

except in courage; and where he submits he triumphs by humility, patience, and constancy, even in torments, and in death itself. Do we maintain this character even under the light trials we meet with?

ST. OMER, B. C.

From his life in Mabillon, t. 2, Act. Bened. p. 629, written forty or fifty years after his death by one who received the account of his actions from persons who were present at his death. See also the Bollandists.

A. D. 670.

St. OMER, called in Latin Audomarus, was the only son of Friulph and Domitilla, persons of noble extraction, and possessed of a plentiful fortune, in the territory of Constance, now an imperial town in Suabia, near the Switzers. The place of his birth was called Guldendal, (*i. e.* Golden valley,) not far from the Lake of Constance. He was born about the close of the sixth century. The thoughts his parents were wholly taken up in him, and his education was their chief care. Though they applied him to the study of human literature, their principal aim was to train him up in the most perfect maxims and practice of virtue and religion. The saint made the most happy progress, and his father, (charmed with his virtue, and moved by his feeling discourses on the great truths of eternal salvation,) upon the death of his wife Domitilla, sold his estate, distributed the price of his whole substance among the poor, and accompanied his son to the monastery of Luxeu, situated in the diocese of Besancon. St. Eustasius, who had succeeded St. Columban the founder in the government of that house, received them kindly, and they both made their religious profession together with great fervour. The humility, obedience, mildness, and devotion, accompanied with an admirable purity of manners, which shone forth in every action of Omer, distinguished him among his brethren in that house of saints. His proficiency in sacred literature was very remarkable, and his reputation spread over the whole kingdom. The city of Tarvanne or Terrouenne, the capital of the ancient Morini in Belgic Gaul, atood in need of a zealous pastor; and that extensive country which contained great part of what is now called Lower Picardy, Artois, and Flanders, was overrun with the thorns of vice and

error, when king Dagobert, at the suggestion of several zealous persons, looked about his dominions for a person every way the best qualified to establish the faith and practice of the gospel in that important and most extensive part of the French empire. The abbey of Luxeu was at that time the most flourishing school of learning and piety in all France, and a fruitful seminary of holy prelates. In it St. Omer was pointed out as a person the most capable of this arduous employment, and proposed as such to the king by St. Acarius bishop of Noyon and Tournay. The choice was applauded by that prince, and also by the bishops and nobility of the whole kingdom. St. Omer had been happy in his retreat above twenty years, when he was torn by violence from the pleasure of his solitude. Upon receiving the message with a severe command to obey without demur, he cried out: "How great is the difference between the secure harbour in which I now enjoy a sweet calm, and that tempestuous ocean into which I am pushed, against my will, and destitute of experience." The deputies, without listening to the objections which his humility formed against the choice, presented him to the bishops, by whom he was obliged to receive the episcopal character, towards the close of the year 637.

The humility with which the saint entered upon this weighty charge drew down upon his missions the most abundant blessings of heaven. Assiduous prayer was his comfort and support under his labours, and he consecrated all his thoughts to the obligations of his ministry; and, by his endeavours, the spirit of piety soon began to reign where that of the world and the devil had before prevailed. Much the greater part of the inhabitants of this country were still slaves to superstition and the worship of idols, though several holy prelates had taken no small pains for their conversion. St. Fuscian and St. Victorius, who are honoured on the 11th of December, had long before carried the gospel among them; also St. Quintin, who is honoured on the 31st of October. These three saints suffered under Rictius Varus in the beginning of the reign of Dioclesian and Maximian Herculeus. In the following age, St. Victorius, bishop of Rouen, laboured to convert them; but through a want of pastors during the incursions of the Suevi, the Vandals and the Alans, even the few Christians who remained, went

fallen into a strange corruption of manners. Likewise St. Remigius sent two holy priests, Antimund and Aldelbert,* between the years 500 and 552, to preach to the Morini, but with little success. To complete the great and difficult work of their conversion was reserved for St. Omer.

This holy prelate, assisted by the powerful grace of God, threw down their idols, demolished their temples, and instructed the deluded people in the saving doctrine of eternal life. It was the first part of his pastoral care to re-establish faith in its purity among the few Christians he found, whose reformation was a task no less difficult than the conversion of the idolaters. Yet such was the success of his labours, that he left his diocese not inferior to those that were then most flourishing in France. Though his discourses were full of a divine fire which could scarcely be resisted, his exemplary life preached still more powerfully; for it was not easy for men to reject a religion which they saw produce so many good works, animate men with so divine a temper, and such a spirit of devotion towards God, and of meekness, humility, and beneficence towards all men, whether friends or enemies. It made many lay themselves out continually in redeeming captives, feeding the poor, comforting the sick, reconciling enemies, and serving every one without any other view than that of promoting their eternal salvation, and the glory of God. This was the character of our holy bishop and his fellow-labourers who were employed under his direction. The chief among these were St. Mommolin, St. Bertin, and St. Ebertran, monks whom St. Omer invited to his assistance from Luxeu. He founded the abbey in Sithiu, now called St. Bertin's, in 654, in which he applied the monks not only to manual labour, but many among them to sacred studies; so that this famous abbey became one of the greatest seminaries of sacred learning in France, and was possessed of a very large and curious library in the eleventh and twelfth centuries,(1) at which time schools were established in all the priories dependent of this monastery. Several immediate disciples of St.

(1) See Martenne, *Anecd. t. 3*, p. 592, 652, 668.

* Antimund is a Christian name, signifying an enemy to the world; Adelbert is a Teutonic name, compounded of *Adel* or *Ethel*, noble, and *bert*, bright or illustrious.

Bertin were persons eminently learned. St. Omer also built the church of our Lady at Sithiu, with a small monastery adjoining, and a burial place for the monks of St. Bertin's or Old Sithiu. The author of his life recounts many miracles performed by him. In his old age he was blind some years before his death ; but that affliction made no abatement in his pastoral concern for his flock. When St. Aubert, bishop of Arras and Cambray, translated the relics of St. Vedast from the cathedral to the monastery which he had built in his honour, St. Omer and St. Lambert, bishop of Tongres, assisted at that ceremony in 667, and the former is related to have recovered his sight for a short time on that occasion. The most probable opinion is that St. Omer died in the year 670, on the 9th of September, the day on which his feast is celebrated. His body was buried by St. Bertin at our Lady's church, which is now the cathedral.*

ST. KIARAN, ABBOT IN IRELAND.†

He was converted by hearing a passage of the gospel read at church. He put himself under the discipline of St. Finian, who, admiring his great proficiency and fervour, foretold that half the monasteries of Ireland would receive a rule from him.‡

* The village of Sithiu by means of this abbey grew into a town, which was encompassed with a wall by Fulco, the eighteenth abbot, who afterwards succeeded Hincmar in the archiepiscopal see of Rheims. The city of Tarvanne having revolted to the French its ancient masters, was utterly destroyed by Charles V. in 1553. The bishop retired to Boulogne, which became the episcopal see for that part of the diocese which was then subject to France. The rest of it was divided into two other dioceses, those of St. Omer and Ypres, which were erected six years after, in 1559. See Guicciardini's Desc. Belgii, Gramaya in Ipreto, p. 178.

† This saint is surnamed Macantsaoir, being the son of a carpenter; and is also called the Younger, to distinguish him from St. Kieran, first bishop of Saigir, now a part of Ossory, who is honoured on the 5th of March.

‡ About a mile's distance from the parish church of Kileroghan, near the river Blackwater in the county of Kerry, is a curious hermitage or cell, hewn out of the solid rock, situated on the top of a hill; this cell is named St. Croghan's, who is the patron saint of the parish. The intelligent among the antiquaries say, that in this place the celebrated St. Kieran Saigar, who according to Usher was born in the island of Cape Clear, composed his rule for monks; although others say it was in an adjacent grotto. Be this as it may, the stalactical exudations of the above-mentioned cell are held in great estimation by the country people, who carefully preserve them as imagining them to have many virtues from the supposed sanctity of the place they grow in. See Smith's ancient and present state of Kerry, Dublin, 1756, p. 93.