

of bread became reduced to eight ounces. St. Dorotheus proceeded with his pupil after much the same manner in other monastic duties; and thus, by a constant and unreserved denial of his own will, and a perfect submission to his director, he surpassed in virtue the greatest fasters of the monastery. All his actions seemed to have nothing of choice, nothing of his own humour in any circumstance of them, the will of God alone reigned in his heart. At the end of five years he was intrusted with the care of the sick, an office he discharged with such an incomparable vigilance, charity, and sweetness, as procured him a high and universal esteem: the sick in particular were comforted and relieved by the very sight of him. He fell into a spitting of blood and a consumption, but continued to the last denying his own will, and was extremely vigilant to prevent any of its suggestions taking place in his heart; being quite the reverse of those persons afflicted with sickness, who, on that account, think everything allowed them. Unable to do anything but pray, he asked continually, and followed, in all his devotions, the directions of his master; and when he could not perform his long exercises of prayer, he declared this with his ordinary simplicity to St. Dorotheus, who said to him: "Be not uneasy, only have Jesus Christ always present in your heart." He begged of a holy old man, renowned in that monastery for sanctity, to pray that God would soon take him to himself. The other answered: "Have a little patience, God's mercy is near. Soon after he said to him: "Depart in peace, and appear in joy before the blessed Trinity, and pray for us." The same servant of God declared after his death, that he had surpassed the rest in virtue, without the practice of any extraordinary austerity. Though he is honoured with the epithet of saint, his name is not placed either in the Roman or Greek calendars.

## B. PETER DAMIAN, OR OF DAMIAN.

CARDINAL, BISHOP OF OSTIA.

From his life by his disciple, John of Lodi, in Mabill. s. 6. Ben. and from his own writings. Fleury, b. 59. n. 48. and Hist. des Ordres Relig. Ceillier, t. 20. p. 512. Henschenius, ad 23 Febr. p. 406.

A.D. 1072.

PETER, surnamed of Damian, was born about the year 988, in Ravenna, of a good family, but reduced. He was the youngest

of many children, and losing his father and mother when very young, was left in the hands of a brother who was married, in whose house he was treated more like a slave, or rather like a beast, than one so nearly related; and when grown up he was sent to keep swine. He one day became master of a piece of money, which instead of laying it out in something for his own use, he chose to bestow it in alms on a priest, desiring him to offer up his prayers for his father's soul. He had another brother called Damian, who was arch-priest of Ravenna, and afterwards a monk: who, taking pity on him, had the charity to give him an education. Having found a father in this brother, he seems from him to have taken the surname of Damian, though he often styles himself the sinner, out of humility. Those who call him *De Honestis*, confound him with Peter of Ravenna, who was of the family of *Honesti*. Damian sent Peter to school, first at Faenza, afterwards at Parma, where he had Ivo for his master. By the means of good natural parts and close application, it was not long before he found himself in a capacity to teach others, which he did with great applause, and no less advantage by the profits which accrued to him from his professorship. To arm himself against the allurements of pleasure and the artifices of the devil, he began to wear a rough hair shirt under his clothes, and to inure himself to fasting, watching, and prayer. In the night, if any temptation of concupiscence arose, he got out of bed and plunged himself into the cold river. After this, he visited churches, reciting the psalter whilst he performed this devotion, till the church office began. He not only gave much away in alms; but was seldom without some poor person at his table, and took a pleasure in serving such, or rather Jesus Christ in their persons, with his own hands. But thinking all this to be removing himself from the deadly poison of sin but by halves, he resolved entirely to leave the world and embrace a monastic life, and at a distance from his own country, for the sake of meeting with fewer obstacles to his design. While his mind was full of these thoughts two religious of the order of St. Benedict, belonging to Font-Avellano, a desert at the foot of the Apennine in Umbria, happened to call at the place of his abode; and being much edified at their disinterestedness, he took a resolution to embrace their institute, as he did soon after. This hermitage had been founded by blessed Ludolph, about twenty years before St. Peter came thither, and was then in the greatest repute. The hermits

here remained two and two together in separate cells, occupied chiefly in prayer and reading. They lived on bread and water four days in the week; on Tuesdays and Thursdays they eat pulse and herbs, which every one dressed in his own cell: on their fast days all their bread was given them by weight. They never used any wine (the common drink of the country) except for mass, or in sickness: they went barefoot, used disciplines, made many genuflections, struck their breasts, stood with their arms stretched out in prayer, each according to his strength and devotion. After the night office they said the whole psalter before day. Peter watched long before the signal for matins, and after with the rest. These excessive watchings, brought on him an insomnia, or wakefulness, which was cured with very great difficulty. But he learned from this to use more discretion. He gave a considerable time to sacred studies, and became as well versed in the scriptures, and other sacred learning, as he was before in profane literature.

His superior ordered him to make frequent exhortations to the religious, and as he had acquired a very great character for virtue and learning, Guy, abbot of Pomposia, begged his superior to send him to instruct his monastery, which consisted of a hundred monks. Peter staid there two years, preaching with great fruit, and was then called back by his abbot, and sent to perform the same function in the numerous abbey of St. Vincent, near the mountain called Pietra Pertusa, or the Hollow Rock. His love for poverty made him abhor and be ashamed to put on a new habit, or any clothes which were not threadbare and most mean. His obedience was so perfect, that the least word of any superior, or signal given, according to the rule of the house, for the performance of any duty, made him run that moment to discharge, with the utmost exactness, whatever was enjoined. Being recalled home some time after, and commanded by his abbot, with the unanimous consent of the hermitage, to take upon him the government of the desert after his death, Peter's extreme reluctance only obliged his superior to make greater use of his authority till he acquiesced. Wherefore, at his decease, in 1041, Peter took upon him the direction of that holy family, which he governed with the greatest reputation for wisdom and sanctity. He also founded five other numerous hermitages; in which he placed priors under his inspection. His principal care was to cherish in his disciples the spirit of solitude,

charity, and humility. Among them many became great lights of the church, as St. Ralph, bishop of Gubio, whose festival is kept on the 26th of June; St. Dominick, surnamed Loricatus, the 14th of October; St. John of Lodi, his successor in the priory of the Holy Cross, who was also bishop of Gubio, and wrote St. Peter's life; and many others. He was for twelve years much employed in the service of the church by many zealous bishops, and by four popes successively, namely, Gregory VI., Clement II., Leo IX., and Victor II. Their successor, Stephen IX., in 1057, prevailed with him to quit his desert, and made him cardinal bishop of Ostia. But such was his reluctance to the dignity, that nothing less than the pope's threatening him with excommunication, and his commands, in virtue of obedience, could induce Peter to submit.

Stephen IX. dying in 1058, Nicholas II. was chosen pope, a man of deep penetration, of great virtue and learning, and very liberal in alms, as our saint testifies, who assisted him in obliging John, bishop of Veletri, an antipope, set up by the capitaneos or magistrates of Rome, to quit his usurped dignity. Upon complaints of simony in the church of Milan, Nicholas II. sent Peter thither as his legate, who chastised the guilty. Nicholas II. dying, after having sat two years and six months, Alexander was chosen pope, in 1062. Peter strenuously supported him against the emperor, who set up an antipope Cadolaus, bishop of Parma, on whom the saint prevailed soon after to renounce his pretensions in a council held at Rome; and engaged Henry IV. king of Germany, who was afterwards emperor, to acquiesce in what had been done, though that prince, who in his infancy had succeeded his pious father Henry III. had sucked in very early the corrupt maxims of tyranny and irreligion. But virtue is amiable in the eyes of its very enemies, and often disarms them of their fury. St. Peter had, with great importunity, solicited Nicholas II. for leave to resign his bishopric, and return to his solitude; but could not obtain it. His successor, Alexander II. out of affection for the holy man, was prevailed upon to allow it, in 1062, but not without great difficulty, and the reserve of a power to employ him in church-matters of importance, as he might have occasion hereafter for his assistance. The saint from that time thought himself discharged, not only from the burden of his flock, but also from the quality of superior, with regard to the several monasteries the

general inspection of which he had formerly charged himself with, reducing himself to the condition of a simple monk.

In this retirement he edified the church by his penance and compunction, and laboured by his writings to enforce the observance of discipline and morality. His style is copious and vehement, and the strictness of his maxims appears in all his works, especially where he treats of the duties of clergymen and monks. He severely rebuked the bishop of Florence for playing a game at chess.(1) The prelate acknowledged his amusement to be a faulty sloth in a man of his character, and received the saint's remonstrance with great mildness, and submitted to his injunction by way of penance, namely, to recite three times the psalter, to wash the feet of twelve poor men, and to give to each a piece of money. He shows those to be guilty of manifold simony, who serve princes or flatter them for the sake of obtaining ecclesiastical preferments.(2) He wrote a treatise to the bishop of Besanzon,(3) against the custom which the canons of that church had of saying the divine office sitting; though he allowed all to sit during the lessons. This saint recommended the use of disciplines whereby to subdue and punish the flesh, which was adopted as a compensation for long penitential fasts. Three thousand lashes, with the recital of thirty psalms, where a redemption of a canonical penance of one year's continuance. Sir Thomas More, St. Francis of Sales, and others, testify that such means of mortification are great helps to tame the flesh, and inure it to the labours of penance; also to remove a hardness of heart and spiritual dryness, and to soften the soul into compunction. But all danger of abuses, excess, and singularity, is to be shunned, and other ordinary bodily mortifications, as watching and fasting, are frequently more advisable. This saint wrote most severely on the obligations of religious men,(4) particularly against their strolling abroad; for one of the most essential qualities of their state is solitude, or at least the spirit of retirement. He complained loudly of certain evasions, by which many palliated real infractions of their vow of poverty. He justly observed: "We can never restore what is decayed of primitive discipline; and if we, by negligence, suffer any diminution in what remains established, future ages will never be able to repair such breaches. Let us not draw upon ourselves

(1) Opusc. 20. c. 7.

(2) Ib. 22.

(3) Ib. 39. Nat. Alex. Theol. Dogm. l. 2. c. 8. reg. 8.

(4) Opusc. 12.

so base a reproach; but let us faithfully transmit to posterity the examples of virtue which we have received from our forefathers."\* The holy man was obliged to interrupt his solitude in obedience to the pope, who sent him in quality of his legate into France, in 1063, commanding the archbishops and others to receive him as himself. The holy man reconciled discords, settled the bounds of the jurisdiction of certain diocesses, and condemned and deposed in councils those who were convicted of simony. He notwithstanding tempered his severity with mildness and indulgence towards penitents, where charity and prudence required such condescension.

Henry IV. king of Germany, at eighteen years of age, began to show the symptoms of a heart abandoned to impiety, infamous debauchery, treachery, and cruelty. He married, in 1066, Bertha, daughter to Otho, marquess of Italy, but afterwards, in 1069 sought a divorce, by taking his oath that he had never been able to consummate his marriage. The archbishop of Mentz had the weakness to be gained over by his artifices to favour his desires, in which view he assembled a council at Mentz. Pope Alexander II. forbade him ever to consent to so enormous an injustice, and pitched upon Peter Damian for his legate to preside in that synod, being sensible that a person of the most inflexible virtue, prudence, and constancy, was necessary for so important and difficult an affair, in which passion, power, and craft, made use of every engine in opposition to the cause of God. The venerable legate met the king and bishops at Frankfort, laid before them the orders and instructions of his holiness, and in his name conjured the king to pay a due regard to the law of God, the canons of the church, and his own reputation, and seriously reflect on the public scandal of so pernicious an example. The noblemen likewise all rose up and entreated his majesty never to stain his honour by so foul an action. The king unable to resist so cogent an authority, dropped his project of a divorce; but remaining the same man in his heart, continued to hate the queen more than ever.

Saint Peter hastened back to his desert of Font-Avellano.

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\* The works of St. Peter Damian, printed in three volumes at Lyons, in 1623, consist of one hundred and fifty-eight letters, fifteen sermons, five lives of saints, namely, of St. Odilo, abbot of Cluni; St. Maurus, bishop of Cesene; St. Romuald; St. Ralph, bishop of Gubio; and St. Dominick Loricatus, and SS. Lucilla and Flora. The third volume contains sixty small tracts, with several prayers and hymns.

Whatever austerities he prescribed to others he was the first to practise himself remitting nothing of them even in his old age. He lived shut up in his cell as in a prison, fasted every day, except festivals, and allowed himself no other subsistence than coarse bread, bran, herbs, and water, and this he never drank fresh, but what he had kept from the day before. He tortured his body with iron girdles and frequent disciplines, to render it more obedient to the spirit. He passed the three first days of every Lent and Advent without taking any kind of nourishment whatsoever; and often for forty days together lived only on raw herbs and fruits, or on pulse steeped in cold water, without touching so much as bread, or anything which had passed the fire. A mat spread on the floor was his bed. He used to make wooden spoons and such like useful mean things, to exercise himself at certain hours in manual labour. Henry, archbishop of Ravenna, having been excommunicated for grievous enormities, St. Peter was sent by Pope Alexander II. in quality of legate, to adjust the affairs of the church. When he arrived at Ravenna, in 1072, he found the unfortunate prelate just dead; but brought the accomplices of his crimes to a sense of their guilt, and imposed on them a suitable penance. This was his last undertaking for the church, God being pleased soon after to call him to eternal rest, and the crown of his labours. Old age and the fatigues of his journey did not make him lay aside his accustomed mortifications, by which he consummated his holocaust. In his return towards Rome, he was stopped by a fever in the monastery of our Lady without the gates of Faenza, and died there on the eighth day of his sickness, whilst the monks were reciting matins round about him. He passed from that employment which had been the delight of his heart on earth, to sing the same praise of God in eternal glory, on the 22nd of February, 1072, being fourscore and three years old. He is honoured as patron at Faenza and Font-Avellano, on the 23rd of the same month.

### SAINT BOISIL,

PRIOR OF MAILROSS, OR MELROSS, C.

The famous abbey of Mailross, which in later ages embraced the Cistercian rule, originally followed that of St. Columba. It was situated upon the river Tweed, in a great forest, and in the seventh century was comprised in the kingdom of the