

communion; and by our continual desire, and most frequent daily adoration of Jesus in this holy sacrament, endeavour to make him all the amends we are able for the insults he receives in it, and to appropriate to ourselves a greater share of its treasures, by a perpetual communion as it were with his Holy Spirit, and a participation of all his merits, graces, treasures, satisfaction, love, and other virtues?

### ST. ELPHEGE, M.

#### ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

From his genuine life, written by Osbern, a monk of Canterbury, in 1070, but finished by Eadmer, as Mr. Wharton discovered, who has given us a more ample and correct edition of it than either the Bollandists or Mabillon had been able to furnish. See a short history of his martyrdom in a chronicle written in the reign of Henry I. in the Cottonian library. Vitellius, c. v. viii. Leland, Collect. t. 1, p. 22, and the history of the translation of his body from London to Canterbury among the MSS. in the Harleian library, Cod. 624, fol. 136, in the British Museum.

#### A. D. 1012.

ST. ELPHEGE was born of noble and virtuous parents, who gave him a good education. Fearing the snares of riches he renounced the world whilst he was yet very young; and though most dutiful to his parents in all other things, he in this courageously overcame the tears of his tender mother. He served God first in the monastery of Derherste in Gloucestershire. His desire of greater perfection taught him always to think that he had not yet begun to live to God. After some years he left Derherste, and built himself a cell in a desert place of the abbey of Bath, where he shut himself up, unknown to men, but well known to God, for whose love he made himself a voluntary martyr of penance. His virtue, after some time, shone to men the brighter through the veils of his humility, and many noblemen and others addressed themselves to him for instructions in the paths of perfection, and he was at length obliged to take upon himself the direction of the great abbey of Bath. Perfection is with difficulty maintained in numerous houses. St. Elphege lamented bitterly the irregularities of the tepid among the brethren, especially little junketings, from which he in a short time reclaimed them; and God, by the sudden death of one, opened

the eyes of all the rest. The good abbot would not tolerate the least relaxation in his community, being sensible how small a breach may totally destroy the regularity of a house. He used to say, that it would have been much better for a man to have staid in the world, than to be an imperfect monk; and that to wear the habit of a saint, without having the spirit, was a perpetual lie, and an hypocrisy which insults, but can never impose upon Almighty God. St. Ethelwold, bishop of Winchester, dying in 984, St. Dunstan being admonished by St. Andrew, in a vision, obliged our holy abbot to quit his solitude, and accept of episcopal consecration. The virtues of Elphege became more conspicuous in this high station, though he was no more than thirty years of age when he was first placed in it. In winter, how cold soever it was, he always rose at midnight, went out, and prayed a long time barefoot, and without his upper garment. He never ate flesh unless on extraordinary occasions. He was no less remarkable for charity to his neighbour, than severity to himself. He accordingly provided so liberally for the indigences of the poor, that during his time there were no beggars in the whole diocese of Winchester. The holy prelate had governed the see of Winchester twenty-two years with great edification, when, after the death of Archbishop Alfric, in 1006, he was translated to that of Canterbury, being fifty-two years of age. He who trembled under his former burden, was much more terrified at the thought of the latter: but was compelled to acquiesce. Having been at Rome to receive his pall, he held at his return a great national council at Oenham, in 1009, in which thirty-two canons were published for the reformation of errors and abuses, and the establishment of discipline; and, among other things, the then ancient law, commanding the fast on Friday, was confirmed.(1)

The Danes at that time made the most dreadful havoc in England. They landed where they pleased, and not only plundered the country, but committed excessive barbarities on the native, with little or no opposition from the weak King Ethelred. Their army being joined by the traitorous Earl Edric, they marched out of the West into Kent, and sat down before Can-

(1) Spelman, Conc. Brit. t. 1, p. 510.

terbury. But before it was invested, the English nobility, perceiving the danger the place was in, desired the archbishop, then in the city, to provide for his security by flight, which he refused to do, saying, that it was the part only of a hireling to abandon his flock in the time of danger. During the siege, he often sent out to the enemies to desire them to spare his innocent sheep, whom he endeavoured to animate against the worst that could happen. And having prepared them, by his zealous exhortations, rather to suffer the utmost than renounce their faith, he gave them the blessed eucharist, and recommended them to the divine protection. Whilst he was thus employed in assisting and encouraging his people, Canterbury was taken by storm. The infidels on entering the city made a dreadful slaughter of all that came in their way, without distinction of sex or age. The holy prelate was no sooner apprised of the barbarity of the enemy, but breaking from the monks, who would have detained him in the church, where they thought he might be safe, he pressed through the Danish troops, and made his way to the place of slaughter. Then, turning to the enemy, he desired them to forbear the massacre of his people, and rather discharge their fury upon him, crying out to the murderers: "Spare these innocent persons. There is no glory in spilling their blood. Turn your indignation rather against me. I have reproached you for your cruelties: I have fed, clothed, and ransomed these your captives." The archbishop, talking with this freedom, was immediately seized, and used by the Danes with all manner of barbarity. Not content with making him the spectator of the burning of his cathedral, and the decimation of his monks, and of the citizens, having torn his face, beat and kicked him unmercifully, they laid him in irons, and confined him several months in a filthy dungeon. But being afflicted with an epidemical mortal colic in their army, and attributing this scourge to their cruel usage of the saint, they drew him out of prison. He prayed for them, and gave to their sick bread which he had blessed; by eating this their sick recovered, and the calamity ceased. Their chiefs returned thanks to the servant of God, and deliberated about setting him at liberty, but covetousness prevailed in their council, they exacted for his ransom three thousand marks of gold. He said

that the country was all laid waste ; moreover, that the patrimony of the poor was not to be squandered away. He therefore was bound again, and on Easter Sunday was brought before the commanders of their fleet, which then lay at Greenwich, and threatened with torments and death unless he payed the ransom demanded. He answered that he had no other gold to offer them than that of true wisdom, which consists in the knowledge and worship of the living God : which if they refused to listen to, they would one day fare worse than Sodom ; adding, that their empire would not long subsist in England. The barbarians, enraged at this answer, knocked him down with the backs of their battle-axes, and then stoned him. The saint like St. Stephen, prayed our Lord to forgive them, and to receive his soul. In the end raising himself up a little, he said, “ O good Shepherd ! O incomparable Shepherd ! look with compassion on the children of thy church, which I, dying, recommend to thee.” And here a Dane, that had been lately baptized by the saint, perceiving him agonizing and under torture, grieved to see him suffer in so slow and painful a manner, to put an end to his pain, clove his head with his battle-axe, and gave the finishing stroke to his martyrdom. Thus died St. Elphege, on the 19th of April, 1012, in the fifty-ninth year of his age. He was solemnly interred in the cathedral of St. Paul’s in London. In 1023, his body was found entire, and translated with honour to Canterbury : Knut, the Danish king, and Agelnoth, the archbishop, went with it from St. Paul’s to the river : it was carried by monks down a narrow street to the water side, and put on board a vessel ; the king held the stern. Queen Emma also attended with great presents, and an incredible multitude of people followed the procession from London. The church of Canterbury, on the occasion, was most magnificently adorned. This translation was made on the 8th of June, on which it was annually commemorated. His relics lay near the high altar till the dispersion of relics under Henry VIII. Hacon, Turkill, and the other Danish commanders, perished miserably soon after, and their numerous fleet of above two hundred sail was almost all lost in violent storms. St. Elphege is named in the Roman Martyrology.

Our English Martyrology commemorates on the 1st of Sep-

tember another St. Elphege, surnamed the Bald, bishop of Winchester, which see he governed from the death of St. Brynstan, in 935 to 953. He is celebrated for his sanctity, and a singular spirit of prophecy, of which Malmesbury gives some instances.

## ST. URSMAR, BISHOP AND ABBOT

### OF LAUBES OR LOBES.

He was born near Avesne, in Haynault, and grew up from his cradle a model of all virtues, in which he made a continual progress by a life of humility, patience, and penance, and by an assiduous application to prayer, in which he usually shed abundance of tears. What he most earnestly asked of God was the gift of an ardent charity, that all his thoughts and actions, and those of all men, might, with the most pure and fervent intention, and in the most perfect manner, be directed in all things to fulfil his holy and adorable will. In his conversation it was his earnest desire and drift to induce persons of a secular life to fix their thoughts, as much as the condition of their state would allow, on heavenly things; and to accompany even their worldly business with such aspirations and thoughts, and to study to withdraw their hearts from all attachment to creatures. St. Landelin had then lately founded the abbey of Lobes, on the Sambre, in a territory which is now subject to the prince of Liege, though in the diocese of Cambray. Ursmar here put on the monastic habit. When St. Landelin retired into a closer solitude, where he soon after built the monastery of Crespin, he left Ursmar abbot of Lobes, in 686. Our saint redoubled his fervour in all the exercises of penance in this dignity. He never tasted any flesh-meat or fish, and for ten years never once touched bread, not even in a dangerous sickness. He finished the building of his abbey and church, and founded Aune and several other monasteries. He often left his dear cell to preach the faith to idolaters and sinners. He became the apostle of several districts in the diocese of Cambray, Arras, Tournay, Noyon, Terouanne, Laon, Metz, Tries, Cologne, and Maestricht. By virtue of a commission from the holy see, he exercised the functions of a bishop: his predecessor, St. Landelin, and his two successors, SS. Ermin and Theodulph, were invested with