

forces his admonitions, so that they never fail to make deep impressions. They who speak affectionately, and from their hearts, speak powerfully to the hearts of others. This is the property of true charity, the most essential qualification of a minister of Christ, who is dead to the world and himself, and seeks no other interest but that of Christ and his neighbour in the salvation of souls.

SAINT FARA, V. ABBESS.

AGNERIC, one of the principal officers of the court of Theodebert II. king of Austrasia, had by his wife Leodegonda, four children: St Cagnoald, who took the monastic habit under St. Columban at Luxeu, about the year 594; St. Faro, who became bishop of Meaux; St. Fara,* and Agnetrudis. In 610, St. Columban being banished from Luxeu, in his flight lodged at the house of Agneric, called Pipimisium, two leagues from Meaux, the present Aupigny, according to Mabillon, or Champigny, according to Du Plessis. St. Cagnoald, who accompanied this abbot in his exile into Switzerland, probably introduced him to his father, and St. Columban gave his blessing to all the family; and when he came to Farà, consecrated her to God in a particular manner. Jonas says she was then in her infancy; Baillet supposes her then fifteen; Du Plessis only ten. When she had attained the age of puberty, her father proposed to her an honourable match. The holy virgin did every thing that lay in her power to prevent it and fell into a lingering sickness, which brought her life in danger. St. Eustasius, St. Columban's successor, when that holy man went to Bobio in Italy, made a journey thither, by order of Clotaire II. in order

* St. Faro, in ancient writings, is called Burgondofaro, and St. Fara, Burgundofara. Baillet (28 Oct. in S. Faro) pretends that they were so called because *Burgundia farones*, or lords of the kingdom of Burgundy; for this critic pretends, that Brie was part of the province of the Senones, which belonged to the dominions of Gontran, king of Orleans and Burgundy, though it had formerly been part of the kingdom of Austrasia. See F. Daniel, Hist. t. I, p. 146. But Du Plessis shows that Meaux belonged not to Gontran, but to Theodebert II. king of Austrasia; and that, Fara signifying lineage, these names implied that the persons were of Burgundian extraction, which Jonas, in the Life of St. Fara, testifies to have been the interpretation of this name. See Mabillon, Act. Ben. p. 617. Ruinart, Not. in Chron. Fredegarii, v. 621. Du Plessis, Hist. de Meaux. Not. 11, p. 632, t. I.

to persuade him to return, taking with St. Cagnoald, who had returned to Luxeu: when St. Columban left Switzerland. St. Eustasius, after he came back, repaired to the court of Clotaire II. to give him an account of his embassy, and in his way lodged at Agneric's. Fara discovered to him her earnest desire of consecrating her virginity to her heavenly spouse. The holy man told her father, that God had visited her with a dangerous illness which threatened certain death, only because he opposed her pious inclinations, and after praying some time prostrate on the ground, he arose, and made the sign of the cross upon her eyes; whereupon she was forthwith restored to her health. The saint recommended her to her mother, that she might be prepared to receive the veil at the time he should come back from court. No sooner was he gone out of doors, but Agneric began again to persecute his daughter, in order to extort her consent to marry the young nobleman to whom he had promised her. Fara fled to the church, and when she was told that, unless she complied with her father's desire, she would be murdered; she resolutely answered: "Do you think I am afraid of death? To lose my life for the sake of virtue, and fidelity to the promise I have made to God, would be a great happiness." St. Eustasius speedily returned, and easily reconciled her father to her, and engaged Gondoald, bishop of Meux, to give her the religious veil. This happened in the year 614. The foundation of the famous monastery of Faremoutier, is dated a year or two after this, Agneric having given his pious daughter a competent portion of land, and raised a building proper for this purpose. The abbey was originally called Brige, from the Celtic word which signifies a bridge: Du Plessis supposes that there was then, as there is at present, a bridge over the river at the confluence of the Aubetin and the Great Morin. Hence the neighbouring forest now called the Forest of Faremoutier, took that name.* The Latin name Eboriacas or Evoriacas, which in the seventh age was given to this monastery, seems to have been derived from the Celtic; and from this monastery and forest a district of the country on the south of the Marne took

* Saltus Briegius, Bede, &c.

the same name, and is now called Brie.(1) This monastery was founded double, and St. Eustasius sent thither from Luxeu St. Cagnoald, who, in 620, was made bishop of Laon, and St. Walbert, who being born of an illustrious family in Ponthieu, and having served some time in the army, had retired to Luxeu. He afterwards succeeded St. Eustasius in that abbacy in 625. Jonas was also a monk at Faremoutier, soon after the foundation of that house, and an eye-witness to the eminent virtues of the holy persons who inhabited it, and of which he has left us an edifying account.

St. Fara, though very young, was appointed abbess of the nunnery, and, assisted with the councils of St. Cagnoald and St. Walbert, settled there the rule of St. Columban, in its greatest severity. We find that the use of wine was there forbidden, and also that of milk, at least in Lent and Advent, and the religious made three confessions a-day, as is mentioned in the life of St. Fara; that is, thrice every day they made a strict examination of their consciences, and made a confession or manifestation of what passed in their souls to their superior. This practice of rigorous self-examination and confession or manifestation is most strenuously recommended and ordered in all the ancient rules of a monastic life,(2) as a most important and useful means of attaining purity of heart, a perfect government of the affections, an habitual Christian watchfulness, and true perfection. Under the direction of guides perfectly disengaged from all earthly things, and enlightened in the paths of virtue, many heroic souls at the same time filled this monastery and all France with the odour of their sanctity. Among these, several are honoured in the calendars of the saints, as St. Sisetrudis, St. Gibitrudis, St. Hercontrudis,(3) and others. From the life of St. Gibitrudis, it appears, that in this monastery it was customary to say a trental of masses for every one that died in the house, during thirty days after their decease. St. Fara was the directress of so many saints, and walked at their head in the perfect observance of all the rules which she prescribed to others. Her younger brother St. Faro was so moved by her

(1) See Du Plessis, n. 17, p. 639.

(2) Reg. S. Bened. c. 7, Penitent. S. Columbani, p. 98.

(3) See Mabill. Act. Bened. pp. 433. 441, 442.

heavenly discourses one day when he came to pay her a visit, that he resigned the great offices which he held at court, persuaded a young lady to whom he had promised marriage to become a nun, and took the clerical tonsure. In 626, he succeeded Gondoald in the episcopal chair of Meaux, died in 672, and was buried in the monastery of the Holy Cross, which he founded, and which bears his name. His protection and holy counsels were a support and comfort to St. Fara, under the assaults which she had to sustain. Agrestes, a turbulent monk, pretending to correct the rule of St. Columban in several points, drew over St. Romaric, founder of the abbey of Remiremont, and St. Amatus, first abbot of that house: though they afterwards discovered the snare, and repented of their fault. St. Fara was upon her guard, and constantly opposed all attempts to undermine the severity of the holy rule which she had professed. Ega, mayor of the palace of Clovis II. raised a troublesome persecution against her, which she bore with patience and constancy to his death, in 641. On the other side, the reputation of her virtue reached the remotest parts. Several English princesses crossed the seas, to sacrifice at the foot of the altars the pomp and riches which waited for them on thrones. The glittering splendour of the purple and courts appeared in their eyes an empty seducing phantom: they trampled it under their feet, and preferred the humility of a cloister to worldly greatness.

Sedrido, the first of these princesses, was daughter of Hereswith, whose father Hereric, was brother to St. Edwin, the glorious king of the Northumbers. St. Hereswith had her by a first husband, whose name has not reached us. Her second husband was Annas, king of the East-Angles, with whose consent she renounced the world, and died a nun at Chelles. Her daughter Sedrido passed into France in 644 or 646, about two years after Annas, her father-in-law, had ascended the throne, and embracing the humble state of a crucified life at Faremoutier, served God with joy, in sackcloth and ashes, in the heroic practice of all Christian virtues. Though a stranger, she was chosen to succeed St. Fara, and governed this flourishing colony of saints from 665 till her happy death. Her mother Hereswith, her sister Edelburge, (daughter of Hereswith and King Annas,)

and her niece Erkengota, daughter of her sister Sexburga, and of Ercombert king of Kent, passed at the same time into France, hoping in this exile more perfectly to forget and be forgotten by the world, which they renounced. St. Edelburge, called by the French St. Aubierge, is called by Bede(1) the *natural* daughter of Annas; whence many have inferred that she was illegitimate. But the word *natural* child seems never to have been anciently taken in that sense, but in opposition to an adoptive child.(2) It is at least visible that Bede here uses it to distinguish her birth from that of Sedrido, who was only step-daughter to Annas.(3) St. Edelburge was chosen third abbess of Faremoutier, upon the death of Sedrido, and is honoured among the saints in the diocese of Meaux, on the 7th of July. An ancient chapel in her honour, which stands not far from the abbey, was rebuilt in 1714. A spring which is near it is esteemed a holy well: and many drink at it out of devotion. It was beautiful and adorned at the expense of certain English gentlemen, who resided in that country in 1718. St. Erkengota, called by the French Artongate, died a private nun at Faremoutier, and is honoured with an office in the diocese of Meux on the 23d of February.(4) Some Benedictin writers add to these St. Hilde- lide, a nun of Faremoutier, who was also an English princess; and was the assistant of St. Edelburge in the foundation of the great nunnery of Barking. The primitive spirit of the religious state which was established by these glorious saints, was long maintained in this monastery of Faremoutier.* St. Fara, after

(1) Bede, l. 3, c. 8.

(2) Sueton. in Tib. c. 52. See Rob. Stephen. Thes. ling. Latin. V. *Naturalis*.

(3) Du Plessis, note 34, p. 699, t. 1.

(4) Bede, l. 3, c. 8. Brev. Meldens. Menolog. Bened.

* At what time the abbey of Faremoutier exchanged the rule of St. Columban for that of St. Bennet, has been the subject of warm debates between le Cointe and the Benedictins. The latest epoch that can be fixed is about the time of Charlemagne. Within half a league from Faremoutier is situated the abbey of La Celle, which name was formerly given to hermitages and small monasteries. This was raised upon the cell of St. Blandin, a hermit, born of poor parents, who died there on the 1st of May, about the tenth century. A council of Meaux, about the year 1062, ordered all small communities which did not maintain above ten monks, to be subjected either to Marmoutier or Cinni. Thus La Celle became subject to the former. In 1633, the monks of Marmoutier yielded it to F. Francis Walgrave and the English Benedictin monks.

having been purified by a painful lingering illness, and made worthy of the crown of eternal glory, was called to receive it on the 3d of April, about the year 655.(1) By her last will she gave part of her estates to her brothers and sister, but the principal part to her monastery; and in these latter, mentions her lands at Champeaux.(2) It therefore seems a mistake in some critics that she founded there another monastery. A conventual priory seems to have been afterwards erected there by the monastery of Faremoutier. It has been since converted into a collegiate church of canons, and is situate in the diocese of Paris. The relics of St. Fara were enshrined in 695, and a great number of miracles has been wrought through her intercession.

Dame Charlotte le Bret, daughter to the first president and treasurer-general of the finances in the généralité or district of Paris, who was born in 1595, lost her left eye at seven years of age, was received a nun at Faremoutier in 1609, and in 1617 lost her right eye, and became quite blind. She went twice out of her monastery to consult the most famous oculists at Paris, who unanimously agreed that an essential part of the organ of her eyes was destroyed, and her sight irrecoverably lost; and, to remove the pain which she frequently felt, they by remedies extinguished all feeling in the eye-balls and adjacent nerves, insomuch that she could not feel the application of vinegar, salt, or the strongest aromatic; and if ever she wept, she only perceived it by feeling the tears trickle down her cheeks. Four years after this, in 1622, the relics of St. Fara being taken out of the shrine, she kissed one of the bones, and then applied it to both her eyes. She immediately felt a pain in them, though they had been four years and a half

(1) See Mabillon, Act. SS. Bened. t. 2, p. 449, et Annal. Bened. t. 1, p. 434. Du Plessis, note 19, p. 642.

(2) See her last will and testament, published by Toussaints Du Plessis, Hist. de l'Eglise de Meaux. Pièces Justificatives, t. 2, p. 1.

upon condition that the claustral prior, after his election, be instituted to his office by, and his community be subject to, the visitation of the grand prior and monks of Marmoutier. (See the deed of this convention in Du Plessis, t. 2, n. 40, p. 343, and his account of this transaction, t. 1, p. 117, l. 2, n. 38.) The English Benedictines were aliens in France till naturalized by Lewis XIV. in 1650, by letters patent, which were renewed in 1674, and again by Lewis XV. in 1723, (ib. p. 734, t. 2, p. 448.)

without sensation, and the lids had been immovably closed; and she had scarcely removed the relics from her eyes, than a humour distilled from them. She cried out, begging that the relics might be applied a second and a third time; which being done, at the third touch she cried out, that she saw. In that instant her sight was perfectly restored to her, and she distinguished all the objects about her. Then, prostrate on the ground, she gave thanks to the author of her recovery, and the whole assembly joined their voices in glorifying God.(1) The certificates and affidavits of the surgeons and physicians who had treated her, and the affidavits of the eye-witnesses of the fact were juridically taken by the bishop of Meaux, (John de Vieupont,) who, by a judicial sentence, given on the 9th of December, 1622, declared, that the cure of the said blindness was the miraculous work of God. The abbess, Frances de la Chastre, and the community of nuns, signed and published a certificate to the like purport; in which they also mention the miraculous cures of two other nuns, the one of a palsy, the other of rheumatism.(2) Other miracles performed through her intercession are recorded by Carcat(3) and Du Plessis, who appeal to memoirs of the abbey, drawn up in an authentic manner, &c. The name of St. Fara is exceedingly honoured in France, Sicily, Italy, &c. See the life of St. Burgundofara ascribed to Bede, but really the work of Jonas, of whom some account is given at note* under the life of St. Columban, on the 21st of November; he wrote at Faremoutier the lives of St. Columban and his successors, St. Attalus and Bertulfus at Bobio, St. Eustatius at Luxeu, and St. Fara. See also Du Plessis, *Hist. de l'Eglise de Meaux*, t. 1, l. 1, n. 21, &c. t. 2, p. 1.

DECEMBER VIII.

THE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

So great are the advantages we reap from the incarnation of the Son of God, and so incomprehensible is the goodness which

(1) Du Plessis, t. 1, l. 5, n. 12, pp. 433, 434.

(2) *Ib.* *Pièces Justif.* t. 2, pp. 320, 322.

(3) August. Carcat, *Vie de S. Fare*, p. 238, &c.