

## ST. HUMBERT, BISHOP OF THE EAST- ANGLES, M.

ST. EDMUND was crowned king by this holy prelate on the 25th of December, in 855; and St. Humbert was martyred by the hands of the same Danes, and about the same time with him, and was likewise honoured by our ancestors amongst the martyrs on the same day.

## ST. FELIX OF VALOIS, C.

THE surname of Valois was given to this saint, according to some, because he was of the royal branch of Valois in France;<sup>1</sup> but according to Jaffred,<sup>2</sup> Baillet, and many others, because he was of the province of Valois. The saint was born in 1127, and when grown up renounced his estate, which was very considerable, and retired into a great wood, in the diocess of Meaux, called Cerfroi. Here, sequestered from the world, and forgetting its shadows and appearances which grossly impose upon its deluded votaries, he enjoyed himself and God, and studied to purify, reform, and govern his own heart, and to live only to his Creator. In the calm and serenity of this silent retreat, letting others amuse themselves with the airy bubbles of ambition, and enjoy the cheats of fancy, and the flatteries of

<sup>1</sup> Hugh, third and youngest son of Henry I. king of France, married Adelaide, daughter of Herbert, and heiress of the county of Vermandois, in 1102. This Hugh is said to have been grandfather of our saint, who, out of humility, changed the name he received at baptism, which was Hugh, into that of Felix. See Henault, t. 1. p. 147. Others object to this pedigree, that Ralph of Peronne was at that time count of Crepi and Valois. See Du Plessis, Hist. de Meaux, n. 43. t. 1. p. 730. and F. Anselme, Hist. Généal. de la Maison de France, c. 18. t. 1. p. 533. who makes this saint of the royal branch; but this is objected to by his continuators. At least after Lewis VII. then on the throne, the families of Dreux and Courtenay were nearer the crown than that of the count of Vermandois, Valois, Amiens, and Crepi.

<sup>2</sup> Nicæe illustrata, part 1. tit. 12. p. 123.

sense, he abandoned himself to the heavenly delights of holy contemplation, (which raised his soul above all created things,) and to the greatest rigours of penance, which were known only to God, but which fervour, love, and compunction rendered sweeter to him than the joys of theatres. The devout hermit had no thoughts but of dying in the obscurity of this silent retreat, when Divine Providence called him thence to make him a great instrument of advancing his honour amongst men.

St. John of Matha, a young nobleman, a native of Provence, and doctor of divinity, who was lately ordained priest, having heard much of the wonderful sanctity of the holy hermit of Cerfroi, sought him out in his desert, and put himself under his direction. Felix soon perceived that his new guest was no novice in the exercises of a spiritual life; and it is not to be expressed with what fervour the two servants of God applied themselves to the practice of all virtues. Their fasts and watchings exceeded the strength of those who have not inured themselves by long habits to such extraordinary austerities: prayer and contemplation were their ordinary employment, and all their conversation tended to inflame each other to the most ardent love of God. After some time St. John proposed to the other a project of establishing a religious Order for the redemption of captives, a design with which he was inspired when he said his first mass. Felix, though seventy years of age, readily offered himself to do and suffer whatever it should please God in the execution of so charitable a design. They agreed to consult heaven by redoubling their fasts and prayers for three days: after which term they resolved to beg the approbation of the holy see, and made an austere pilgrimage together to Rome, in the depth of winter, and arrived there in January, 1198. Innocent III

who was lately installed in St. Peter's chair, having read the strong letters of recommendation which the bishop of Paris sent him in their favour, received them as if they had been two angels sent by God, and lodged them in his own palace. After many audiences, and several deliberations with his cardinals and prelates, having consulted God by prayer and fasting, his holiness was persuaded the two hermits were moved by the Holy Ghost, and gave a solemn approbation of a new religious institute which he would have called of the Holy Trinity, and of which he appointed St. John of Matha the superior-general. Eudo of Sully, bishop of Paris, and the abbot of St. Victor were commissioned by him to draw up a rule or constitutions, which they had already projected: and they were confirmed by his holiness on the 17th of December following. The holy founders who had taken a second journey to Rome to present their rule to the pope, returned into France with its confirmation, and were every where received with applause and benedictions. King Philip Augustus authorized the establishment of their Order in France, and promoted it by his liberalities. Margaret of Blois gave them twenty acres of the wood where their hermitage was situate, with other benefactions; and they built the monastery of Cerfroi, which is the mother and chief house of the Order, about a mile from their old cells.<sup>1</sup> This Order within the space of forty years was so much increased as to be possessed of six hundred monasteries. St. John being obliged to go to Rome to settle his institute there in the church of St. Thomas *della Navicella*, upon Mount Cælius, the direction of the new convents which were erected in France, was left to St. Felix, who, amongst other houses,

<sup>1</sup> The Trinitarians were sometimes called in England Red Friars: for though their habit is white, they wear a red and blue cross patée upon their scapular.

founded one at Paris, in the church of St. Maturninus, though the house was afterward rebuilt more spacious by Robert Gaguin, the learned and famous general of this Order, who died in 1501. St. John, after two voyages to Barbary, spent the two last years of his life at Rome, where he died on the 21st of December, in 1213.<sup>1</sup> St. Felix died in his solitude at Cerfroi a year and about six weeks before him, on the 4th of November in the year 1212, being fourscore and five years and seven months old. It is related, that a little time before his death, coming to choir to matins before the rest, he saw there the Blessed Virgin with a company of heavenly spirits singing the divine office ; which vision is frequently represented in pictures of this saint.

It is the constant tradition of the Order, that these two founders were canonized by a bull of Urban IV. in 1260 : though the bull is no where extant. That the festival of St. Felix was kept in the whole diocess of Meaux in 1219, is proved by an authentic act, produced by Du Plessis. (*Hist. du Dioc. de Meaux*, t. 2. p. 253.) Alexander VII. in 1666 declared his veneration to be of time immemorial. Innocent XI. in 1679 transferred the feast of St. John to the 8th of February ; and that of St. Felix to the 20th of November. See Gaguin, *Hist. Franc.* in Philip Aug. and in the *Chronicles* of his Order : Ciaconius in Innocent III., Francis a S. Laurentio, *Compendium Vitæ SS. Joannis et Felicis*.

## SAINT BERNWARD, BISHOP OF HILDESHEIM, C.

HE was chaplain to Otho III. king of Germany, afterward emperor: being made bishop of Hildesheim, in 992, he spent the day in his functions, and a great part of the night in prayer, and died in 1021, on the 20th of November. His name was enrolled amongst the saints by Celestin III. in 1194.

See his life begun by Tangmar, his preceptor, and continued by two others who knew the saint, in Brower's *Sider. Illustr.* and in Surius.

<sup>1</sup> See the life of St. John of Matha on the 8th of February.