the useful and polite arts. But the most elegant ages of those empires themselves may, in many respects, be esteemed barbarous if compared with Christianity. The divine spirit of mildness, patience, humility, and charity which it inspires, and the purity, and sanctity of its morals, have refined the minds of men, corrected the ignorance, stupidity, and barbarism of the fiercest nations, and diffused a rational, virtuous, and holy temper throughout the countries where the gospel has been planted. St. Medard, with incredible pains, brought over the most rude and wild people from their barbarous manners, inspired them with the meek spirit of the gospel, and rendered them a civilized and Christian nation, abounding with examples of eminent virtue, as Miræus observes. Our saint having completed this great work in Flanders, returned to Noyon, where Radegondes, queen of France in 544, received the religious veil from his hands, with the consent of her husband, Clotaire, and was made a deaconess.* Shortly after, the saint fell sick. Upon the first news of his illness, King Clotaire, who always honoured him as a living saint, came to Noyon to pay him a visit, and to receive his blessing. Soon after his departure, the saint rested from his labours in a very advanced age, in the sixth century, according to Le Cointe in 545, according to Pagi in 561. The whole kingdom lamented his death as the loss of their common father and protector. His body was buried in his own cathedral; but King Clotaire was so moved by many miracles wrought at his tomb, that he desired to translate his precious remains to Soissons, where he then chiefly resided.

Clotaire was an able, valiant, and generous prince, but had tarnished his glory by actions of cruelty and ambition in his

* On the Deaconesses read the learned dissertation of Cupérus the Bollandist, Augusti, t. 3, p. 51. Bingham, &c.

youth. He reigned first king of Soissons. By the death of his brother Clodomir in 524, he obtained a share in the kingdom of Orleans: by the death of Thierry in 544, he added Austrasia or Metz to his dominions; and by that of Childebart in 558 he became also king of Paris, and of all France. He endeavoured to expiate the crimes of his youth by works of penance, and listened to the advice of St. Medard. Having begun to build a stately church and abbey at Soissons, after the death of that holy man, he caused his relics to be translated thither from Noyon in a shrine covered with most precious stuffs, seeded with diamonds, and adorned with plates of gold; the king himself, the princes, his children, and all the chief lords of the court attending the procession: the king thought himself honoured by sometimes putting his royal shoulders under the burden. The body was laid at Crouy or Croiac, a village eastward of Soissons, near the gates, and a small church or oratory of wood was raised over it, till the church in Soissons could be finished. Clotaire dying in 561 at Compiègne, the structure of this abbey was completed by King Sigebert, one of his younger sons. It has been sometimes styled by popes the chief of all the Benedictin abbeys in France. Fortunatus and St. Gregory of Tours, who lived before the close of the same century, testify, that in their time the festival of St. Medard was celebrated in France with great solemnity. A small portion of his relics was procured for the parish church which bears his name in Paris.

All holy pastors were eminently men of prayer. Besides the constant homage of public prayer, they retired frequently into their closets or into wildernesses to give themselves up entirely to this heavenly exercise. This Jesus teaches them by so often withdrawing into deserts and mountains to pray, and to spend whole nights in prayer. The most retired places, and the calmest and most silent seasons ought to be chosen, that our souls may most perfectly soar above all earthly things, and sequestering our minds and hearts from them, converse in heaven, and recommend to God both our own and others' necessities. The sanctification both of the pastor and his flock requires this. To retire sometimes to speak to God for them is not to abandon them, but to serve them in the best manner by endeavouring

to draw down the most abundant showers of divine grace upon them, and by purifying his own soul, and replenishing himself with God and his truths, learning the art of imparting them with their interior spirit. Without this, the salvation both of the pastor and his people is equally in danger. The apostles joined prayer with their ministry, as equally dividing their care and their time. Acts vi. 4.

ST. GILDARD, OR GODARD,

BISHOP OF ROUEN, CONFESSOR.

HE is commemorated jointly with St. Medard in the Roman Martyrology, and in the new Paris and old Sarum Breviaries. He assisted at the first council of Orleans in 511, and governed the see of Rouen with great zeal during the space of fifteen years. He was buried at St. Mary's in Rouen, which is since called St. Gildard's, or in French St. Godard's. In the Norman incursions his body was translated to St. Medard's at Soissons, and still remains there. That he was brother of St. Medard was unknown to Fortunatus, Gregory of Tours, &c. See Pommeraye, History of the Archbishops of Rouen, Baillet, &c.

ST. MAXIMINUS, C.

FIRST ARCHBISHOP OF AIX, IN PROvence.

HE planted the faith in that country, probably before the close of the first century, about the same time it was first preached at Marseilles. He is said by some moderns to have been one of the disciples of our Lord. St. Sedonius was his successor, and second bishop of Arles, supposed by the people of the country to have been the man born blind whom our Redeemer healed. Their relics are shown with those of many other saints at St. Maximin's, a town six leagues from Aix, built at the place where this saint was buried. The monastery, which was formerly of the Order of St. Bennet and dependent on St. Victor's at Marseilles, was given by St. Lewis's brother, Charles, count of Provence, to the Dominicans, who enjoy it with extraordinary privileges, and an exemption of the whole town from the spiritual jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Aix. On