

# LITTELL'S LIVING AGE.

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{ From Beginning  
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the removal of mosaic pavements beyond their powers.

The result of each year's work is fully chronicled and communicated to the Society of Antiquaries, who, by publishing the reports with suitable plans and illustrations in *Archæologia*, thereby place on permanent record for present and future students the account of these most important explorations.

Finally, after exhibition in London, all the remains found are sent to Reading, where, by the kindness and liberality of the Duke of Wellington, they are added year by year to the Silchester Loan Collection, which there finds a home in the Free Public Library and Museum. This collection not only contains everything of importance discovered during the past three years, but the principal objects found by Mr. Joyce, and until lately deposited at Silchester and Strathfieldsaye, have now been added to it. As a collection of objects all of one period and all from the same place, it is already of the greatest value to all students of Romano-British antiquities.

The important architectural remains are placed and arranged in a special room, accompanied by specimens of various building materials and other illustrative features. Copies of all the plans, too, are here displayed on the walls. In the centre of the room are deposited by the executive committee the various models made by them, amongst which is that of the little church discovered last year.

The maintenance of these works annually on such a scale as repays the trouble expended, is, of course, a costly matter, quite beyond the means of the Society of Antiquaries or any other body. Public attention has, however, been drawn to the importance and interest of the works, and, through the liberality of various subscribers, especially of Dr. Edwin Freshfield, treasurer of the Society of Antiquaries, the Silchester Excavation Fund has, up to the present, not had to complain of lack of money. It will be several years yet before so large an area as the one

hundred acres within the walls can be properly and fully explored, and there is, therefore, ample scope for the beneficence of any one interested in the work and its results.

As an example of the unexpected discoveries that are from time to time made on the site of Calleva, this article may fitly be ended with the announcement of one of our most recent "finds." In clearing out a well, which had been sunk through the floor of one of the houses not long after its destruction, there came to light a cone-shaped pillar with characteristic late Roman mouldings round the base. It is in fact a Roman tombstone; but the singular thing is that the name of the deceased is inscribed in two lines of Ogam characters. Hitherto no Ogam stone has been found in England east of Devon, and, indeed, inscriptions in this strange character are so rare that only a few English examples are known. Professor Rhys, after examining the monument, pronounces it to be one of the oldest Ogam stones yet discovered, its date, irrespective of the mouldings on it, being limited by the early character of the Ogams and the probable period of the destruction of Calleva. W. H. ST. JOHN HOPE.

From Temple Bar.

#### A NIGHT WITH THE TRAPPISTS.

IN south-western France, a little to the east and north of the great wine-growing district of the Bordelais, is a rather extensive tract of country called the Double, which is scarcely known, even by name, beyond the region where it lies. It is still one of the most forlorn wildernesses in all France; but like the Carmargue, it has been much changed of late years by drainage and cultivation, and is destined to become productive and prosperous. For incalculable centuries it had remained a baneful solitude, overgrown with virgin forest, except in the hollows between the low hills, which succeed one another like the undulations of the sea; and here, almost hidden in sum-

mer by tall reeds and sedges, lay the pools and bogs that poisoned the air and rendered the climate abominable. In the midst of this marshy cretaceous desert, stretching between the Isle and its tributary, the Dronne, and close to a wretched, fever-stricken village called Echourgnac, a small community of Trappist monks established themselves in 1868. They did not go there merely as ascetics fleeing from the world, but also as philanthropists, prepared to sacrifice their lives for the good of humanity. Their mission was to drain and to cultivate this most unhealthy part of the Double, and to improve the condition of the peasants who eked out a miserable existence there. The best testimony that their labor was not wasted was afforded some years ago, when the French government was dispersing the monastic communities. The inhabitants of the Double were so excited at the prospect of their benefactors being expelled from their midst, that a serious conflict between them and the gendarmes was regarded as certain, if officials were sent to expel the monks. The danger was avoided by the decision of the government to leave the Trappists in peace as well as the Carthusians.

To pay a visit to the Trappists at Echourgnac was my chief motive for crossing the Double. I had left the small town of Ribérac, which is on the northern boundary of this region, early in the afternoon of a scorching summer day, and after quitting the verdant valley of the Dronne had walked over several miles of desolate country with a scarcely varying landscape of scrubby woods and marshy heaths. I was now resting a while by a reedy pool fringed with gorse and heather, and was listening to the Oreads answering one another upon their pan-pipes, when I saw coming towards me a figure which might have disturbed me very much had I been living in those days when — if there is any truth in legendary lore — the devil only needed half a pretext for forcing his society upon lonely travellers. This man — for man it was — had a face so overgrown with coal-

black hair that very little could be seen of it excepting the eyes and nose. Beard, whiskers, and moustache were inseparably mixed up. What skin was visible through the matted jungle of hair was little less swarthy than a Hindoo's. All the upper part of this astonishing head was hidden by a large hat of black straw, shaped like an inverted washing-basin. The rest of the figure was clad in a frock of dark brown serge, with hanging hood. Not expecting to see a Trappist where I was, I was startled for a moment by the apparition, but I quickly guessed that this was one of the brothers of the still distant monastery who had been sent out on some little expedition into the district. As he passed he raised his hat just enough to show that the close-cropped black hair beneath it was turning grey.

The road led me through a little village where there was an old Romanesque church. There were numerous archivolts over the broad portal, and above these was a horizontal dog's-tooth moulding with grotesque heads at intervals, but time had effaced most of the carving. All about the church the long grass and gaudy mulleins stood over the bones of men and women who, like their parents before them, had clung to their old homes in the midst of the pestilential marshes, suffering continually from malaria, watching their children grow paler and paler, and yet never thinking of surrender. What a strange combination of heroism, obstinacy, and stupidity do we find in human nature! But now things had changed here. There was an air of prosperity in the village, and the people said that the fever had almost left them.

While crossing another bit of wild and deserted country, I saw the dark gleam of poisonous pools nearly hidden by willows and reeds. The vibration of my footsteps disturbed the vipers that lay near the hot road; they slid down the banks and curved out of sight amongst the roots of the heather. These reptiles abound in the Double; conditions that are baneful to men are

healthful to them. The sighing of the pines added to the sadness of the land, for these trees now appeared in clumps along the wayside, and the storm wind had begun to blow. The sun was shining obliquely through a dun-colored haze when I reached the village of Echourgnac in a cultivated valley. Here the cattle and the green fields were signs of the cheese-making industry carried on at the monastery. The conventual buildings were now visible on the top of the neighboring hill, with the church spire higher against the sky than all the rest. I made my way towards this little fortress of asceticism hidden from the world amidst the woods and marshes.

I had made up my mind to spend the night with the Trappists, even if I was obliged to accept their charity and to allow myself to be classed with those tramps who have no literary pretext for their vagabond ways. Indeed, I had been given to understand by all to whom I had spoken on the subject in the district, that the reverend fathers gave money sometimes to the wayfarer, but accepted none in return for food and shelter. That part of me in which the conventional is concentrated said: "Stop at the inn;" but the other part, which has the curiosity and the errantry of the man who has never been perfectly civilized, said: "Go on, and whatever happens, pass the night with the Trappists."

Having reached the monastery gate, the next thing to do was to pull the bell. The porter opened first his wicket and then the door. The superior could not be approached for a quarter of an hour, so I was asked to wait in the lodge. Thus I had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the porter. Although he was very much in religion, having been a brother at Echourgnac since the foundation, he might be termed without disrespect "a jolly old soul." He was, as he said, a man who had no pretensions whatever to be learned. His lack of book knowledge made him all the more natural. His age appeared to be about sixty-five, but he had a body that was still robust and

vigorous under his dirty brown frock, although he had been living so many years on bread and cheese and vegetables, and short commons withal. The post of porter must have helped him not a little to bear up against the discipline, for it allowed him the use of his tongue, and the rule of silence would have been a more severe trial to him than to many another. He poured out some beer for me from a great stone jar that he kept near at hand. I had heard that the Trappists of Echourgnac added to their other accomplishments the arts of beer-brewing and wine-making, and was therefore not surprised by the porter's kindly offer; but when I noticed the yellow color and soup-like consistency of the fluid that he poured out for me, I was sorry that I had accepted it.

"It is a little thick," said the Trappist, whose keen eyes had noticed that there was a lack of warmth in the manner in which I took the glass from his hand, "but the beer is good. It is rather new."

"It must be very nourishing," I replied, after heroically draining the cup of tribulation.

"Have some more?" said this good-natured Trappist as he raised the jar again. I saved myself from a second dose by an energetic *merci!* and changed his thoughts by asking him if he had been a long time at the monastery.

"I was one of the first lot who came here in July, 1868. There were twenty-two of us in all, *pères et frères*, and two or three weeks afterwards seventeen were down with fever. You can have no idea of what it was here five-and-twenty years ago. The country was unfit for human beings. The people went shivering about in the heat of summer wrapped up as they would be in the depth of winter. It was pitiful to see them."

He then entered into details respecting the clearing of the land, the draining of the pools, etc. Suddenly remembering the flight of time, he disappeared with my card and left me in charge of the lodge. Presently he

came back and told me that the reverend father was unwell and could not see anybody, but that I could pass the night in the monastery if I wished to do so. The porter led me through a great farmyard, then through a door into a room, in the centre of which was a large table, and in the corners four very small and low wooden bedsteads with meagre mattresses, a couple of sheets, and a colored quilt.

When we entered, two men were seated at the table eating bread and cheese and drinking home-brewed beer "thick and slab," such as I had been refreshed with. One was quite young, perhaps five-and-twenty, and it was to him that the brother who parleyed with the outer world at the gate introduced me with the recommendation that he should do all in his power for me, adding with an emphasis by which he gained my friendship forever: "Je reponds sur vous." The young man said that as soon as he had finished his own meal he would see about my supper—so he called it—at once. I begged him to take his time, as I was in no hurry. The good porter, still solicitous, asked where I was going to sleep, and the young man, whom I afterwards learned was a postulant, pointed to a bed in one of the corners. I was then left with my two new acquaintances. The postulant had very soon finished, and having brushed the crumbs off his part of the bare board with his hand, he disappeared to see what he could find for me in the kitchen. The man who remained also brought his meal to a close, but he did not whisk the crumbs away; he brushed them into little heaps, and wetting his forefinger, raised them by this means to his mouth. He was about fifty; his chin was shaved, but he wore whiskers, and a long, rusty overcoat nearly down to his heels. He was very quiet, and I thought he looked like a repentant cabman. There was something about the man that excited my curiosity, but I felt that, considering where I was, it would be very bad taste to put any leading questions to him respecting his history. I never-

theless found a way of getting into conversation with him, and he did not need much persuasion to talk. He was rather incoherent, but I gathered from what he said that he had wandered a good deal from monastery to monastery, now in the world and now almost "in religion," without finding anchorage anywhere. "The world," he said, "is like a rotten plank, and we are like smoke that comes and goes. If we do not think of eternity, we are shipwrecked." Feeling perhaps that something in the world was a little more solid after the bread and cheese and beer than it was before, he was working himself up to a communicative humor, and I was beginning to hope that I should soon know what sort of a character he really was, when the return of the postulant changed his ideas as effectually as if a bucket of water had been thrown in his face. When he ventured to speak again, the younger man told him that it was six o'clock, and that the whole community was now expected to observe the rule of silence. "Do not be angry," he added, as he heard the other mutter something that escaped me. "I am not angry," replied the owner of the long coat, as he glided softly out of the room.

I was now alone with the postulant, who made matters pleasanter for me by giving a generous interpretation to the rule of silence in so far as it applied to himself. He told me that as I had come after the hour of the second meal, the *frère cuisinier* was not in the kitchen, but at *salve*; consequently there was no possibility of getting even an omelette made for me. After looking, however, into all the corners of the kitchen, my providential man had discovered some cold macaroni, which he presented to me in a small tin plate. I do not know how it had been cooked, but its very dark color made me suspicious of it. Although I knew it was quite wholesome, I thought it safer to leave it untouched, and to be satisfied with bread and cheese. Now this cheese, made by the Trappists of the Double upon the Port-Salut recipe,

which is a secret of the order, is of excellent quality, and deserves its reputation. The monastery bread, made from the wheat grown by the monks, was of the substantial and honest kind which in England would probably be called "farmhouse bread," although the great wheel or trencher-shaped loaves of the French provinces might cause some surprise there. My meal, therefore, might have been worse than it was, and as it was given to me for nothing, it would have been very bad manners not to appear pleased. The truth is, the novelty of my position—that of a tramp taken in and fed on charity—amused me so much that I found everything perfect. I had an idea "at the back of the head," that I should find a way of squaring matters financially with the holy men, but I did not wish to tell it even to myself then. I must confess that when a black bottle was placed beside the bread and cheese on the bare table, I was weak enough to hope that it contained some of the excellent white wine which I was told the Trappists made; but when the liquor came out the color of pea-soup, I recognized the religious beer which had already disappointed me. As I could get nothing better, and the water being distinctly bad, the most sensible thing to do was to be reconciled to the beer, and in this I succeeded very fairly. Necessity is not the mother of invention only. The wine, I afterwards learned, is only drunk at the convent in winter. A portion of it is sold to priests for sacramental use.

When I had taken the keen edge off my hunger, I began to feel a fresh interest in the postulant. Somehow, he did not appear to me to be of the stuff out of which monks, especially Trappists, are made, although I know that in all that relates to the interior workings of a man there are no outward signs to be relied upon. There is puzzle enough in our own contradictions to discourage us from trying to find consistency in others; but we try all the same. We have a fine sense of proportion and harmony when we analyze our fellow beings, but none whatever

when we turn the faculty introspectively. The sanctimonious undertone in which this young man spoke struck me as being false, for there was nothing in him that I could discover which linked him to the ascetic ideal of life. But then the question arose, why was he there? He was strong and healthy; he had a deep color on his cheeks and a humorous twinkle in his eye. He did not look as if he had been crossed in love, or had received any of the scars of passion such as might account for his wish to become a Trappist. He had seen something of the world. He had been to Chili, among other countries, and the civil war there had ruined his prospects, so he told me. I concluded from what he said that on his return to France he had sought a temporary refuge with the Trappists, and that he preferred to remain under the shelter that he had found there, rather than run the risk of worse in the struggle for life outside. Becoming more confidential, he told me that what was most difficult to be borne by those in his position was the rule of absolute submission and obedience.

I had not been at the table long when this postulant glided out of the room, saying, "I will see if there is a way of getting another bottle of beer." Presently he returned with a bottle under his arm, and then I learnt that the abbot had given orders that I was to pass the night "dans la chambre de monseigneur." The prospect of sleeping in the bishop's bed furnished me with a conscientious reason for not drawing the cork from the second bottle of monastic barley-brew; but my companion, who was more or less in religion, did not give me a chance of refusing, for he drew it himself and filled two glasses. "Nous allons trinquer," said he. We clinked glasses and talked with greater freedom, although the postulant still spoke under his breath—it was a habit that he had fallen into. We were interrupted by a scuffling outside and by the opening of the door. A couple of monks in brown frocks were on the threshold. A small, grey-bearded brother with a bent back

held in one hand a pewter plate and in the other a small basin of the same metal. He was the *frère cuisinier*, who had returned from *salve*, and he had come to offer me some vegetable soup and some more macaroni, both of which I declined. Not a word did these Trappists say, but they carried on with the postulant a conversation in dumb show as to what my requirements would be on the morrow. They stroked their noses, rubbed their fingers together, and grimaced so expressively all on my account that I suffered agony because I dared not laugh outright.

When they had left I took a stroll outside, for as yet I felt no inclination to go to bed, notwithstanding that a bishop had slept upon the same mattress that was waiting for me. Keeping within the convent bounds, where no woman is allowed to set her foot — that troublesome foot whose imprint may be found on most of the paths that lead to a Trappist monastery — wandering beyond the buildings, but still within the enclosure, I came to a bit of waste land covered with heather and gorse that overlooked the wooded wilderness towards the west, as a headland bluff overlooks the sea. The sun had set and the wild spirits of the storm had drawn a translucent drapery of vapor from the dark thundercloud hovering overhead to where the fringe of the forest broke the blood-stained bar upon the horizon's verge, and this luminous, orange-colored curtain was crossed every moment upwards and downwards by silvery shafts of lightning. Such an effect of sunset combined with storm was like a new revelation of nature, and the sublimity of the spectacle would have held me fast to the patch of wild heath if the rain had not begun to fall in splashes. The long summer day was over, and the night came forth in trouble and with gushing tears. The roar of the thunder grew louder and the flash of the lightning brightened every minute. I returned to the monastery and found the postulant quite anxious to have done with me and to put me into the bishop's room. He was sleepy — every-

body gets sleepy in these country places at about nine o'clock, irrespective of canonical hours — whereas I grow livelier like a night bird as the dusk deepens. All the monks must have been in their cells snoring with the clear conscience which is the gift of the day that has been well filled up, when I reluctantly entered the only room in the place that had any pretension to comfort, but which to me was like a prison. I was making an effort to acquire the virtue of resignation, when the postulant spoiled the mood by speaking again of beer. Had he picked up in his wanderings the notion that an Englishman could not live unless he was kept well supplied with beer, or had he formed an exaggerated idea of the seductiveness of the strange but innocent liquor that the Trappists brewed? Whatever his thoughts may have been, he darted away in spite of my endeavor to stop him, and presently reappeared with another black bottle. I knew that he had not obtained it without diplomacy, and that he had made my unquenchable thirst the excuse; but by this time I had perceived that his solicitude was not wholly unselfish. He muttered something about "charity" as he filled a glass for me, notwithstanding my refusal, then vanished with the bottle. He had promised to wake me at two o'clock for matins.

When left alone I made an inspection of the bishop's room. It was spacious enough for fifty people to dance in, and the furniture would not have been greatly in the way. The stones which made the floor had no carpet, not even the *descente de lit*, which in France is considered indispensable even when the floor is of wood. In the corner was a low wooden bedstead with dingy curtains suspended from a rafter, and a *paillasse* of maize leaves with a thin wool one above it; coarse hempen sheets and a colored coverlet completed the bedding. By the side against the wall was a broad *prie-Dieu*, with a lithograph just above it of the Holy Child bearing the cross. A plain table in the centre without a cloth, a *secrétaire* with high crucifix attached,

another bare table with washing-basin, jug, and folded towel, with a few chairs and several religious prints, made up the furniture.

This room was on the ground floor and looked out upon a long, covered terrace, with the farmyard immediately beyond. I opened the sashes—I had already prevailed upon the postulant not to fasten the shutters—and, having blown out the candle, I lit my pipe. I suppose if I had had any sense of propriety I should have refrained from smoking in the bishop's room; but what was I to do, a prisoner there at nine o'clock in the evening and not a bit sleepy? If it had been a fine evening I do not think I could have resisted the temptation to jump out of the window and to stroll back to the patch of imprisoned moor. First a cat and then a great dog came sneaking along, and I tried to get on friendly terms with them from the window, but they too seemed to have renounced the world with all its pomps and vanities to conform to the Trappist rule, for each of them looked at me with pity and reproach out of the corner of the eye and described a wide semicircle, at the risk of getting wet, in order not to be drawn into conversation. But the storm at all events had not been silenced; the thunder growled and groaned, and every half minute the lightning lit up all the stones and puddles of the great farmyard, beyond which my vision was cut off by the roofs of the out-buildings.

Notwithstanding the unpleasantness of being shut up, I felt that if the management of the weather had been left to me I could not have arranged things better for my first night in a Trappist monastery. Here I was in the midst of the desolation of the Double under the same roof with men who were driven into this shelter by the desolation of their souls. Tempest-tossed by the conflict of the spirit and the flesh, wounded perhaps by secret griefs and humiliations, strong perchance in the eyes of others, while never sure of themselves from one hour to another, putting out upon the

same sea again and again only to be thrown back upon the same desert shore, they at length settled down here, and they must have done so with the calm conviction that they had found the medicine to suit their kind of sickness in a life of incessant punishment of self and labor for others.

It was about eleven when I felt tired enough to lie down. I had not been in this position long when something bit me. I thought I knew the enemy, but I dared not whisper its name even to myself, for I was overcome by its condescension. From a bishop to me was a fall in the social scale that ought to have made the most voracious insect tremble on the edge of the precipice. Maybe it did tremble before it yielded to temptation and forgot its dignity.

The storm continued all night with intervals of calm. A little before two o'clock the bell was rung for matins. The clang of the metal must have been heard clear and shrill far over the Double, even when the storm seemed to be rending the black sails of the clouds asunder. The postulant fetched me, as he had promised, and he led me through a labyrinth of passages to the church. Although the building was almost in darkness, I could see that it was in the pointed style, and that it was marked by a cold elegance befitting its special purpose. The nave was divided near the middle by a Gothic screen of wood artistically carved, although the ornamental motive had been kept in subjection. The half that adjoined the sanctuary was somewhat higher than the other, and here the Trappist fathers had their stalls—the brothers' stalls were in the lower part. I was led to a place below the screen. The office had already commenced; the monotonous plain-chant by deep-toned voices had reached me in the corridors. Perhaps it was half an hour later when the chanting ceased. The lamps were darkened in the stalls above the screen—in the lower part there was but one very small light suspended from the vault—then the monks knelt each upon the narrow piece of wood affixed to their stalls for



this purpose, and for half an hour with heads bent down they prayed in silence while the thunder groaned outside and the lightning flashed through the clerestory windows. To the Trappists, who day after day, year after year, at the same hour had been going through the same part of their unchanging discipline, heedless whether the stars shone overhead or the lightning glittered, there was nothing in all this to draw their minds from the circle of devotional routine; I alone felt as if I was going down into my grave. The grey light that was now making the ribs of the vaulting dimly visible was like the dawn of eternity breaking through the brief night called death, which is not perhaps so dark as it seems. At three o'clock the chill and awful silence was broken by the white-robed prior, who rose from his low posture like a dead man in his shroud, and began to chant in another tone and measure from what had gone before, and which had in it the sadness of the wind that I heard moaning in the pine-tops on the moor before the storm broke. The voice was strong and clear, but so solemn that it was almost unearthly, and it seemed in some strange way to mingle with the purity of the cold dawn that comes when all the passions of the world are still, but which makes the leaves tremble at the crime and trouble of another day.

When the prior stood up the brothers left to begin their manual labor, each one in his allotted place. The fathers remained in their stalls until after the four o'clock mass, and then they too fell to work until six o'clock — the hour of prime. I soon followed the brothers, although not so far as the fields, the cheese rooms, and farm buildings. I returned to my room; but, as I had to pass on the upper side of the screen on leaving the church, I looked at the two rows of white figures standing in their stalls. It may have been the effect of the mingled daylight and lamplight, or of my own imagination; whatever the reason, I thought during those few seconds that I had never before seen such a collection of strange

and startling faces. They were not those of weak men, but of sombre men who had walked through Hell like Dante, and who bore upon their calm and corpse-like features the deep-cut traces of the flame and horror.

I took up my old place by the window, and watched in the twilight of morning an aged brother, with frock hitched up above his naked ankles and his feet in great *sabots*, fetch sack after sack of what I supposed to be bran, and carry it away on his shoulders. He passed close to me, and looked at me with an expression which I interpreted to mean: "You must be a lunatic to stare at me instead of going to bed — you, who have monseigneur's soft bed and are at liberty to sleep." But no word passed between us. At length I did go to bed again and slept.

I was awakened by a noise in my room, and on opening my eyes I saw a long figure in white two or three yards from me, and I realized that a Trappist father was watching me. Then, when he perceived that I was awake, he glided from the room without saying a word. Had I spoken, he would have replied and explained what he wanted; but I had not recovered sufficiently from my surprise to remember the rule until he was gone. I now called to mind that the postulant had told me over-night that a certain father would show me round the monastery after prime. This, then, was he, and I was doubtless keeping him waiting, for it was seven o'clock. A few minutes later he returned. I was then at my ablutions.

Now, although I have grown pretty well accustomed to go through this daily duty with the aid of salad-bowls and slop-basins while living in the French provinces, I think it good for the mind to keep up the illusion of a thorough wash even when this is practically impossible. When, therefore, the Trappist stalked again into my room without giving me warning, his costume, primitive as it was, was surpassed by the simplicity of mine. I told him that I would be with him in two or three minutes, and he retired

with a slow and stately nod. I tried very hard to keep my word, for I expected every moment to see the door open again. When I opened it myself, I found the father pacing slowly in the passage. Knowing that there is not much to be had in a Trappist monastery without asking, I opened the conversation by making some delicate allusions to breakfast. The truth is that the bread-and-cheese supper was nothing to me now but an unsatisfactory recollection, and, with the sense of vacuum that distressed me, I was unwilling to follow the monk upon the promised round lest I should die of inanition on the way. He asked me what I would like to eat, and I said, "Anything that is near at hand." Had I suggested that a chop or a steak would be suitable after so light a dinner, I should not have had it; but I should have received a large measure of silent reprobation for my bad taste in asking for it, and also for having reminded a Trappist of such vanities of the past.

The father—he was becoming fatherly indeed—went to a cupboard of the *salle à manger* already described, and brought out what I had left of the bread and cheese set before me the previous evening. Having placed this on the table, together with a bottle of beer—the postulant had led me to hope for coffee and milk, but there was evidently no escape from malt liquor here—he withdrew to a little office close by where he was wont to perform the daily duty of keeping the cheese accounts of the monastery. I felt sure that when he had reckoned up a few figures he would be coming round to tear me away from the bread and cheese, so I endeavored to hasten the consumption with as much speed as I could decently put on. I was right in my conjecture. I had not been seated five minutes when he came back and wandered half round the table.

"J'aurai fini dans un petit moment, mon père," said I, as I cut off another piece of cheese. By the by, nobody should call a Trappist "monsieur," because the monk has ceased to have

even a name of his own other than his religious one, and has become a father or brother to everybody. He returned to his accounts; but he had not gone very deeply into them when he saw me standing at the door of his little den. He left his books at once, and we walked side by side where he chose to lead me. He was a rather tall man, with a face that was an enigma. The features were so like those of the late Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, that if the English freethinker had disappeared mysteriously I might have strongly suspected him of having turned Trappist, for if the members of the order had written their history one would not be surprised to find anybody in it.

This father volunteered no information whatever; it had all to be drawn out of him. He spoke in a low voice, and, as it appeared to me, with something of the hesitation of a man who is recalling his mother tongue after many years of disuse. His face was large and heavy; but there was a keen light in his eyes which at times was that of gaiety well kept under. He soon let me see that even a Trappist may give out an occasional flash of humor. I was questioning him respecting the help that the monastery gave to the poor, and he told me that in addition to thirty or forty persons living in the locality who received regular assistance every day, about the same number of wanderers stopped at the gate and waited for the bread and cheese which was never refused them.

"Men looking for work?" I asked innocently.

"Yes," replied the monk, without moving a muscle of his stolid face; "and who pray to God that he will not give them any."

It was evident that no sentimental illusions respecting the begging class were entertained by the community. The monk confirmed what people in the country had already told me of the help afforded by the Trappists to peasant agriculturists in difficulties. The sick were moreover supplied with medicines gratuitously from the small pharmacy attached to the monastery. I did

not ask the question, but I concluded that at least one of the fathers had a medical diploma. The medicine that was chiefly wanted in the Double when the Trappists settled there was quinine; the demand upon it was very heavy years ago, but by removing to a great extent the cause of the fever-breeding miasma, the monks have been able to economize the drug.

Talking about these matters, we reached the refectory. A great cold room with whitewashed walls and five long, narrow tables with benches on each side, stretching from end to end, was the place where the monks took their very frugal meals. The tables were laid for the first meal. There were no cloths, and it is almost needless to add that there were no napkins, although these are considered so essential in France that even in the most wretched auberge one is usually laid before the guest. Trappists, however, have little need of them. At each place were a wooden spoon and fork, a plate, a jug of water, and another jug—a smaller one—of beer, and a porringer for soup, which is the chief of the Trappists' diet. Very thin soup it is; the ingredients being water, chopped vegetables, bread, and a little oil or butter. Until a few years ago no oily matter, whether vegetable or animal, was allowed in the soup, nor was it permissible, except in case of sickness, to have more than one meal a day; but the necessity of relaxing the rule a little was realized. Now, during the six summer months of the year, there are two meals a day, namely, at eleven and six; but in winter there is still only one that is called a meal, and this is at four. There is, however, a *gôûter*—just something to keep the stomach from collapsing—at ten in the morning. No flesh, nor fish, nor animal product, except cheese and butter, is eaten by these Trappists unless they fall ill, and then they have meat or anything else that they may need to make them well. There is, however, very little sickness amongst them. The living of each Trappist probably costs no more than sixpence a day to the

community. Assuming that the money brought into the common fund by those who have a private fortune—the fathers as a rule are men of some independent means—covers the establishment expenses and the taxation imposed by the State, there must remain a considerable profit on the work of each individual, whether he labors in the fields or in the dairy and cheese rooms, or concerns himself with the sales and the accounts, or, like the porter at the gate, tests with an instrument the richness of the milk that is brought in by the peasants, lest they who have been befriended by the monks in sickness and penury should steal from them in return. To devote this surplus obtained by a life of sacrifice, compared to which the material misery of the beggars whom they relieve is luxury, to the lessening of human suffering, to the encouragement of the family, offering the hand of charity to the worthy and the unworthy, expecting no honor from all this, and not even gratitude, is a life that makes that of the theoretical philanthropists and humanitarian philosophers look rather barren. Let every man who lives up to an unselfish ideal have full credit for it, whether he be a Trappist or a Buddhist.

At one end of the refectory, below the line of tables, was a small wooden bench for a single person. The monk pointed to it with half a smile upon his face. "What is it?" I asked. "The stool of penitence," he replied. Here a monk, who had brought upon himself some disciplinary correction, sat by order of the abbot in view of everybody, and had the extra mortification of watching the others eat, while he, the penitent, had nothing to put between his teeth. I wondered if my cicerone had ever been perched there, but I was not on such terms of familiarity with him that I could ask the question.

From the refectory we went to the dormitory, an oblong room with a passage down the middle, and cells on each side—about fifty altogether. They were very narrow, and were separated by lath and plaster partitions, only car-

ried to the height of about six feet. These partitions, which had been white-washed over, looked very fragile and dilapidated, and altogether the appearance of this great dormitory was wretched in the extreme. A glance into the interior of two or three of the cells deepened this impression. In each was a small wooden bedstead about a foot and a half high, with nothing upon it but a very thin *paillasse*, a black blanket (the color of the wool), and a little bolster. Upon a nail hung a small cat-o'-nine-tails of knotted whipcord. "How often do you administer to yourselves the discipline?" I asked. "Every Friday," said the monk. To other questions that I put to him he replied that about ten members of the community were priests, and that fathers and brothers used the dormitory in common. There was no distinction between the two classes as regards the vows that were taken.

We passed into the cloisters, which were very plain, without any attempt at architectural ornament, but the garden that filled the centre of the quadrangle was carefully kept, and the many flowers there were evidently watered and otherwise tended by hands that were gentle to them. Then I asked if it was true that the members of the community, when they passed one another in their ordinary occupations, were allowed to break the rule of silence only to say, "Remember death." "No," replied the monk, "it is a legend that originated with Chateaubriand." We reached the chapter-house, a plain room with benches along the walls and a case containing a small collection of books. I saw nothing of interest here excepting a genealogical tree of the order of Reformed Cistercians, called Trappists, showing its descent from the Abbey of Cîteaux, and a portrait of Père Dom Sébastien, abbot-general of the Trappists, who was a pontifical zouave before he put on the habit of the most ascetic of the monastic orders.

I asked to see the cemetery, and was led to an uncultivated spot a little beyond the block of convent buildings. A small, grassy enclosure, with a

wooden paling round it, was the monks' burying-place. About twelve had died in the twenty-five years of the monastery's existence, but most of the graves looked recent. This was explained to me by the father, who actually smiled as he said: "We who came here at the commencement are getting old now and are following one another to the cemetery rather quickly." Wearers of the white frock and wearers of the brown frock were lying in perfect equality side by side as they happened to die, each having a small cross of white wood standing in the grass of his grave. I read: "N. Raphaël, monachus —, natus —, professus —, obiit —." The dates I took no note of. With the exception of the name and the dates, the inscription on each cross was the same as on the others. And the name, it need scarcely be said, was the one taken in religion.

"Do you know one another's family names?" I asked of the living monk by my side, who appeared to have lapsed into meditation, thinking, perhaps, how far his place would be from the last on the line.

"As a rule we do not. There are only two or three monks here whose names I know."

Lastly, I was taken to the farm buildings, where there were about fifty cows and one hundred pigs. A young brother, a novice, was busy, with his frock hitched up, cleaning out the pigsties. He was piously plying the shovel, but his face had not yet acquired an expression of perfect resignation. He was young, however, and perhaps he had been brought up in better society than that of pigs.

I was invited with much kindness and courtesy to stay until after the eleven o'clock meal; but grateful as I felt to the Trappists for their bread and cheese and home-brewed beer, which had enabled me to sustain life for more than twelve hours, I was quite content with what I had received in that way. My curiosity being also satisfied, I gladly went forth into the wicked world again after exchanging a cordial farewell with the genial porter, who, when

he caught sight of me returning to his lodge, looked sharply to see if the jar of beer was safe, and his mind being made easy on the point, he begged me to let him pour me out a glass. Then he gazed at me with round eyes of surprise and reproach when I declined the offer with more animation than discretion should have permitted.

E. HARRISON BARKER.

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MY NURSERY REVISITED.

MY nursery is a little old-world village nestling in a hollow amid the Berkshire wolds. I was five years old when last I saw the place; but so tenderly has time dealt with it, that, save I see it as through a telescope reversed, the picture I have carried in memory for a quarter of a century is faithful to the reality of to-day. And truly there is little change. The railway has cut its path through the hillside and raised a huge embankment across the valley, but its invasion has not awakened H—from her pastoral slumber. She scorns the rope civilization has thrown to her and drifts along in her groove of agriculture, secure in the lack of possibilities which might tempt enterprise to disturb her peace.

In the foreground of my picture of H— stood the house I knew best—the ivy-covered vicarage, my cradle. What a noble mansiou memory held it! Having grown from three feet high to six the picture needs corresponding alteration; the house I had in mind was twice the size of this; those lofty, spiked railings dwindle down to the merest fence, and the spacious front garden disappears in a strip of gravel walk. Only the shrubs remain true; because they have changed and grown up with me; but that luxuriant Virginia creeper, which outshines the ivy, looks like a wig over a familiar face.

Within the vicarage, once my eye is reconciled to the reduced scale, every corner calls up a flood of memories, clear-cut, blurred, and dim. This is the night-nursery, where Mrs. Eales,

our nurse, ruled with a hair-brush as with a rod of iron; a queer feeling akin to funk creeps down my back now as I look round the room. I feel the rap of Mrs. Eales's bony knuckles on my head, and shudder at the sight of a brush such as that, with whose flat side— A glance at the washstand so vividly recalls the agony of morning ablutions as administered by her hands, that my eyes smart again; with a bit of yellow soap and a rough towel that nurse could inflict unspeakable tortures; she gave me a distaste for washing I retained for years. The day-nursery is a bedroom now, and every stick of the old furniture is gone, but I spent far too many days here to have forgotten it. There, in that corner, my little brother laid the seeds of a life-long feud by smashing my sailor doll. I have forgiven him now, but I can never forget the tragedy; the stolid indifference wherewith the one-year-old destroyer regarded the mangled corse we drew from the grate with the nursery dust-pan; the tears my sympathetic sister mingled with mine when the case was pronounced hopeless; and, above all, the redeeming joy of the funeral we gave the sawdustless remains next day. The whole affair comes back vividly, as though it were only yesterday I was playing here on the floor, and I catch myself peering towards the open cupboard to see if my big Noah's Ark is still in its place on the bottom shelf.

A stone's throw—quite a long walk it used to be—from the vicarage gate stands the old grey church among the decrepit, lichened tombstones; nothing of its outward face has changed. There, on the stunted square tower, still twirls in legless, much-tailed brilliancy, the gilded cock I used to covet for a plaything, and the swallows' nests occupy their identical old nooks. But within, restoration—much needed, they tell me—has laid its transforming finger on all old acquaintances. Gone is the black oak, three-decker pulpit, with its queer sounding-board; vanished are the rows of wooden hat-pegs which ran along the walls; nor does a