

BOOK II.

THE ANCIENT MONK.

CHAPTER I.

JOCELIN OF BRAKELOND.

WE will, in this Second Portion of our Work, strive to penetrate a little, by means of certain confused Papers, printed and other, into a somewhat remote Century; and to look face to face on it, in hope of perhaps illustrating our own poor Century thereby. It seems a circuitous way; but it may prove a way nevertheless. For man has ever been a striving, struggling, and, in spite of wide-spread calumnies to the contrary, a veracious creature: the Centuries too are all lineal children of one another; and often, in the portrait of early grandfathers, this and the other enigmatic feature of the newest grandson shall disclose itself, to mutual elucidation. This Editor will venture on such a thing. 5

Besides, in Editors' Books, and indeed everywhere else in the world of Today, a certain latitude of movement grows more and more becoming for the practical man. Salvation lies not in tight lacing, in these times;—how far from that, in any province whatsoever! Readers and men generally are getting into strange habits of asking all persons and things, from poor Editors' Books up to Church Bishops and State Potentates, not, By what designation art thou called; in what wig and black triangle dost thou walk abroad? Heavens, I know thy designation and black triangle well enough! But, in God's name, what *art* thou? Not Nothing, sayest thou! Then if not, How much and what? This is the thing I would know; and even *must* soon know, such a pass am I come to!—What weather-symptoms,—not for the poor Editor of Books alone! The Editor of Books may understand 10 15 20

withal that if, as is said, ‘many kinds are permissible,’ there is one kind not permissible, ‘the kind that has nothing in it, *le genre ennuyeux*,’ and go on his way accordingly.—

5 A certain Jocelinus de Brakelonda, a natural-born Englishman, has left us an extremely foreign Book,* which the labours of the Camden Society have brought to light in these days. Jocelin’s Book, the ‘Chronicle,’ or private Boswellian Notebook, of Jocelin, a certain old St. Edmundsbury Monk and Boswell, now seven centuries old, how remote is it from us; exotic, extraneous; in all ways, coming from far
10 abroad! The language of it is not foreign only but dead: Monk-Latin lies across not the British Channel, but the ninefold Stygian Marshes, Stream of Lethe, and one knows not where! Roman Latin itself, still alive for us in the Elysian Fields of Memory, is domestic in compar-
15 ison. And then the ideas, life-furniture, whole workings and ways of this worthy Jocelin; covered deeper than Pompeii with the lava-ashes and inarticulate wreck of seven hundred years!

 Jocelin of Brakelond cannot be called a conspicuous literary character; indeed few mortals that have left so visible a work, or footmark,
20 behind them can be more obscure. One other of those vanished Existences, whose work has not yet vanished;—almost a pathetic phenomenon, were not the whole world full of such! The Builders of Stonehenge, for example:—or alas what say we Stonehenge and builders? The writers of the *Universal Review* and *Homer’s Iliad*; the pav-
25 iours of London streets;—sooner or later, the entire Posterity of Adam! It is a pathetic phenomenon; but an irremediable, nay, if well meditated, a consoling one.

 By his dialect of Monk-Latin, and indeed by his name, this Jocelin seems to have been a Norman Englishman; the surname *de Brakelonda*
30 indicates a native of St. Edmundsbury itself, *Brakelond* being the known old name of a street or quarter in that venerable Town. Then farther, sure enough, our Jocelin was a Monk of St. Edmundsbury Convent; held some ‘*obedientia*,’ subaltern officiality there, or rather, in succession several; was, for one thing, ‘chaplain to my Lord Abbot,
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* *Chronica JOCELINI DE BRAKELONDA, de rebus gestis Samsonis Abbatis Monasterii Sancti Edmundi: nunc primum typis mandata, curante JOHANNE GAGE ROKWOOD (Camden Society, London, 1840).*

living beside him night and day for the space of six years;’—which last, indeed, is the grand fact of Jocelin’s existence, and properly the origin of this present Book, and of the chief meaning it has for us now. He was, as we have hinted, a kind of born *Boswell*, though an infinitesimally small one; neither did he altogether want his *Johnson* 5 even there and then. Johnsons are rare; yet, as has been asserted, Boswells perhaps still rarer,—the more is the pity on both sides! This Jocelin, as we can discern well, was an ingenious and ingenuous, a cheery-hearted, innocent, yet withal shrewd, noticing, quick-witted man; and from under his monk’s cowl, has looked out on that narrow 10 section of the world in a really *human* manner; not in any *simial*, canine, ovine, or otherwise *inhuman* manner,—afflictive to all that have humanity! The man is of patient, peaceable, loving, clear-smiling nature; open for this and that. A wise simplicity is in him; much natural sense; a *veracity* that goes deeper than words. Veracity: it is 15 the basis of all; and, some say, means genius itself; the prime essence of all genius whatsoever! Our Jocelin, for the rest, has read his classical manuscripts, his Virgilius, his Flaccus, Ovidius Naso; of course still more, his Homilies and Breviaries, and if not the Bible, considerable extracts of the Bible. Then also he has a pleasant wit; and loves 20 a timely joke, though in mild subdued manner: very amiable to see. A learned grown man, yet with the heart as of a good child; whose whole life indeed has been that of a child,—St. Edmundsbury Monastery a larger kind of cradle for him, in which his whole prescribed duty was to *sleep* kindly, and love his mother well! This is the 25 Biography of Jocelin; ‘a man of excellent religion,’ says one of his contemporary Brother Monks, ‘*eximia religionis, potens sermone et opere.*’

For one thing, he had learned to write a kind of Monk or Dog-Latin, still readable to mankind; and, by good luck for us, had be- 30 thought him of noting down thereby what things seemed notablest to him. Hence gradually resulted a *Chronica Jocelini*; new Manuscript in the *Liber Albus* of St. Edmundsbury. Which Chronicle, once written in its childlike transparency, in its innocent good-humour, not without touches of ready pleasant wit and many kinds of worth, other 35 men liked naturally to read: whereby it failed not to be copied, to be multiplied, to be inserted in the *Liber Albus*; and so surviving Henry the Eighth, Putney Cromwell, the Dissolution of Monasteries, and all

accidents of malice and neglect for six centuries or so, it got into the *Harleian Collection*,—and has now therefrom, by Mr. Rokewood of the Camden Society, been deciphered into clear print; and lies before us, a dainty thin quarto, to interest for a few minutes whomsoever it can.

Here too it will behove a just Historian gratefully to say that Mr. Rokewood, Jocelin's Editor, has done his editorial function well. Not only has he deciphered his crabbed Manuscript into clear print; but he has attended, what his fellow editors are not always in the habit of doing, to the important truth that the Manuscript so deciphered ought to have a meaning for the reader. Standing faithfully by his text, and printing its very errors in spelling, in grammar or otherwise, he has taken care by some note to indicate that they are errors, and what the correction of them ought to be. Jocelin's Monk-Latin is generally transparent, as shallow limpid water. But at any stop that may occur, of which there are a few, and only a very few, we have the comfortable assurance that a meaning does lie in the passage, and may by industry be got at; that a faithful editor's industry had already got at it before passing on. A compendious useful Glossary is given; nearly adequate to help the uninitiated through: sometimes one wishes it had been a trifle larger; but, with a Spelman and Ducange at your elbow, how easy to have made it far too large! Notes are added, generally brief; sufficiently explanatory of most points. Lastly a copious correct Index; which no such Book should want, and which unluckily very few possess. And so, in a word, the *Chronicle of Jocelin* is, as it professes to be, unwrapped from its thick cerements, and fairly brought forth into the common daylight, so that he who runs, and has a smattering of grammar, may read.

We have heard so much of Monks; everywhere, in real and fictitious History, from Muratori Annals to Radcliffe Romances, these singular two-legged animals, with their rosaries and breviaries, with their shaven crowns, hair-cilices, and vows of poverty, masquerade so strangely through our fancy; and they are in fact so very strange an extinct-species of the human family,—a veritable Monk of Bury St. Edmunds is worth attending to, if by chance made visible and audible. Here he is; and in his hand a magical speculum, much gone to rust indeed, yet in fragments still clear; wherein the marvellous image

of his existence does still shadow itself, though fitfully, and as with an intermittent light! Will not the reader peep with us into this singular *camera lucida*, where an extinct species, though fitfully, can still be seen alive? Extinct species, we say; for the live specimens which still go about under that character are too evidently to be classed as spurious in Natural History: the Gospel of Richard Arkwright once promulgated, no Monk of the old sort is any longer possible in this world. But fancy a deep-buried Mastodon, some fossil Megatherion, Ichthyosaurus, were to begin to *speak* from amid its rock-swathings, never so indistinctly! The most extinct fossil species of men or monks can do, and does, this miracle,—thanks to the Letters of the Alphabet, good for so many things. 5

Jocelin, we said, was somewhat of a Boswell; but unfortunately, by Nature, he is none of the largest, and distance has now dwarfed him to an extreme degree. His light is most feeble, intermittent, and requires the intensest kindest inspection; otherwise it will disclose mere vacant haze. It must be owned, the good Jocelin, spite of his beautiful childlike character, is but an altogether imperfect ‘mirror’ of these old-world things! The good man, he looks on us so clear and cheery, and in his neighbourly soft-smiling eyes we see so well our *own* shadow,—we have a longing always to cross-question him, to force from him an explanation of much. But no; Jocelin, though he talks with such clear familiarity, like a next-door neighbour, will not answer any question: that is the peculiarity of him, dead these six hundred and fifty years, and quite deaf to us, though still so audible! The good man, he cannot help it, nor can we. 15 20 25

But truly it is a strange consideration this simple one, as we go on with him, or indeed with any lucid simple hearted soul like him: Behold therefore, this England of the Year 1200 was no chimerical vacuity or dreamland, peopled with mere vaporous Fantasms, Rymer’s Fœdera, and Doctrines of the Constitution; but a green solid place, that grew corn and several other things. The sun shone on it; the vicissitude of seasons and human fortunes. Cloth was woven and worn; ditches were dug, furrowfields ploughed, and houses built. Day by day all men and cattle rose to labour, and night by night returned home weary to their several lairs. In wondrous Dualism, then as now, lived nations of breathing men; alternating, in all ways, between Light and Dark: between joy and sorrow, between rest and 30 35

toil,—between hope, hope reaching high as Heaven, and fear deep as very Hell. Not vapour Fantasms, Rymer's *Fœdera* at all! Cœur-de-Lion was not a theatrical popinjay with greaves and steel-cap on it, but a man living upon victuals,—*not* imported by Peel's Tariff. Cœur-de-Lion came palpably athwart this Jocelin at St. Edmundsbury; and had almost peeled the sacred gold '*Feretrum*,' or St. Edmund Shrine itself, to ransom him out of the Danube Jail.

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These clear eyes of neighbour Jocelin looked on the bodily presence of King John; the very John *Sansterre* or Lackland, who signed *Magna Charta* afterwards in Runnymede. Lackland, with a great retinue, boarded once, for the matter of a fortnight, in St. Edmundsbury Convent; daily in the very eyesight, palpable to the very fingers of our Jocelin: O Jocelin, what did he say, what did he do; how looked he, lived he;—at the very lowest, what coat or breeches had he on? Jocelin is obstinately silent. Jocelin marks down what interests *him*; entirely deaf to *us*. With Jocelin's eyes we discern almost nothing of John Lackland. As through a glass darkly, we with our own eyes and appliances, intensely looking, discern at most: A blustering, dissipated, human figure, with a kind of blackguard quality air, in crimson velvet, or other uncertain texture, uncertain cut, with much plumage and fringing; amid numerous other human figures of the like; riding abroad with hawks; talking noisy nonsense;—tearing out the bowels of St. Edmundsbury Convent (its larders namely and cellars) in the most ruinous way, by living at rack and manger there. Jocelin notes only, with a slight subacidity of manner, that the King's Majesty, *Dominus Rex*, did leave, as gift for our St. Edmund Shrine, a handsome enough silk cloak,—or rather pretended to leave, for one of his retinue borrowed it of us, and *we* never got sight of it again; and, on the whole, that the *Dominus Rex*, at departing, gave us 'thirteen *sterlingii*,' one shilling and one penny, to say a mass for him; and so departed,—like a shabby Lackland as he was! 'Thirteen pence sterling,' this was what the Convent got from Lackland, for all the victuals he and his had made away with. We of course said our mass for him, having covenanted to do it,—but let impartial posterity judge with what degree of fervour!

And in this manner vanishes King Lackland; traverses swiftly our strange intermittent magic-mirror, jingling the shabby thirteen pence merely; and rides with his hawks into Egyptian night again. It is

Jocelin's manner with all things; and it is men's manner and men's necessity. How intermittent is our good Jocelin; marking down, without eye to *us*, what *he* finds interesting! How much in Jocelin, as in all History, and indeed in all Nature, is at once inscrutable and certain; so dim, yet so indubitable; exciting us to endless considerations. 5
 For King Lackland *was* there, verily he; and did leave these *tredecim sterlingii* if nothing more, and did live and look in one way or the other, and a whole world was living and looking along with him! There, we say, is the grand peculiarity; the immeasurable one; distinguishing, to a really infinite degree, the poorest historical Fact 10
 from all Fiction whatsoever. Fiction, 'Imagination,' 'Imaginative Poetry' &c. &c., except as the vehicle for truth, or *fact* of some sort,—which surely a man should first try various other ways of vehiculating, and conveying safe,—what is it? Let the Minerva and other Presses re- 15
 spond!—

But it is time we were in St. Edmundsbury Monastery, and Seven good Centuries off. If indeed it be possible, by any aid of Jocelin, by any human art, to get thither, with a reader or two still following us?

CHAPTER II.

ST. EDMUNDSBURY.

THE *Burg*, Bury, or ‘Berry’ as they call it, of St. Edmund is still a prosperous brisk Town; beautifully diversifying, with its clear brick houses, ancient clean streets, and twenty or fifteen thousand busy souls, the general grassy face of Suffolk; looking out right pleasantly,
5 from its hill-slope, towards the rising sun: and on the eastern edge of it, still runs, long, black and massive, a range of monastic ruins; into the wide internal spaces of which the stranger is admitted on payment of one shilling. Internal spaces laid out, at present, as a botanic garden. Here stranger or townsman, sauntering at his leisure amid these
10 vast grim venerable ruins, may persuade himself that an Abbey of St. Edmundsbury did once exist; nay there is no doubt of it: see here the ancient massive Gateway, of architecture interesting to the eye of Dilettantism; and farther on, that other ancient Gateway, now about to tumble, unless Dilettantism, in these very months, can subscribe
15 money to cramp it and prop it!

Here, sure enough, is an Abbey; beautiful in the eye of Dilettantism. Giant Pedantry also will step in, with its huge *Dugdale* and other enormous *Monasticons* under its arm, and cheerfully apprise you, That this was a very great Abbey, owner and indeed creator of
20 St. Edmund’s Town itself, owner of wide lands and revenues; nay that its lands were once a county of themselves; that indeed King Canute or Knut was very kind to it, and gave St. Edmund his own gold crown off his head, on one occasion; for the rest, that the Monks

were of such and such a genus, such and such a number; that they had so many carucates of land in this hundred, and so many in that; and then farther that the large Tower or Belfry was built by such a one, and the smaller Belfry was built by &c. &c.—Till human nature can stand no more of it; till human nature desperately take refuge in forgetfulness, almost in flat disbelief of the whole business, Monks, Monastery, Belfries, Carucates and all! Alas, what mountains of dead ashes, wreck and burnt bones, does assiduous Pedantry dig up from the Past Time, and name it History, and Philosophy of History; till, as we say, the human soul sinks wearied and bewildered; till the Past Time seems all one infinite incredible grey void, without sun, stars, hearthfires or candle-light; dim offensive dust-whirlwinds filling universal Nature; and over your Historical Library, it is as if all the Titans had written for themselves: DRY RUBBISH SHOT HERE!

And yet these grim old walls are not a dilettantism and dubiety; they are an earnest fact. It was a most real and serious purpose they were built for! Yes, another world it was, when these black ruins, white in their new mortar and fresh chiselling, first saw the sun as walls, long ago. Gauge not, with thy dilettante compasses, with that placid dilettante simper, the Heaven's-Watchtower of our Fathers, the fallen God's-Houses, the Golgotha of true Souls departed!

Their architecture, belfries, land-carucates? Yes,—and that is but a small item of the matter. Does it never give thee pause, this other strange item of it, that men then had a *soul*,—not by hearsay alone, and as a figure of speech; but as a truth that they *knew*, and practically went upon! Verily it was another world then. Their Missals have become incredible, a sheer platitude, sayest thou? Yes, a most poor platitude; and even, if thou wilt, an idolatry and blasphemy, should any one persuade *thee* to believe them, to pretend praying by them. But yet it is pity we had lost tidings of our souls:—actually we shall have to go in quest of them again, or worse in all ways will befall! A certain degree of soul, as Ben Jonson reminds us, is indispensable to keep the very body from destruction of the frightfullest sort; to 'save us,' says he, 'the expense of *salt*.' Ben has known men who had soul enough to keep their body and five senses from becoming carrion, and save salt:—men, and also Nations. You may look in Manchester Hunger-mobs and Corn-law Commons Houses, and various other

quarters, and say whether either soul or else salt is not somewhat wanted at present!—

Another world, truly: and this present poor distressed world might get some profit by looking wisely into it, instead of foolishly. But at
 5 lowest, O dilettante friend, let us know always that it *was* a world, and not a void infinite of grey haze with fantasms swimming in it. These old St. Edmundsbury walls, I say, were not peopled with fantasms; but with men of flesh and blood, made altogether as we are. Had thou and I then been, who knows but we ourselves had taken refuge
 10 from an evil Time, and fled to dwell here, and meditate on an Eternity, in such fashion as we could? Alas, how like an old osseous fragment, a broken blackened shin-bone of the old dead Ages, this black ruin looks out, not yet covered by the soil; still indicating what a once gigantic Life lies buried there! It is dead now, and dumb; but
 15 was alive once, and spake. For twenty generations, here was the earthly arena where painful living men worked out their life-wrestle,—looked at by Earth, by Heaven and Hell. Bells tolled to prayers; and men, of many humours, various thoughts, chaunted vespers, matins;—and round the little islet of their life rolled forever (as round
 20 ours still rolls, though we are blind and deaf) the illimitable Ocean, tinting all things with *its* eternal hues and reflexes; making strange prophetic music! How silent now; all departed, clean gone. The World-Dramaturgist has written: *Exeunt*. The devouring Time-Demons have made away with it all: and in its stead, there is either nothing; or what
 25 is worse, offensive universal dustclouds, and grey eclipse of Earth and Heaven, from ‘dry rubbish shot here!’—

Truly, it is no easy matter to get across the chasm of Seven Centuries, filled with such material. But here, of all helps, is not a Boswell
 30 the welcomest; even a small Boswell? Veracity, true simplicity of heart, how valuable are these always! He that speaks what *is* really in him, will find men to listen, though under never such impediments. Even gossip, springing free and cheery from a human heart, this too is a kind of veracity and *speech*;—much preferable to pedantry and inane
 35 grey haze! Jocelin is weak and garrulous, but he is human. Through the thin watery gossip of our Jocelin, we do get some glimpses of that deep-buried Time; discern veritably, though in a fitful intermittent manner, these antique figures and their life-method, face to face!

Beautifully, in our earnest loving glance, the old centuries melt from opaque to partially translucent, transparent here and there; and the void black Night, one finds, is but the summing up of innumerable peopled luminous *Days*. Not parchment Chartularies, Doctrines of the Constitution, O Dryasdust; not altogether, my erudite Friend!—

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Readers who please to go along with us into this poor *Jocelini Chronica* shall wander inconveniently enough, as in wintry twilight, through some poor stript hazel-grove, rustling with foolish noises, and perpetually hindering the eyesight; but across which, here and there, some real human figure is seen moving: very strange; whom we could hail if he would answer;—and we look into a pair of eyes deep as our own, *imaging* our own, but all unconscious of us; to whom we for the time are become as spirits and invisible!

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CHAPTER III.

LANDLORD EDMUND.

SOME three centuries or so had elapsed since *Beodric's-worth** became St. Edmund's *Stow*, St. Edmund's *Town* and Monastery, before Jocelin entered himself a Novice there. 'It was,' says he, 'the year after the Flemings were defeated at Fornham St. Genevieve.'

5 Much passes away into oblivion: this glorious victory over the Flemings at Fornham has, at the present date, greatly dimmed itself out of the minds of men. A victory and battle nevertheless it was, in its time: some thrice-renowned Earl of Leicester, not of the De Montfort breed, (as may be read in Philosophical and other Histories,

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* Dryasdust puzzles and pokes for some biography of this Beodric; and repugns to consider him a mere East-Anglian Person of Condition, not in need of a biography,—whose *peoð*, *weorth* or *worth*, that is to say, *Growth*, Increase, or as we should now name it, *Estate*, that same Hamlet and wood Mansion, now St. Edmund's Bury, originally was. For, adds our erudite Friend, the Saxon *peoðan*, equivalent to the German *werden*, means to *grow*, to *become*; traces of which old vocable are still found in the North-country dialects, as, 'What is *word* of him?' meaning 'What is *become* of him?' and the like. Nay we in modern English still say, 'Wo *worth* the hour' (Wo *befal* the hour), and speak of the '*Weird* Sisters;' not to mention the innumerable other names of places still ending in *weorth* or *worth*. And indeed, our common noun *worth*, in the sense of *value*, does not this mean simply, What a thing has *grown* to, What a man has *grown* to, How much he amounts to,—by the Threadneedle-street standard or another!

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could any human memory retain such things,) had quarrelled with his sovereign, Henry Second of the name; had been worsted, it is like, and maltreated, and obliged to fly to foreign parts; but had rallied there into new vigour; and so, in the year 1173, returns across the German Sea with a vengeful army of Flemings. Returns, to the coast of Suffolk; to Framlingham Castle, where he is welcomed; westward towards St. Edmundsbury and Fornham Church, where he is met by the constituted authorities with *posse comitatus*; and swiftly cut in pieces, he and his, or laid by the heels; on the right bank of the obscure river Lark,—as traces still existing will verify. 5 10

For the river Lark, though not very discoverably, still runs or stagnates in that country; and the battle-ground is there; serving at present as a pleasure-ground to his Grace of Northumberland. Copper pennies of Henry II. are still found there;—rotted out from the pouches of poor slain soldiers, who had not had *time* to buy liquor with them. In the river Lark itself was fished up, within man's memory, an antique gold ring; which fond Dilettantism can almost believe may have been the very ring Countess Leicester threw away, in her flight, into that same Lark river or ditch.* Nay, few years ago, in tearing out an enormous superannuated ash-tree, now grown quite corpulent, bursten, superfluous, but long a fixture in the soil, and not to be dislodged without revolution,—there was laid bare, under its roots, 'a circular mound of skeletons wonderfully complete,' all radiating from a centre, faces upwards, feet inwards; a 'radiation' not of Light, but of the Nether Darkness rather; and evidently the fruit of battle; for 'many of the heads were cleft, or had arrow-holes in them.' The Battle of Fornham, therefore, is a fact, though a forgotten one; no less obscure than undeniable,—like so many other facts. 15 20 25

Like the St. Edmund's Monastery itself! Who can doubt, after what we have said, that there was a Monastery here at one time? No doubt at all there was a Monastery here; no doubt, some three centuries prior to this Fornham Battle, there dwelt a man in these parts, of the name of Edmund; King, Landlord, Duke or whatever his title was, of the Eastern Counties;—and a very singular man and landlord he must have been. 30 35

* Lyttelton's History of Henry II. (2nd Edition), v. 169, &c.

For his tenants, it would appear, did not in the least complain of him; his labourers did not think of burning his wheatstacks, breaking into his game-preserves; very far the reverse of all that. Clear evidence, satisfactory even to my friend Dryasdust, exists that, on the contrary, they honoured, loved, admired this ancient Landlord to a quite astonishing degree,—and indeed at last to an immeasurable and inexpressible degree; for, finding no limits or utterable words for their sense of his worth, they took to beatifying and adoring him! ‘Infinite admiration,’ we are taught, ‘means worship.’

Very singular,—could we discover it! What Edmund’s specific duties were; above all, what his method of discharging them with such results was, would surely be interesting to know; but are *not* very discoverable now. His Life has become a poetic nay a religious *Mythus*; though, undeniably enough, it was once a prose Fact, as our poor lives are; and even a very rugged unmanageable one. This Landlord Edmund did go about in leather shoes, with *femoralia* and bodycoat of some sort on him; and daily had his breakfast to procure; and daily had contradictory speeches, and most contradictory facts not a few, to reconcile with himself. No man becomes a Saint in his sleep. Edmund, for instance, instead of *reconciling* those same contradictory facts and speeches to himself; which means *subduing*, and, in a man-like and godlike manner, conquering them to himself,—might have merely thrown new contention into them, new unwisdom into them, and so been conquered *by* them; much the commoner case! In that way he had proved no ‘Saint,’ or Divine-looking Man; but a mere Sinner, and unfortunate, blameable, more or less Diabolic-looking Man! No Landlord Edmund becomes infinitely admirable in his sleep.

With what degree of wholesome rigour his rents were collected we hear not. Still less by what methods he preserved his game, whether by ‘bushing’ or how,—and if the partridge seasons were ‘excellent,’ or were indifferent. Neither do we ascertain what kind of Corn-Bill he passed, or wisely-adjusted Sliding-scale:—but indeed there were few spinners in those days; and the nuisance of spinning, and other dusty labour, was not yet so glaring a one.

How then, it may be asked, did this Edmund rise into favour; become to such astonishing extent a recognised Farmer’s Friend? Really, except it were by doing justly and loving mercy, to an unprecedented extent, one does not know. The man, it would seem,

‘had walked,’ as they say, ‘humbly with God;’ humbly and valiantly with God; struggling to make the Earth heavenly, as he could: instead of walking sumptuously and pridefully with Mammon, leaving the Earth to grow hellish as it liked. Not sumptuously with Mammon? How then could he ‘encourage trade,’—cause Howel and James, and many wine-merchants to bless him, and the tailor’s heart (though in a very shortsighted manner) to sing for joy? Much in this Edmund’s Life is mysterious. 5

That he could, on occasion, do what he liked with his own is, meanwhile, evident enough. Certain Heathen Physical-Force Ultra-Chartists, ‘Danes’ as they were then called, coming into his territory with their ‘five points,’ or rather with their five-and-twenty thousand *points* and edges too, of pikes namely and battle-axes; and proposing mere Heathenism, confiscation, spoliation, and fire and sword,—Edmund answered that he would oppose to the utmost such savagery. They took him prisoner; again required his sanction to said proposals. Edmund again refused. Cannot we kill you? cried they.—Cannot I die? answered he. My life, I think, is my own to do what I like with! And he died, under barbarous tortures, refusing to the last breath; and the Ultra-Chartist Danes *lost* their propositions;—and went with their ‘points’ and other apparatus, as is supposed, to the Devil, the Father of them. Some say, indeed, these Danes were not Ultra-Chartists, but Ultra-Tories, demanding to reap where they had not sown, and live in this world without working, though all the world should starve for it; which likewise seems a possible hypothesis. Be what they might, they went, as we say, to the Devil; and Edmund, doing what he liked with his own, the Earth was got cleared of them. 10 15 20 25

Another version is, that Edmund on this and the like occasions stood by his order; the oldest, and indeed only true order of Nobility known under the stars, that of Just Men and Sons of God, in opposition to Unjust and Sons of Belial,—which latter indeed are *second*-oldest, but yet a very unvenerable order. This, truly, seems the likeliest hypothesis of all. Names and appearances alter so strangely, in some half-score centuries; and all fluctuates chameleon-like, taking now this hue, now that. Thus much is very plain, and does not change hue: Landlord Edmund was seen and felt by all men to have done verily a man’s part in this life-pilgrimage of his; and benedictions and outflowing love and admiration from the universal heart were his 30 35

meed. Well-done! Well-done! cried the hearts of all men. They raised his slain and martyred body; washed its wounds with fast-flowing universal tears; tears of endless pity, and yet of a sacred joy and triumph. The beautifullest kind of tears,—indeed perhaps the beautifullest kind of thing: like a sky all flashing diamonds and prismatic radiance; all weeping, yet shone on by the everlasting Sun:—and *this* is not a sky, it is a Soul and living Face! Nothing liker the *Temple of the Highest*, bright with some real effulgence of the Highest, is seen in this world.

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O, if all Yankee-land follow a small good ‘Schnüspel the distinguished Novellist’ with blazing torches, dinner-invitations, universal hep-hep-hurrah, feeling that he, though small, *is* something; how might all Angle-land once follow a hero-martyr and great true Son of Heaven! It is the very joy of man’s heart to admire, where he can; nothing so lifts him from all his mean imprisonments, were it but for moments, as true admiration. Thus it has been said, ‘all men, especially all women, are born worshippers;’ and will worship, if it be but possible. Possible to worship a Something, even a small one; not so possible a mere loud-blarney Nothing! What sight is more pathetic than that of poor multitudes of persons met to gaze at Kings’ Progresses, Lord Mayors’ Shews, and other gilt-gingerbread phenomena of the worshipful sort, in these times; each so eager to worship; each, with a dim fatal sense of disappointment, finding that he cannot rightly here! These be thy gods, O Israel? And thou art so *willing* to worship,—poor Israel!— —

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In this manner, however, did the men of the Eastern Counties take up the slain body of their Edmund, where it lay cast forth in the village of Hoxne; seek out the severed head, and reverently reunite the same. They embalmed him with myrrh and sweet spices, with love, pity and all high and awful thoughts; consecrating him with a very storm of melodious adoring admiration, and sun-dyed showers of tears;—joyfully, yet with awe (as all deep joy has something of the awful in it), commemorating his noble deeds and godlike walk and conversation while on Earth. Till, at length, the very Pope and Cardinals at Rome were forced to hear of it; and they, summing up as correctly as they well could, with *Advocatus-Diaboli* pleadings and their other forms of process, the general verdict of mankind, declared: That he had, in very fact, led a hero’s life in this world; and

being now *gone*, was gone as they conceived to God above, and reaping his reward *there*. Such, they said, was the best judgement they could form of the case;—and truly not a bad judgement. Acquiesced in, zealously adopted, with full assent of ‘private judgement,’ by all mortals.

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The rest of St. Edmund’s history, for the reader sees he has now become a *Saint*, is easily conceivable. Pious munificence provided him a *loculus*, a *feretrum* or shrine; built for him a wooden chapel, a stone temple, ever widening and growing by new pious gifts,—such the overflowing heart feels it a blessedness to solace itself by giving. St. Edmund’s Shrine glitters now with diamond flowerages, with a plating of wrought gold. The wooden chapel, as we say, has become a stone temple. Stately masonries, long-drawn arches, cloisters, sounding aisles buttress it, begirdle it far and wide. Regimented companies of men, of whom our Jocelin is one, devote themselves, in every generation, to meditate here on man’s Nobleness and Awefulness, and celebrate and shew forth the same, as they best can,—thinking they will do it better here, in presence of God the Maker, and of the so Aweful and so Noble made by Him. In one word, St. Edmund’s Body has raised a Monastery round it. To such length, in such manner, has the Spirit of the Time visibly taken body, and crystallised itself here. New gifts, houses, farms, *katalla**—come ever in. King Knut, whom men call Canute, whom the Ocean-tide would not be forbidden to wet,—we heard already of this wise King, with his crown and gifts; but of many others, Kings, Queens, wise men and noble loyal women, let Dryasdust and divine Silence be the record! Beodric’s-worth has become St. Edmund’s *Bury*;—and lasts visible to this hour. All this that thou now seest, and namest Bury Town, is properly the Funeral Monument of Saint or Landlord Edmund. The present respectable Mayor of Bury may be said, like a Fakeer (little as he thinks of it), to have his dwelling in the extensive, many-sculptured Tombstone of St. Edmund; in one of the brick niches thereof dwells the present respectable Mayor of Bury.

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* Goods, properties; what we now call *chattels*, and still more singularly *cattle*, says my erudite Friend!

Certain Times do crystallise themselves in a magnificent manner; and others, perhaps, are like to do it in rather a shabby one!—But Richard Arkwright too will have his Monument, a thousand years hence: all Lancashire and Yorkshire, and how many other shires and countries, with their machineries and industries, for his monument!

5 A true *pyramid* or ‘*flame-mountain*,’ flaming with steam fires and useful labour over wide continents, usefully towards the Stars, to a certain height;—how much grander than your foolish Cheops Pyramids or Sakhara clay ones! Let us withal be hopeful, be content or

10 patient.

CHAPTER IV.

ABBOT HUGO.

It is true, all things have two faces, a light one and a dark. It is true, in three centuries, much imperfection accumulates; many an Ideal, monastic or other, shooting forth into practice as it can, grows to a strange enough Reality; and we have to ask with amazement, Is this your Ideal! For, alas, the Ideal always has to grow in the Real, and to seek out its bed and board there, often in a very sorry way. No beautifullest Poet is a Bird-of-Paradise, living on perfumes; sleeping in the æther with outspread wings. The Heroic, *independent* of bed and board, is found in Drury-lane Theatre only; to avoid disappointments, let us bear this in mind. 5 10

By the law of Nature, too, all manner of Ideals have their fatal limits and lot; their appointed periods, of youth, of maturity or perfection, of decline, degradation, and final death and disappearance. There is nothing born but has to die. Ideal monasteries, once grown real, do seek bed and board in this world; do find it more and more successfully; do get at length too intent on finding it, exclusively intent on that. They are then like diseased corpulent bodies fallen idiotic, which merely eat and sleep; *ready* for 'dissolution,' by a Henry the Eighth or some other. Jocelin's St. Edmundsbury is still far from this last dreadful state: but here too the reader will prepare himself to see an Ideal not sleeping in the æther like a bird of paradise, but 15 20

roosting as the common woodfowl do, in an imperfect, uncomfortable, more or less contemptible manner!—

5 Abbot Hugo, as Jocelin breaking at once into the heart of the business apprises us, had in those days grown old, grown rather blind, and his eyes were somewhat darkened, *aliquantulum caligaverunt oculi ejus*. He dwelt apart very much, in his *Talamus* or peculiar Chamber; got into the hands of flatterers, a set of mealy-mouthed persons who strove to make the passing hour easy for him,—for him
10 easy, and for themselves profitable; accumulating in the distance mere mountains of confusion. Old Dominus Hugo sat inaccessible in this way, far in the interior, wrapt in his warm flannels and delusions; inaccessible to all voice of Fact; and bad grew ever worse with us. Not that our worthy old *Dominus Abbas* was inattentive to the divine
15 offices, or to the maintenance of a devout spirit in us or in himself; but the Account-Books of the Convent fell into the frightfullest state, and Hugo's annual Budget grew yearly emptier, or filled with futile expectations, fatal deficit, wind and debts!

20 His one worldly care was to raise ready money; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. And how he raised it: From usurious insatiable Jews; every fresh Jew sticking on him like a fresh horseleech, sucking his and our life out; crying continually, Give, Give! Take one example instead of scores. Our *Camera* having fallen into ruin, William the Sacristan received charge to repair it; strict charge, but no money;
25 Abbot Hugo would, and indeed could, give him no fraction of money. The *Camera* in ruins, and Hugo penniless and inaccessible, Willelmus Sacrista borrowed Forty Marcs (some Seven-and-twenty Pounds) of Benedict the Jew, and patched up our Camera again. But the means of repaying him? There were no means. Hardly could *Sacrista*, *Cel-*
30 *lerarius* or any public officer, get ends to meet, on the indispensablest scale, with their shrunk allowances: ready money had vanished.

Benedict's Twenty-seven pounds grew rapidly at compound-interest, and at length, when it had amounted to a Hundred pounds, he, on a day of settlement, presents the account to Hugo himself! Hugo
35 already owed him another Hundred of his own; and so here it has become Two Hundred! Hugo, in a fine frenzy, threatens to depose the Sacristan, to do this and do that; but, in the mean while, How to quiet your insatiable Jew? Hugo, for this couple of hundreds,

grants the Jew his bond for Four hundred payable at the end of four years. At the end of four years there is, of course, still no money; and the Jew now gets a bond for Eight hundred and eighty pounds, to be paid by instalments, Four-score pounds every year. Here was a way of doing business!

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Neither yet is this insatiable Jew satisfied or settled with: he had papers against us of ‘small debts fourteen years old;’ his modest claim amounts finally to ‘Twelve hundred pounds besides interest;’—and one hopes he never got satisfied in this world; one almost hopes he was one of those beleaguered Jews who hanged themselves in York Castle shortly afterwards, and had his usances and quittances and horseleech papers summarily set fire to! For approximate justice will strive to accomplish itself; if not in one way, then in another. Jews, and also Christians and Heathens, who accumulate in this manner, though furnished with never so many parchments, do, at times, ‘get their grinder-teeth successively pulled out of their head, each day a new grinder,’ till they consent to disgorge again. A sad fact,—worth reflecting on.

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Jocelin, we see, is not without secularity: Our *Dominus Abbas* was intent enough on the divine offices; but then his Account-Books—?—One of the things that strike us most, throughout, in Jocelin’s *Chronicle*, and indeed in Eadmer’s *Anselm*, and other old monastic Books, written evidently by pious men, is this, That there is almost no mention whatever of ‘personal religion’ in them; that the whole gist of their thinking and speculation seems to be the ‘privileges of our order,’ ‘strict exaction of our dues,’ ‘God’s honour’ (meaning the honour of our Saint), and so forth. Is not this singular? A body of men, set apart for perfecting and purifying their own souls, do not seem disturbed about that in any measure: the ‘Ideal’ says nothing about its idea; says much about finding bed and board for itself! How is this?

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Why, for one thing, bed and board are a matter very apt to come to speech: it is much easier to *speak* of them than of ideas; and they are sometimes much more pressing with some! Nay, for another thing, may not this religious reticence, in these devout good souls, be perhaps a merit, and sign of health in them? Jocelin, Eadmer, and such religious men, have as yet nothing of ‘Methodism;’ no Doubt or even

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root of Doubt. Religion is not a diseased self-introspection, an agonising inquiry: their duties are clear to them, the way of supreme good plain, indisputable, and they are travelling on it. Religion lies over them like an all-embracing heavenly canopy, like an atmosphere and life-element, which is not spoken of, which in all things is pre-supposed without speech.

Is not serene or complete Religion the highest aspect of human nature; as serene Cant, or complete No-religion, is the lowest and miserablest? Between which two, all manner of earnest Methodisms, introspections, agonizing inquiries, never so morbid, shall play their respective parts, not without approbation.

But let any reader fancy himself one of the Brethren in St. Edmundsbury Monastery under such circumstances! How can a Lord Abbot, all stuck-over with horseleeches of this nature, front the world? He is fast losing his life-blood, and the Convent will be as one of Pharaoh's lean kine. Old monks of experience draw their hoods deeper down; careful what they say: the monk's first duty is obedience. Our Lord the King, hearing of such work, sends down his Almoner to make investigations: but what boots it? Abbot Hugo assembles us in Chapter; asks, "If there is any complaint?" Not a soul of us dare answer, "Yes, thousands!" but we all stand silent, and the Prior even says that things are in a very comfortable condition. Whereupon old Abbot Hugo, turning to the royal messenger, says, "You see!"—and the business terminates in that way. I, as a brisk-eyed, noticing youth and novice, could not help asking of the elders, asking of Magister Samson in particular: Why he, well-instructed and a knowing man, had not spoken out, and brought matters to a bearing? Magister Samson was Teacher of the Novices, appointed to breed us up to the rules, and I loved him well. "*Fili mi*," answered Samson, "the burnt child shuns the fire. Dost thou not know, our Lord the Abbot sent me once to Acre in Norfolk, to solitary confinement and bread and water, already? The Hinghams, Hugo and Robert, have just got home from banishment for speaking. This is the hour of darkness; the hour when flatterers rule and are believed. *Videat Dominus*, let the Lord see, and judge."

In very truth, what could poor old Abbot Hugo do? A frail old man; and the Philistines were upon him,—that is to say, the Hebrews.

He had nothing for it but to shrink away from them; get back into his warm flannels, into his warm delusions again. Happily, before it was quite too late, he bethought him of pilgriming to St. Thomas of Canterbury. He set out, with a fit train, in the autumn days of the year 1180; near Rochester City, his mule threw him, dislocated his poor kneepan, raised incurable inflammatory fever; and the poor old man got his dismissal from the whole coil at once. St. Thomas à Becket, though in a circuitous way, had *brought* deliverance! Neither Jew usurers, nor grumbling monks, nor other importunate despicality of men or mud-elements afflicted Abbot Hugo any more; but he dropt his rosaries, closed his account-books, closed his old eyes, and lay down into the long Sleep. Heavy-laden hoary old Dominus Hugo, fare thee well. 5 10

One thing we cannot mention without a due thrill of horror: namely, that, in the empty exchequer of Dominus Hugo, there was not found one penny to distribute to the Poor that they might pray for his soul! By a kind of godsend, Fifty shillings did, in the very nick of time, fall due, or seem to fall due, from one of his Farmers (the *Firmarius* de Palegrava), and he paid it, and the Poor had it; though, alas, this too only *seemed* to fall due, and we had it to pay again afterwards. Dominus Hugo's apartments were plundered by his servants, to the last portable stool, in few minutes after the breath was out of his body. Forlorn old Hugo, fare thee well forever. 15 20

CHAPTER V.

TWELFTH CENTURY.

OUR Abbot being dead, the *Dominus Rex*, Henry II, or Ranulf de Glanvill *Justiciarius* of England for him, set Inspectors or Custodians over us;—not in any breathless haste to appoint a new Abbot, our revenues coming into *his* own *Scaccarium*, or royal Exchequer, in the
5 meanwhile. They proceeded with some rigour, these Custodians; took written inventories, clapt-on seals, exacted everywhere strict tale and measure: but wherefore should a living monk complain? The living monk has to do his devotional drill-exercise; consume his allotted *pitantia*, what we call *pittance*, or ration of victual; and possess his
10 soul in patience.

Dim, as through a long vista of Seven Centuries, dim and very strange looks that monk-life to us; the ever-surprising circumstance this, That it is a *fact* and no dream, that we see it there, and gaze into the very eyes of it! Smoke rises daily from those culinary chimney-
15 throats; there are living human beings there, who chaunt, loud-braying, their matins, nones, vespers; awakening *echoes*, not to the bodily ear alone. St. Edmund's Shrine, perpetually illuminated, glows ruddy through the Night, and through the Night of Centuries withal; St. Edmundsbury Town paying yearly Forty pounds for that express end.
20 Bells clang out; on great occasions, all the bells. We have Processions, Preachings, Festivals; Christmas Plays, *Mysteries* shewn in the Church-yard, at which latter the Townsfolk sometimes quarrel. Time was, Time is, as Friar Bacon's Brass Head remarked; and withal Time will

be. There are three Tenses, *Tempora*, or Times; and there is one Eternity; and as for us,—

We are such stuff as Dreams are made of!

Indisputable, though very dim to modern vision, rests on its hill-slope that same *Bury, Stow*, or Town of St. Edmund; already a considerable place, not without traffic, nay manufactures, would Jocelin only tell us what. Jocelin is totally careless of telling: but, through dim fitful apertures, we can see *Fullones*, 'Fullers,' see cloth-making; looms dimly going, dye-vats, and old women spinning yarn. We have Fairs too, *Nundinae*, in due course; and the Londoners give us much trouble, pretending that *they*, as a metropolitan people, are exempt from toll. Besides there is Field-husbandry, with perplexed settlement of Convent rents: corn-ricks pile themselves within burgh, in their season; and cattle depart and enter; and even the poor weaver has his cow;—'dungheaps' lying quiet at most doors (*ante foras*, says the incidental Jocelin), for the Town has yet no improved police. Watch and ward nevertheless we do keep, and have Gates,—as what Town must not; thieves so abounding; war, *werra*, such a frequent thing! Our thieves, at the Abbot's judgement bar, deny; claim wager of battle; fight, are beaten, and *then* hanged. 'Ketel, the thief,' took this course; and it did nothing for him,—merely brought us, and indeed himself, new trouble!

Every way a most foreign Time. What difficulty, for example, has our *Cellerarius* to collect the *rep-silver*, 'reaping silver,' or penny, which each householder is by law bound to pay for cutting down the Convent grain! Richer people pretend that it is commuted, that it is this and the other; that, in short, they will not pay it. Our *Cellerarius* gives up calling on the rich. In the houses of the poor, our *Cellerarius* finding, in like manner, neither penny nor good promise, snatches, without ceremony, what *vadium* (pledge, *wad*) he can come at: a joint-stool, kettle, nay the very house-door, '*hostium*;' and old women, thus exposed to the unfeeling gaze of the public, rush out after him with their distaffs and the angriest shrieks: '*vetulae exhibant cum colis suis*,' says Jocelin, '*minantes et exprobrantes*.'

What a historical picture, glowing visible, as St. Edmund's Shrine by night, after Seven long Centuries or so! *Vetula cum colis*: My

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venerable ancient spinning grandmothers,—ah, and ye too have to shriek, and rush out with your distaffs; and become Female Chartists, and scold all evening with void doorway,—and in old Saxon, as we in modern, would fain demand some Five-point Charter, could it be
 5 fallen in with, the Earth being too tyrannous!—Wise Lord Abbots, hearing of such phenomena, did in time abolish or commute the reap-penny, and one nuisance was abated. But the image of these justly offended old women, in their old wool costumes, with their angry features, and spindles brandished, lives forever in the historical
 10 memory. Thanks to thee, Jocelin Boswell. Jerusalem was taken by the Crusaders, and again lost by them; and Richard Cœur-de-Lion ‘veiled his face’ as he passed in sight of it: but how many other things went on, the while!

Thus, too, our trouble with the Lakenheath eels is very great. King Knut, namely, or rather his Queen who also did herself honour
 15 by honouring St. Edmund, decreed by authentic deed yet extant on parchment, that the Holders of the Town Fields, once Beodric’s, should, for one thing, go yearly and catch us four thousand eels in the marsh-pools of Lakenheath. Well, they went, they continued to go; but, in later times, got into the way of returning with a most short
 20 account of eels. Not the due six-score apiece; no, Here are two-score, Here are twenty, ten,—sometimes, Here are none at all; Heaven help us, we *could* catch no more, they were not there! What is a distressed *Cellerarius* to do? We agree that each Holder of so many acres shall
 25 pay one penny yearly, and let go the eels as too slippery. But alas, neither is this quite effectual: the Fields, in my time, have got divided among so many hands, there is no catching of *them* either; I have known our Cellarer get seven and twenty pence formerly, and now it is much if he get ten pence farthing (*vix decem denarios et obolum*)!
 30 And then their sheep, which they are bound to fold nightly in our pens, for the manure’s sake; and, I fear, do not always fold: and their *aver-pennies*, and their *avragiums*, and their *fodercorns*, and mill-and-market dues! Thus, in its undeniable but dim manner, does old St. Edmundsbury spin and till, and laboriously keep its pot boiling, and
 35 St. Edmund’s Shrine lighted, under such conditions and averages as it can.

How much is still alive in England; how much has not yet come into life! A Feudal Aristocracy is still alive, in the prime of life; superintending the cultivation of the land, and less consciously the distribution of the produce of the land, the adjustment of the quarrels of the land; judging, soldiering, adjusting; everywhere governing the people,—so that even a Gurth born thrall of Cedric lacks not his due parings of the pigs he tends. Governing;—and, alas, also game-preserving, so that a Robert Hood, a William Scarlet and others have, in these days, put on Lincoln coats, and taken to living, in some universal-suffrage manner, under the green-wood tree!

How silent, on the other hand, lie all Cotton-trades and such like; not a steeple-chimney yet got on end from sea to sea! North of the Humber, a stern Willelmus Conquestor burnt the Country, finding it unruly, into very stern repose. Wild fowl scream in these ancient silences, wild cattle roam in those ancient solitudes; the scanty sulky Norse-bred population all coerced into silence,—feeling that under these new Norman Governors their history has probably as good as *ended*. Men and Northumbrian Norse populations know little what has ended, what is but beginning! The Ribble and the Aire roll down, as yet unpolluted by dyers' chemistry; tenanted by merry trouts and piscatory otters; the sunbeam and the vacant wind's-blast alone traversing those moors. Side by side sleep the coal-strata and the iron-strata for so many ages; no Steam-Demon has yet risen smoking into being. Saint Mungo rules in Glasgow; James Watt still slumbering in the deep of Time. *Mancunium*, Manceaster, what we now call Manchester, spins no cotton,—if it be not *wool* 'cottons,' clipt from the backs of mountain sheep. The Creek of the Mersey gurgles, twice in the four-and-twenty hours, with eddying brine, clangorous with sea-fowl; and is a *Lither*-Pool, a *lazy* or sullen Pool, no monstrous pitchy City, and Seahaven of the world! The Centuries are big; and the birth-hour is coming, not yet come. *Tempus ferax, tempus edax rerum.*

CHAPTER VI.

MONK SAMSON.

5 WITHIN doors, down at the hill-foot, in our Convent here, we are a
peculiar people,—hardly conceivable in the Arkwright Corn-Law ages,
of mere Spinning-Mills and Joe-Mantons! There is yet no Methodism
among us, and we speak much of Secularities: no Methodism; our
Religion is not yet a horrible restless Doubt, still less a far horribler
10 composed Cant; but a great heaven-high Unquestionability, encom-
passing, interpenetrating the whole of Life. Imperfect as we may be,
we are here, with our litanies, shaven crowns, vows of poverty, to
testify incessantly and indisputably to every heart, That this Earthly
Life and *its* riches and possessions, and good and evil hap, are not
15 intrinsically a reality at all, but *are* a shadow of realities eternal, in-
finite; that this Time-world, as an air-image, fearfully *emblematic*,
plays and flickers in the grand still mirror of Eternity; and man's little
Life has Duties that are great, that are alone great, and go up to
Heaven and down to Hell. This, with our poor litanies, we testify and
struggle to testify.

20 Which, testified or not, remembered by all men, or forgotten by
all men, does verily remain the fact, even in Arkwright Joe-Manton
ages! But it is incalculable, when litanies have grown obsolete; when
fodercorns, *avragiums*, and all human dues and reciprocities have been
fully changed into one great due of *cash-payment*; and man's duty to
man reduces itself to handing him certain metal coins, or covenanted
money-wages, and then shoving him out of doors; and man's duty to

God becomes a cant, a doubt, a dim inanity, a 'pleasure of virtue' or such like; and the thing a man does infinitely fear (the real *Hell* of a man) is 'that he do not make money and advance himself,'—I say, it is incalculable what a change has introduced itself everywhere into human affairs! How human affairs shall now circulate everywhere not healthy life-blood in them, but, as it were, a detestable copperas banker's ink; and all is grown acrid, divisive, threatening dissolution; and the huge tumultuous Life of Society is galvanic, devil-ridden, too truly possessed by a devil! For, in short, Mammon *is* not a god at all; but a devil, and even a very despicable devil. Follow the Devil faithfully, you are sure enough to *go* to the Devil: whither else *can* you go?—In such situations men look back with a kind of mournful recognition even on poor limited Monk-figures, with their poor litanies; and reflect, with Ben Jonson, that soul is indispensable, some degree of soul, even to save you the expense of salt!—

For the rest, it must be owned, we Monks of St. Edmundsbury are but a limited class of creatures, and seem to have a somewhat dull life of it. Much given to idle gossip; having indeed no other work, when our chaunting is over. Listless gossip, for most part, and a mitigated slander; the fruit of idleness, not of spleen. We are dull, insipid men, many of us; easy-minded; whom prayer, and digestion of food will avail for a life. We have to receive all strangers in our Convent, and lodge them gratis; such and such sorts go by rule to the Lord Abbot and his special revenues; such and such to us and our poor Cellarer, however straitened. Jews themselves send their wives and little ones hither in war-time, into our *Pitanceria*; where they abide safe, with due *pittances*,—for a consideration. We have the fairest chances for collecting news. Some of us have a turn for reading Books; for meditation, silence; at times we even write Books. Some of us can preach, in English-Saxon, in Norman French, and even in Monk-Latin; others cannot in any language or jargon, being stupid.

Failing all else, what gossip about one another! This is a perennial resource. How one hooded head applies itself to the ear of another, and whispers—*tacenda*. Willelmus Sacrista, for instance, what does he nightly over in that Sacristy of his? Frequent bibations, '*frequentes bibationes et quedam tacenda*,'—eheu! We have '*tempora minutionis*,' stated seasons of blood-letting, when we are all let-blood together; and then there is a general free-conference, a sanhedrim of clatter.

Notwithstanding our vow of poverty, we can by rule amass to the extent of 'two shillings;' but it is to be given to our necessitous kindred, or in charity. Poor Monks! Thus too a certain Canterbury Monk was in the habit of 'slipping, *clanculo* from his sleeve,' five
 5 shillings into the hand of his mother, when she came to see him, at the divine offices, every two months. Once, slipping the money clandestinely, just in the act of taking leave, he slipt it not into her hand but on the floor, and another had it; whereupon the poor Monk, coming to know it, looked mere despair for some days; till Lanfranc
 10 the noble Archbishop, questioning his secret from him, nobly made the sum *seven* shillings,* and said, Never mind!

One Monk of a taciturn nature distinguishes himself among these babbling ones: the name of him Samson; he that answered Jocelin, " *Fili mi*, a burnt child shuns the fire." They call him 'Norfolk *Bar-*
 15 *rator*,' or litigious person; for indeed, being of grave taciturn ways, he is not universally a favourite; he has been in trouble more than once. The reader is desired to mark this Monk. A personable man of seven-and-forty; stout-made, stands erect as a pillar; with bushy eye-
 20 brows, the eyes of him beaming into you in a really strange way; the face massive, grave, with 'a very eminent nose;' his head almost bald, its auburn remnants of hair, and the copious ruddy beard, getting slightly streaked with grey. This is Brother Samson; a man worth looking at.

He is from Norfolk, as the nickname indicates; from Tottington in Norfolk, as we guess; the son of poor parents there. He has told me, Jocelin, for I loved him much, That once in his ninth year he had an alarming dream;—as indeed we are all somewhat given to dreaming
 25 here. Little Samson, lying uneasily in his crib at Tottington, dreamed that he saw the Arch Enemy in person, just alighted in front of some grand building, with outspread bat-wings, and stretching forth detestable clawed hands to grip him, little Samson, and fly off with him: whereupon the little dreamer shrieked desperate to St. Edmund for help, shrieked and again shrieked; and St. Edmund, a reverend heav-
 30 enly figure, did come,—and indeed poor little Samson's mother, awakened by his shrieking, did come; and the Devil and the Dream
 35

* Eadmeri Hist. 8.

both fled away fruitless. On the morrow, his mother, pondering such an awful dream, thought it were good to take him over to St. Edmund's own Shrine, and pray with him there. See, said little Samson at sight of the Abbey-Gate; see, mother, this is the building I dreamed of! His poor mother dedicated him to St. Edmund,—left him there with prayers and tears: what better could she do? The exposition of the dream, Brother Samson used to say, was this: *Diabolus* with outspread bat-wings shadowed forth the pleasures of this world, *voluptates hujus sæculi*, which were about to snatch and fly away with me, had not St. Edmund flung his arms round me, that is to say, made me a monk of his. A monk, accordingly, Brother Samson is; and here to this day where his mother left him. A learned man, of devout grave nature; has studied at Paris, has taught in the Town Schools here, and done much else; can preach in three languages, and, like Dr. Caius, 'has had losses' in his time. A thoughtful, firm-standing man; much loved by some, not loved by all; his clear eyes flashing into you, in an almost inconvenient way!

Abbot Hugo, as we said, had his own difficulties with him; Abbot Hugo had him in prison once, to teach him what authority was, and how to dread the fire in future. For Brother Samson, in the time of the Antipopes, had been sent to Rome on business; and, returning successful, was too late,—the business had all misgone in the interim! As tours to Rome are still frequent with us English, perhaps the reader will not grudge to look at the method of travelling thither in those remote ages. We happily have, in small compass, a personal narrative of it. Through the clear eyes and memory of Brother Samson, one peeps direct into the very bosom of that Twelfth Century, and finds it rather curious. The actual *Papa*, Father, or universal President of Christendom, as yet not grown chimerical, sat there; think of that only! Brother Samson went to Rome as to the real Light-fountain of this lower world; we now—!—But let us hear Brother Samson, as to his mode of travelling:

'You know what trouble I had for that Church of Woolpit; how I was despatched to Rome in the time of the Schism between Pope Alexander and Octavian; and passed through Italy at that season, when all clergy carrying letters for our Lord Pope Alexander were laid hold of, and some were clapt in prison, some hanged; and some, with nose and lips cut off, were sent forward to our Lord the Pope, for the

disgrace and confusion of him (*in dedecus et confusionem ejus*). I, however, pretended to be Scotch, and putting on the garb of a Scotchman, and taking the gesture of one, walked along; and when anybody mocked at me, I would brandish my staff in the manner of that
 5 weapon they call *gaveloc*,* uttering comminatory words after the way of the Scotch. To those that met and questioned me who I was, I made no answer but: *Ride, ride Rome; turne Cantwereberei*.† Thus did I, to conceal myself and my errand, and get safer to Rome under the guise of a Scotchman.

10 ‘Having at last obtained a Letter from our Lord the Pope according to my wishes, I turned homewards again. I had to pass through a certain strong town on my road; and lo, the soldiers thereof surrounded me, seizing me, and saying: “This vagabond (*iste solivagus*), who pretends to be Scotch, is either a spy, or has Letters from the
 15 false Pope Alexander.” And whilst they examined every stitch and rag of me, my leggings (*caligas*), breeches, and even the old shoes that I carried over my shoulder in the way of the Scotch,—I put my hand into the leather srip I wore, wherein our Lord the Pope’s Letter lay, close by a little jug (*ciffus*) I had for drinking out of; and the Lord
 20 God so pleasing, and St. Edmund, I got out both the Letter and the jug together; in such a way that, extending my arm aloft, I held the Letter hidden between jug and hand: they saw the jug, but the Letter they saw not. And thus I escaped out of their hands in the name of the Lord. Whatever money I had they took from me; wherefore I had
 25 to beg from door to door, without any payment (*sine omni expensa*) till I came to England again. But hearing that the Woolpit Church was already given to Geoffry Ridell, my soul was struck with sorrow because I had laboured in vain. Coming home, therefore, I sat me
 30 down secretly under the Shrine of St. Edmund, fearing lest our Lord Abbot should seize and imprison me, though I had done no mischief; nor was there a monk who durst speak to me, nor a laic who durst bring me food except by stealth.’‡

* Javelin, missile pike. *Gaveloc* is still the Scotch name for *crowbar*.

35 † Does this mean, “Rome forever; Canterbury *not*” (which claims an unjust Supremacy over us)! Mr. Rokewood is silent. Dryasdust would perhaps explain it,—in the course of a week or two of talking; did one dare to question him!

‡ Jocelini Chronica, p. 36.

Such resting and welcoming found Brother Samson, with his worn soles, and strong heart! He sits silent, revolving many thoughts, at the foot of St. Edmund's Shrine. In the wide Earth, if it be not Saint Edmund, what friend or refuge has he? Our Lord Abbot, hearing of him, sent the proper officer to lead him down to prison, clap 'foot-gyves on him' there. Another poor official furtively brought him a cup of wine; bade him "be comforted in the Lord." Samson utters no complaint; obeys in silence. 'Our Lord Abbot, taking counsel of it, banished me to Acre, and there I had to stay long.'

Our Lord Abbot next tried Samson with promotions; made him Subsacristan, made him Librarian, which he liked best of all, being passionately fond of Books: Samson, with many thoughts in him, again obeyed in silence; discharged his offices to perfection, but never thanked our Lord Abbot,—seemed rather as if looking into him, with those clear eyes of his. Whereupon Abbot Hugo said, *Se nunquam vidisse*, he had never seen such a man; whom no severity would break to complain, and no kindness soften into smiles or thanks:—a questionable kind of man!

In this way, not without troubles, but still in an erect clear-standing manner, has Brother Samson reached his forty-seventh year; and his ruddy beard is getting slightly grizzled. He is endeavouring, in these days, to have various broken things thatched in; nay perhaps to have the Choir itself completed, for he can bear nothing ruinous. He has gathered 'heaps of lime and sand;' has masons, slaters working, he and *Warinus monachus noster*, who are joint keepers of the Shrine; paying out the money duly,—furnished by charitable burghers of St. Edmundsbury, they say. Charitable burghers of St. Edmundsbury? To me Jocelin it seems rather, Samson and Warinus, whom he leads, have privily hoarded the oblations at the Shrine itself, in these late years of indolent dilapidation, while Abbot Hugo sat wrapt inaccessible; and are struggling, in this prudent way, to have the rain kept out!—Under what conditions, sometimes, has Wisdom to struggle with Folly; get Folly persuaded to so much as thatch out the rain from itself! For indeed if the Infant govern the Nurse, what dexterous practice on the Nurse's part will not be necessary!

* Jocelini Chronica, p. 7.

5 It is a new regret to us that, in these circumstances, our Lord the King's Custodians, interfering, prohibited all building or thatching from whatever source; and no Choir shall be completed, and Rain and Time, for the present, shall have their way. Willelmus Sacrista, he of 'the frequent bibations and some things not to be spoken of;' he, with his red nose, I am of opinion, had made complaint to the Custodians; wishing to do Samson an ill turn:—Samson his *Sub*-sacristan, with those clear eyes, could not be a prime favourite of his! Samson again obeys in silence.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CANVASSING.

Now, however, come great news to St. Edmundsbury: That there is to be an Abbot elected; that our interlunar obscurity is to cease; St. Edmund's Convent no more to be a doleful widow, but joyous and once again a bride! Often in our widowed state had we prayed to the Lord and St. Edmund, singing weekly a matter of 'one-and-twenty penitential Psalms, on our knees in the Choir,' that a fit Pastor might be vouchsafed us. And, says Jocelin, had some known what Abbot we were to get, they had not been so devout, I believe!—Bozzy Jocelin opens to mankind the floodgates of authentic Convent gossip; we listen, as in a Dionysius' Ear, to the inanest hubbub, like the voices at Virgil's Horn-Gate of Dreams. Even gossip, seven centuries off, has significance. List, list, how like men are to one another in all centuries:

'*Dixit quidam de quodam*, A certain person said of a certain person, "He, that *Frater*, is a good monk, *probabilis persona*; knows much of the order and customs of the church; and though not so perfect a philosopher as some others, would make a very good Abbot. Old Abbot Ording, still famed among us, knew little of letters. Besides, as we read in Fables, it is better to choose a log for king, than a serpent, never so wise, that will venomously hiss and bite his subjects."—"Impossible!" answered the other: "How can such a man make a sermon in the Chapter, or to the people on festival days, when

he is without letters? How can he have the skill to bind and to loose, he who does not understand the Scriptures? How—?”

5 And then ‘another said of another, *alius de alio*, “That *Frater* is a *homo literatus*, eloquent, sagacious; vigorous in discipline; loves the Convent much, has suffered much for its sake.” To which a third party answers, “From all your great clerks good Lord deliver us! From Norfolk barrators, and surly persons, That it would please thee to preserve us, We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord!” Then

10 ‘another *quidam* said of another *quodam*, “That *Frater* is a good manager (*husebondus*);” but was swiftly answered, “God forbid that a man who can neither read nor chaunt, nor celebrate the divine offices, an unjust person withal, and grinder of the faces of the poor, should ever be Abbot!” One man, it appears, is nice in his victuals. Another is indeed wise; but apt to slight inferiors; hardly at the pains

15 to answer, if they argue with him too foolishly. And so each *aliquis* concerning his *aliquo*,—through whole pages of electioneering babble. ‘For,’ says Jocelin, ‘So many men, as many minds.’ Our Monks ‘at time of blood-letting, *tempore minutionis*,’ holding their sanhedrim of babble, would talk in this manner: Brother Samson, I remarked, never said anything; sat silent, sometimes smiling; but he

20 took good note of what others said, and would bring it up, on occasion, twenty years after. As for me Jocelin, I was of opinion that ‘some skill in Dialectics, to distinguish true from false,’ would be good in an Abbot. I spake, as a rash Novice in those days, some conscientious words of a certain benefactor of mine; ‘and behold, one of those sons of Belial’ ran and reported them to him, so that he never after looked at me with the same face again! Poor Bozzy!—

25

Such is the buz and frothy simmering ferment of the general mind and no-mind; struggling to ‘make itself up,’ as the phrase is, or ascertain what *it* does really want: no easy matter, in most cases. St. Edmundsbury, in that Candlemas season of the year 1182, is a busily fermenting place. The very clothmakers sit meditative at their looms; asking, Who shall be Abbot? The *sochemanni* speak of it, driving their ox-teams afield; the old women with their spindles: and none yet

30

35 knows what the days will bring forth.

The Prior, however, as our interim chief, must proceed to work; get ready ‘Twelve Monks,’ and set off with them to his Majesty at

Waltham, there shall the election be made. An election, whether managed directly by ballot-box on public hustings, or indirectly by force of public opinion, or were it even by open alehouses, landlords' coercion, popular club-law, or whatever electoral methods, is always an interesting phenomenon. A mountain tumbling in great travail, throwing up dustclouds and absurd noises, is visibly there; uncertain yet what mouse or monster it will give birth to. 5

Besides it is a most important social act; nay, at bottom, the one important social act. Given the men a People choose, the People itself, in its exact worth and worthlessness, is given. A heroic people chooses heroes, and is happy; a valet or flunkey people chooses sham-heroes, what are called quacks, thinking them heroes, and is not happy. The grand summary of a man's spiritual condition, what brings out all his herohood and insight, or all his flunkeyhood and horn-eyed dimness, is this question put to him, What man dost thou honour? Which is thy ideal of a man; or nearest that? So too of a People: for a People too, every People, *speaks* its choice,—were it only by silently obeying, and not revolting,—in the course of a century or so. Nor are electoral methods, Reform Bills and such like, unimportant. A People's electoral methods are, in the long run, the express image of its electoral *talent*; tending and gravitating perpetually, irresistibly, to a conformity with that: and are, at all stages, very significant of the People. Judicious readers, of these times, are not disinclined to see how Monks elect their Abbot in the Twelfth Century: how the St. Edmundsbury mountain manages its midwifery; and what mouse or man the outcome is. 10 15 20 25

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ELECTION.

ACCORDINGLY our Prior assembles us in Chapter; and, we adjuring him before God to do justly, nominates, not by our selection, yet with our assent, Twelve Monks, moderately satisfactory. Of whom are Hugo Third-Prior, Brother Dennis a venerable man, Walter the *Medicus*, Samson *Subsacrista*, and other esteemed characters,—though
5 Willelmus *Sacrista*, of the red nose, too is one. These shall proceed straightway to Waltham; and there elect the Abbot as they may and can. Monks are sworn to obedience; must not speak too loud, under penalty of foot-gyves, limbo, and bread and water: yet monks too
10 would know what it is they are obeying. The St. Edmundsbury Community has no hustings, ballot-box, indeed no open voting: yet by various vague manipulations, pulse-feelings, we struggle to ascertain what its virtual aim is, and succeed better or worse.

This question, however, rises, alas a quite preliminary question:
15 Will the *Dominus Rex* allow us to choose freely? It is to be hoped! Well, if so, we agree to choose one of our own Convent. If not, if the *Dominus Rex* will force a stranger on us, we decide on demurring, the Prior and his Twelve shall demur: we can appeal, plead, remonstrate; appeal even to the Pope, but trust it will not be necessary. Then there
20 is this other question, raised by Brother Samson: What if the Thirteen should not themselves be able to agree? Brother Samson *Subsacrista*, one remarks, is ready oftenest with some question, some suggestion,

that has wisdom in it. Though a servant of servants, and saying little, his words all tell, having sense in them; it seems by his light mainly that we steer ourselves in this great dimness.

What if the Thirteen should not themselves be able to agree? Speak, Samson, and advise.—Could not, hints Samson, Six of our venerablest elders be chosen by us, a kind of electoral committee, here and now: of these, ‘with their hand on the Gospels, with their eye on the *Sacrosancta*,’ we take oath that they will do faithfully; let these, in secret and as before God, agree on Three whom they reckon fittest; write their names in a Paper, and deliver the same sealed, forthwith, to the Thirteen: one of these Three the Thirteen shall fix on, if permitted. If not permitted, that is to say, if the *Dominus Rex* force us to demur,—the Paper shall be brought back unopened, and publicly burned, that no man’s secret bring him into trouble. 5 10

So Samson advises, so we act; wisely, in this and in other crises of the business. Our electoral committee, its eye on the *Sacrosancta* is soon named, soon sworn; and we striking up the Fifth Psalm, ‘*Verba mea*,

‘Give ear unto my words, O Lord,
My meditation weigh,’ 20

march out chanting, and leave the Six to their work in the Chapter here. Their work, before long, they announce as finished: they, with their eye on the *Sacrosancta*, imprecating the Lord to weigh and witness their meditation, have fixed on Three Names, and written them in this Sealed Paper. Let Samson Subsacrista, general servant of the party, take charge of it. On the morrow morning, our Prior and his Twelve will be ready to get under way. 25

This then is the ballot-box and electoral winnowing-machine they have at St. Edmundsbury: a mind fixed on the Thrice Holy, an appeal to God on high to witness their meditation: by far the best, and indeed the only good electoral winnowing-machine,—if men have souls in them. Totally worthless, it is true, and even hideous and poisonous, if men have no souls. But without soul, alas what winnowing-machine in human elections, can be of avail? We cannot get along without soul; we stick fast, the mournfullest spectacle; and salt itself will not save us! 30 35

On the morrow morning accordingly our Thirteen set forth; or rather our Prior and Eleven; for Samson, as general servant of the party, has to linger, settling many things. At length he too gets upon the road; and, ‘carrying the sealed Paper in a leather pouch hung round his neck; and *froccum bajulans in ulnis*’ (thanks to thee Bozzy Jocelin), ‘his frock-skirt, looped over his elbows,’ shewing substantial stern-works, tramps stoutly along. Away across the Heath, not yet of Newmarket and horse-jockeying; across your Fleam-dike and Devil’s-dike, no longer useful as a Mercian East-Anglian boundary or bulwark: continually towards Waltham, and the Bishop of Winchester’s House there, for his Majesty is in that. Brother Samson, as purse-bearer, has the reckoning always, when there is one, to pay; ‘delays are numerous,’ progress none of the swiftest.

But, in the solitude of the Convent, Destiny thus big and in her birth time, what gossiping, what babbling, what dreaming of dreams! The secret of the Three our electoral Elders alone know: some Abbot we shall have to govern us; but which Abbot, O which! One Monk discerns in a vision of the night-watches, that we shall get an Abbot of our own body, without needing to demur: a prophet appeared to him clad all in white, and said, “Ye shall have one of yours, and he will rage among you like a wolf, *seviet ut lupus*.” Verily!—then which of ours? Another Monk now dreams: he has seen clearly which; a certain Figure taller by head and shoulders than the other two, dressed in alb and *pallium*, and with the attitude of one about to fight;—which tall Figure a wise Editor would rather not name at this stage of the business! Enough that the vision is true: that Saint Edmund himself, pale and awful, seemed to rise from his Shrine with naked feet, and say audibly, “He, *ille*, shall veil my feet;” which part of the vision also proves true. Such guessing, visioning, dim perscrutation of the momentous future: the very clothmakers, old women, all townsfolk speak of it, ‘and more than once it is reported in St. Edmundsbury, This one is elected; and then, This one and That other.’ Who knows?

But now, sure enough, at Waltham ‘on the Second Sunday of Quadragesima,’ which Dryasdust declares to mean the 22^d day of February, year 1182, Thirteen St. Edmundsbury Monks are, at last, seen processioning towards the Winchester Manorhouse; and in some

high Presence-chamber, and Hall of State, get access to Henry II in all his glory. What a Hall,—not imaginary in the least, but entirely real and indisputable, though so extremely dim to us; sunk in the deep distances of Night! The Winchester Manorhouse has fled bodily, like a Dream of the old Night; not Dryasdust himself can shew a wreck of it. House and people, royal and episcopal, lords and varlets, where are they? Why *there*, I say, Seven Centuries off; sunk *so* far in the Night, there they *are*; peep through the blankets of the old Night, and thou wilt see! King Henry himself is visibly there, a vivid, noble-looking man, with grizzled beard, in glittering uncertain costume; with earls round him, and bishops and dignitaries, in the like. The Hall is large, and has for one thing an altar near it,—chapel and altar adjoining it; but what gilt seats, carved tables, carpeting of rush-cloth, what arras-hangings, and huge fire of logs:—alas, it has Human Life in it; and is not that the grand miracle, in what hangings or costume soever?—

The *Dominus Rex*, benignantly receiving our Thirteen with their obeisance, and graciously declaring that he will strive to act for God's honour, and the Church's good, commands, 'by the Bishop of Winchester and Geoffrey the Chancellor,'—*Galfridus Cancellarius*, Henry's and the Fair Rosamond's authentic Son present here!—commands, "That they, the said Thirteen, do now withdraw, and fix upon Three from their own Monastery." A work soon done; the Three hanging ready round Samson's neck, in that leather pouch of his. Breaking the seal, we find the names,—what think *ye* of it, ye higher dignitaries, thou indolent Prior, thou Willelmus *Sacrista* with the red bottle-nose?—the names, in this order: of Samson *Subsacrista*, of Roger the distressed Cellarer, of Hugo *Tertius-Prior*.

The higher dignitaries, all omitted here, 'flush suddenly red in the face:' but have nothing to say. One curious fact and question certainly is, How Hugo Third-Prior, who was of the electoral committee, came to nominate *himself* as one of the Three? A curious fact which Hugo Third-Prior has never yet entirely explained, that I know of!—However, we return, and report to the King our Three names; merely altering the order; putting Samson last, as lowest of all. The King, at recitation of our Three, asks us: "Who are they? Were they born in my domain? Totally unknown to me! You must nominate three others." Whereupon Willelmus *Sacrista* says, "Our Prior must be named,

quia caput nostrum est, being already our head.” And the Prior responds, “Willelmus Sacrista is a fit man, *bonus vir est*,”—for all his red nose. Tickle me Toby and I’ll tickle thee! Venerable Dennis too is named; none in his conscience can say nay. There are now Six on our List. “Well,” said the King, “they have done it swiftly, they! *Deus est cum eis*.” The Monks withdraw again; and Majesty revolves, for a little, with his *Pares* and *Episcopi*, Lords or ‘*Law-wards*’ and Soul-Overseers, the thoughts of the royal breast. The Monks wait silent in an outer room.

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In short while, they are next ordered, To add yet another three; but not from their own Convent; from other Convents, “for the honour of my kingdom.” Here,—what is to be done here? We will demur, if need be! We do name three, however, for the nonce: the Prior of St. Faith’s, a good Monk of St. Neot’s, a good Monk of St. Alban’s; good men all; all made abbots and dignitaries since, at this hour. There are now Nine upon our List. What the thoughts of the Dominus Rex may be farther? The Dominus Rex, thanking graciously, sends out word that we shall now strike off three. The three strangers are instantly struck off. Willelmus Sacrista adds that he will of his own accord decline,—a touch of grace and respect for the *Sacrosancta*, even in Willelmus! The King then orders us to strike off a couple more; then yet one more: Hugo Third-Prior goes, and Roger *Cellerarius*, and venerable Monk Dennis;—and now there remain on our List two only, Samson Subsacrista and the Prior.

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Which of these two? It were hard to say,—by Monks who may get themselves foot-gyved and thrown into limbo, for speaking! We humbly request that the Bishop of Winchester and Geoffrey the Chancellor may again enter, and help us to decide. “Which do you want?” asks the Bishop. Venerable Dennis made a speech, ‘commending the persons of the Prior and Samson; but always in the corner of his discourse, *in angulo sui sermonis*, brought Samson in.’ “I see!” said the Bishop: “We are to understand that your Prior is somewhat remiss; that you want to have him you call Samson for Abbot.” “Either of them is good,” said venerable Dennis, almost trembling; “but we would have the better, if it pleased God.” “Which of the two *do* you want?” inquires the Bishop pointedly. “Samson!” answered Dennis; “Samson!” echoed all of the rest that durst speak or echo anything;

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and Samson is reported to the King accordingly. His Majesty, advising of it for a moment, orders that Samson be brought in with the other Twelve.

The King's Majesty, looking at us somewhat sternly, then says: "You present to me Samson; I do not know him: had it been your Prior, whom I do know, I should have accepted him: however, I will now do as you wish. But have a care of yourselves. By the true eyes of God, *per veros oculos Dei*, if you manage badly, I will be upon you!" Samson therefore steps forward, kisses the King's feet; but swiftly rises erect again, swiftly turns towards the altar, uplifting with the other Twelve, in clear tenor-note, the Fifty-first Psalm, '*Miserere mei Deus*,

'After thy loving-kindness, Lord,
Have mercy upon *me*;'

with firm voice, firm step and head, no change in his countenance whatever. "By God's eyes," said the King, "that one, I think, will govern the Abbey well." By the same oath (charged to your Majesty's account), I too am precisely of that opinion! It is some while since I fell in with a likelier man anywhere than this new Abbot Samson. Long life to him, and may the Lord *have* mercy on him as Abbot!

Thus, then, have the St. Edmundsbury Monks, without express ballot-box or other good winnowing-machine, contrived to accomplish the most important social feat a body of men can do, to winnow out the man that is to govern them: and truly one sees not that, by any winnowing-machine whatever, they could have done it better. O ye kind Heavens, there is in every Nation and Community *a fittest*, a wisest, bravest, best; whom could we find and make King over us, all were in very truth well;—the best that God and Nature had permitted *us* to make it! By what art discover him? Will the Heavens in their pity teach us no art; for our need of him is great!

Ballot-boxes, Reform Bills, winnowing-machines: all these are good, or are not so good;—alas, brethren, how *can* these, I say, be other than inadequate, be other than failures, melancholy to behold? Dim all souls of men to the divine, the high and awful meaning of Human Worth and Truth, we shall never, by all the machinery in Birmingham,

discover the True and Worthy. It is written, ‘if we are ourselves valets, there shall exist no hero for us; we shall not know the hero when we see him;’—we shall take the quack for a hero; and cry, audibly through all ballot-boxes and machinery whatsoever, Thou art he; be thou
 5 King over us!

What boots it? Seek only deceitful Speciosity, money with gilt carriages, ‘fame’ with newspaper-paragraphs, whatever name it bear, you will find only deceitful Speciosity; godlike Reality will be forever far from you. The Quack shall be legitimate inevitable King of you;
 10 no earthly machinery able to exclude the Quack. Ye shall be born thralls of the Quack, and suffer under him, till your hearts are near broken, and no French Revolution or Manchester Insurrection, or partial or universal volcanic combustions and explosions, never so many, can do more than ‘change the *figure* of your Quack;’ the
 15 essence of him remaining, for a time and times.—“How long, O Prophet?” say some, with a rather melancholy sneer. Alas, ye *unprophetic*, ever till this come about: Till deep misery, if nothing softer will, have driven you out of your Speciosities *into* your Sincerities; and you find that there either is a Godlike in the world, or else ye are
 20 an unintelligible madness; that there is a God, as well as a Mammon and a Devil, and a Genius of Luxuries and canting Dilettantisms and Vain Shews! How long that will be, compute for yourselves. My unhappy brothers!—

CHAPTER IX.

ABBOT SAMSON.

So then the bells of St. Edmundsbury clang out one and all, and in church and chapel the organs go: Convent and Town, and all the west side of Suffolk, are in gala; knights, viscounts, weavers, spinners, the entire population, male and female, young and old, the very sockmen with their chubby infants,—out to have a holiday, and see the Lord Abbot arrive! And there is ‘stripping barefoot’ of the Lord Abbot at the Gate, and solemn leading of him in to the High Altar and Shrine; with sudden ‘silence of all the bells and organs,’ as we kneel in deep prayer there; and again with outburst of all the bells and organs, and loud *Te Deum* from the general human windpipe; and speeches by the leading viscount, and giving of the kiss of brotherhood; the whole wound up with popular games, and dinner within doors of more than a thousand strong, *plus quam mille comedentibus in gaudio magno*. 5 10

In such manner is the selfsame Samson once again returning to us, welcomed on *this* occasion. He that went away with his frock-skirts looped over his arm, comes back riding high; suddenly made one of the dignitaries of this world. Reflective readers will admit that here was a trial for a man. Yesterday a poor mendicant, allowed to possess not above two shillings of money, and without authority to bid a dog run for him, this man today finds himself a *Dominus Abbas*, mitred Peer of Parliament, Lord of manorhouses, farms, manors, and wide lands; a man with ‘Fifty Knights under him,’ and dependent swiftly 15 20

obedient multitudes of men. It is a change greater than Napoleon's; so sudden withal. As if one of the Chandos day-drudges had, on awakening some morning, found that *he* overnight was become Duke! Let Samson with his clear-beaming eyes see into that, and discern it if he can. We shall now get the measure of him by a new scale of inches, considerably more rigorous than the former was. For if a noble soul is rendered tenfold beautifuller by victory and prosperity, springing now radiant as into his own due element and sun-throne; an ignoble one is rendered tenfold and hundredfold uglier, pitifuller. Whatsoever vices, whatsoever weaknesses were in the man, the parvenu will shew us them enlarged, as in the solar microscope, into frightful distortion. Nay, how many mere seminal principles of vice, hitherto all wholesomely kept latent, may we now see unfolded, as in the solar hot house, into growth, into huge universally-conspicuous luxuriance and development!

But is not this, at any rate, a singular aspect of what political and social capabilities, nay let us say what depth and opulence of true social vitality, lay in those old barbarous ages, That the fit Governor could be met with under such disguises, could be recognised and laid hold of under such? Here he is discovered with a maximum of two shillings in his pocket, and a leather scrip round his neck; trudging along the highway, his frock-skirts looped over his arm. They think this is he nevertheless, the true Governor; and he proves to be so. Brethren, have we no need of discovering true Governors, but will sham ones forever do for us? These were absurd superstitious block-heads of Monks; and we are enlightened Tenpound Franchisers, without taxes on knowledge! Where, I say, are our superior, are our similar or at all comparable discoveries? We also have eyes, or ought to have; we have hustings, telescopes; we have lights, link-lights and rush-lights of an enlightened free Press, burning and dancing everywhere, as in a universal torch-dance; singeing your whiskers as you traverse the public thoroughfares in town and country. Great souls, true Governors, go about under all manner of disguises now as then. Such telescopes, such enlightenment,—and such discovery! How comes it, I say; how comes it? Is it not lamentable; is it not even in some sense amazing?

Alas, the defect, as we must often urge and again urge, is less a defect of telescopes than of some eyesight. Those superstitious block-heads of the Twelfth Century had no telescopes, but they had still an eye: not ballot-boxes; only reverence for Worth, abhorrence of Unworth. It is the way with all barbarians. Thus Mr. Sale informs me, the old Arab Tribes would gather in liveliest *gaudeamus*, and sing, and kindle bonfires, and wreath crowns of honour, and solemnly thank the gods that, in their Tribe too, a Poet had shewn himself. As indeed they well might; for what usefuller, I say not nobler and heavenlier thing could the gods, doing their very kindest, send to any Tribe or Nation in any time or circumstances? I declare to thee my afflicted quack-riden brother, in spite of thy astonishment, it is very lamentable! We English find a Poet, as brave a man as has been made for a hundred years or so anywhere under the sun; and do we kindle bonfires, or thank the gods? Not at all. We, taking due counsel of it, set the man to gauge ale-barrels in the Burgh of Dumfries; and pique ourselves on our 'patronage of genius.'

Genius, Poet: do we know what these words mean? An inspired Soul once more vouchsafed us, direct from Nature's own great fire-heart, to see the Truth, and speak it, and do it; Nature's own sacred voice heard once more athwart the dreary boundless element of hear-saying and canting, of twaddle and poltroonery, in which the bewildered Earth, nigh perishing, has *lost its way*. Hear once more, ye bewildered benighted mortals; listen once again to a voice from the inner Light-sea and Flame-sea, Nature's and Truth's own heart; know the Fact of your Existence what it is, put away the Cant of it which it is *not*; and knowing, do, and let it be well with you!—

George the Third is Defender of something we call 'the Faith,' in those years; George the Third is head charioteer of the Destinies of England, to guide them through the gulph of French Revolutions, American Independences; and Robert Burns is Guager of Ale in Dumfries. It is an Iliad in a nutshell. The physiognomy of a world now verging towards dissolution, reduced now to spasms and death-throes, lies pictured in that one fact,—which astonishes nobody, except at me for being astonished at it. The fruit of long ages of confirmed Valethood, entirely confirmed as into a Law of Nature; cloth-worship and quack-worship: entirely *confirmed* Valethood,—which will have to *unconfirm* itself again; God knows, with difficulty enough!—

Abbot Samson had found a Convent all in dilapidation; rain beating through it, material rain and metaphorical, from all quarters of the compass. Willelmus Sacrista sits drinking nightly, and doing mere *tacenda*. Our larders are reduced to leanness, Jew Harpies and unclean creatures our purveyors; in our basket is no bread. Old women with their distaffs rush out on a distressed Cellarer in shrill Chartism. 'You cannot stir abroad but Jews and Christians pounce upon you with unsettled bonds;' debts boundless seemingly as the National Debt of England. For four years our new Lord Abbot never went abroad but Jew creditors and Christian, and all manner of creditors, were about him; driving him to very despair. Our Prior is remiss; our Cellarers, officials are remiss, our Monks are remiss: what man is not remiss? Front this, Samson, thou alone art there to front it; it is thy task to front and fight this, and to die or kill it. May the Lord have mercy on thee!

To our antiquarian interest in poor Jocelin and his Convent, where the whole aspect of existence, the whole dialect, of thought, of speech, of activity, is so obsolete, strange, long-vanished, there now super-adds itself a mild glow of human interest for Abbot Samson; a real pleasure, as at sight of man's work, especially of governing, which is man's highest work, done *well*. Abbot Samson had no experience in governing; had served no apprenticeship to the trade of governing,—alas, only the hardest apprenticeship to that of obeying. He had never in any court given *vadium* or *plegium*, says Jocelin; hardly ever seen a court, when he was set to preside in one. But it is astonishing, continues Jocelin, how soon he learned the ways of business; and, in all sorts of affairs, became expert beyond others. Of the many persons offering him their service 'he retained one Knight skilled in taking *vadia* and *plegia*;' and within the year was himself well skilled. Nay, by and by, the Pope appoints him Justiciary in certain causes; the King one of his new Circuit Judges: official Osbert is heard saying, "That Abbot is one of your shrewd ones, *disputator est*; if he go on as he begins, he will cut out every lawyer of us!"*

Why not? What is to hinder this Samson from governing? There is in him what far transcends all apprenticeships; in the man himself there exists a model of governing, something to govern by! There

* Jocelini Chronica, p. 25.

exists in him a heart-aborrence of whatever is incoherent, pusillanimous, unveracious,—that is to say, chaotic, *ungoverned*; of the Devil, not of God. A man of this kind cannot help governing! He has the living ideal of a governor in him; and the incessant necessity of struggling to unfold the same out of him. Not the Devil or Chaos, for any wages, will he serve; no, this man is the born servant of Another than them. Alas, how little avail all apprenticeships, when there is in your governor himself what we may well call *nothing* to govern by: nothing;—a general grey twilight, looming with shapes of expediencies, parliamentary traditions, division-lists, election-funds, leading-articles; this, with what of vulpine alertness and adroitness soever, is not much! 5 10

But indeed what say we, apprenticeship? Had not this Samson served, in his way, a right good apprenticeship to governing; namely, the harshest slave-apprenticeship to obeying! Walk this world with no friend in it but God and St. Edmund, you will either fall into the ditch, or learn a good many things. To learn obeying is the fundamental art of governing. How much would many a Serene Highness have learned, had he travelled through the world with water-jug and empty wallet, *sine omni expensa*; and, at his victorious return, sat down not to newspaper-paragraphs and city-illuminations, but at the foot of St. Edmund's Shrine to shackles and bread and water! He that cannot be servant of many, will never be master, true guide and deliverer of many;—that is the meaning of true mastership. Had not the Monk-life extraordinary 'political capabilities' in it; if not imitable by us, yet enviable? Heavens, had a Duke of Logwood, now rolling sumptuously to his place in the Collective Wisdom, but himself happened to plough daily, at one time, on seven-and-sixpence a-week, with no out-door relief,—what a light, unquenchable by logic and statistic and arithmetic, would it have thrown on several things for him! 15 20 25 30

In all cases, therefore, we will agree with the judicious Mrs. Glass: 'First catch your hare!' First get your man; all is got: he can learn to do all things, from making boots, to decreeing judgements, governing communities; and will do them like a man. Catch your no-man,—alas, have you not caught the terriblest Tartar in the world! Perhaps all the terribler, the quieter and gentler he looks. For the mischief that one blockhead, that every blockhead does, in a world so ferocious, teeming with endless results as ours, no ciphering will sum up. 35

The quack bootmaker is considerable; as corn-cutters can testify, and desperate men reduced to buckskin and list-shoes. But the quack priest, quack high-priest, the quack king! Why do not all just citizens rush, half-frantic, to stop him, as they would a conflagration? Surely
5 a just citizen *is* admonished by God and his own Soul, by all silent and articulate voices of this Universe, to do what in *him* lies towards relief of this poor blockhead-quack, and of a world that groans under him. Run swiftly; relieve him,—were it even by extinguishing him! For all things have grown so old, tinder-dry, combustible; and he is
10 more ruinous than conflagration. Sweep him *down*, at least; keep him strictly within the hearth: he will then cease to be conflagration; he will then become useful, more or less, as culinary fire. Fire is the best of servants; but what a master! This poor blockhead too is born for uses: why, elevating him to mastership, will you make a conflagration,
15 a parish-curse or world-curse of him?

CHAPTER X.

GOVERNMENT.

How Abbot Samson, giving his new subjects seriatim the kiss of fatherhood in the St. Edmundsbury chapterhouse, proceeded with cautious energy to set about reforming their disjointed distracted way of life; how he managed with his Fifty rough *Milites* (Feudal Knights), with his lazy Farmers, remiss refractory Monks, with Pope's Legates, Viscounts, Bishops, Kings; how on all sides he laid about him like a man, and putting consequence on premiss, and everywhere the saddle on the right horse, struggled incessantly to educe organic method out of lazily fermenting wreck,—the careful reader will discern, not without true interest, in these pages of Jocelin Boswell. In most antiquarian quaint costume, not of garments alone, but of thought, word, action, outlook and position, the substantial figure of a man with eminent nose, bushy brows and clear-flashing eyes, his russet beard growing daily greyer, is visible, engaged in true governing of men. It is beautiful how the chrysalis governing-soul, shaking off its dusty slough and prison, starts forth winged, a true royal soul! Our new Abbot has a right honest unconscious feeling, without insolence as without fear or flutter, of what he is and what others are. A courage to quell the proudest, an honest pity to encourage the humblest. Withal there is a noble reticence in this Lord Abbot: much vain unreason he hears; lays up without response. He is not there to expect reason and nobleness of others; he is there to give them of his own reason and nobleness. Is he not their servant, as we said, who

can suffer from them, and for them; bear the burden their poor spindle-limbs totter and stagger under; and in virtue *thereof* govern them, lead them out of weakness into strength, out of defeat into victory!

5

One of the first Herculean Labours Abbot Samson undertook, or the very first, was to institute a strenuous review and radical reform of his economics. It is the first labour of every governing man, from *Paterfamilias* to *Dominus Rex*. To get the rain thatched out from you is the preliminary of whatever farther, in the way of speculation or of
10 action, you may mean to do. Old Abbot Hugo's budget, as we saw, had become empty, filled with deficit and wind. To see his account-books clear, be delivered from those ravening flights of Jew and Christian creditors, pouncing on him like obscene harpies wherever
15 he shewed face, was a necessity for Abbot Samson.

On the morrow after his instalment, he brings in a load of money-bonds, all duly stamped, sealed with this or the other Convent Seal: frightful, unmanageable, a bottomless confusion of Convent finance. There they are;—but there at least they all are; all that shall be of
20 them. Our Lord Abbot demands that all the official seals in use among us be now produced and delivered to him. Three-and-thirty seals turn up; are straightway broken, and shall seal no more: the Abbot only, and those duly authorized by him shall seal any bond. There are but two ways of paying debt: increase of industry in raising
25 income, increase of thrift in laying it out. With iron energy, in slow but steady undeviating perseverance, Abbot Samson sets to work in both directions. His troubles are manifold: cunning *milites*, unjust bailiffs, lazy sockmen, he an inexperienced Abbot; relaxed lazy monks, not disinclined to mutiny in mass: but continued vigilance, rigorous
30 method, what we call 'the eye of the master,' work wonders. The clear-beaming eyesight of Abbot Samson, steadfast, severe, all-penetrating,—it is like *Fiat lux* in that inorganic waste whirlpool; penetrates gradually to all nooks, and of the chaos makes a *kosmos* or ordered world!

He arranges everywhere, struggles unweariedly to arrange, and
35 place on some intelligible footing, the 'affairs and dues, *res ac redditus*,' of his dominion. The Lakenheath eels cease to breed squabbles between human beings; the penny of *reap-silver* to explode into the

streets the Female Chartism of St. Edmundsbury. These and innumerable greater things. Wheresoever Disorder may stand or lie, let it have a care; here is the man that has declared war with it, that never will make peace with it. Man is the Missionary of Order; he is the servant not of the Devil and Chaos, but of God and the Universe! Let all sluggards and cowards, remiss, false-spoken, unjust, and otherwise diabolic persons have a care: this is a dangerous man for them. He has a mild grave face; a thoughtful sternness, a sorrowful pity: but there is a terrible flash of anger in him too; lazy monks often have to murmur, "*Savit ut lupus*, He rages like a wolf; was not our Dream true!" 'To repress and hold-in such sudden anger he was continually careful,' and succeeded well:—right, Samson; that it may become in thee as noble central heat, fruitful, strong, beneficent; not blaze out, or the seldomest possible blaze out, as wasteful volcanoism to scorch and consume!

"We must first creep, and gradually learn to walk," had Abbot Samson said of himself, at starting. In four years he has become a great walker; striding prosperously along; driving much before him. In less than four years, says Jocelin, the Convent Debts were all liquidated: the harpy Jews not only settled with, but banished, bag and baggage, out of the *Bannaleuca* (Liberties, *Banlieue*) of St. Edmundsbury,—so has the King's Majesty been persuaded to permit. Farewell to *you*, at any rate; let us, in no extremity, apply again to you! Armed men march them over the borders, dismiss them under stern penalties,—sentence of excommunication on all that shall again harbour them here: there were many dry eyes at their departure.

New life enters everywhere, springs up beneficent, the Incubus of Debt once rolled away. Samson hastes not; but neither does he pause to rest. This of the Finance is a life-long business with him;—Jocelin's anecdotes are filled to weariness with it. As indeed to Jocelin it was of very primary interest.

But we have to record also, with a lively satisfaction, that spiritual rubbish is as little tolerated in Samson's Monastery as material. With due rigour, Willelmus Sacrista, and his bibations and *tacenda* are, at the earliest opportunity, softly, yet irrevocably put an end to. The bibations, namely, had to end; even the building where they used to be carried on was razed from the soil of St. Edmundsbury, and 'on

its place grow rows of beans:’ Willelmus himself, deposed from the Sacristy and all offices, retires into obscurity, into absolute taciturnity unbroken thenceforth to this hour. Whether the poor Willelmus did not still, by secret channels, occasionally get some slight wetting of
5 vinous or alcoholic liquor,—now grown, in a manner, indispensable to the poor man? Jocelin hints not; one knows not how to hope, what to hope! But if he did, it was in silence and darkness; with an ever-present feeling that teetotalism was his only true course. Drunken
10 dissolute Monks are a class of persons who had better keep out of Abbot Samson’s way. *Savit ut lupus*; was not the Dream true! murmured many a Monk. Nay Ranulf de Glanvill, Justiciary in Chief, took umbrage at him, seeing these strict ways; and watched farther with suspicion: but discerned gradually that there was nothing wrong, that there was much the opposite of wrong.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ABBOT'S WAYS.

ABBOT SAMSON shewed no extraordinary favour to the Monks who had been his familiars of old; did not promote them to offices,—*nisi essent idonei*, unless they chanced to be fit men! Whence great discontent among certain of these, who had contributed to make him Abbot: reproaches, open and secret, of his being ‘ungrateful, hard-tempered, unsocial, a Norfolk *barrator* and *paltenerius*.’ 5

Indeed, except it were for *idonei*, ‘fit men,’ in all kinds, it was hard to say for whom Abbot Samson had much favour. He loved his kindred well, and tenderly enough acknowledged the poor part of them; with the rich part, who in old days had never acknowledged him, he 10 totally refused to have any business. But even the former he did not promote into offices; finding none of them *idonei*. ‘Some whom he thought suitable he put into situations in his own household, or made keepers of his country places: if they behaved ill, he dismissed them without hope of return.’ In his promotions, nay almost in his benefits, you would have said there was a certain impartiality. ‘The official 15 person who had, by Abbot Hugo’s order, put the fetters on him at his return from Italy, was now supported with food and clothes to the end of his days at Abbot Samson’s expense.’

Yet he did not forget benefits; far the reverse, when an opportunity occurred of paying them at his own cost. How pay them at the 20 public cost;—how, above all, by *setting fire* to the public, as we said; clapping ‘conflagrations’ on the public, which the services of blockheads,

non-idonei, intrinsically are! He was right willing to remember friends, when it could be done. Take these instances: 'A certain chaplain who had maintained him at the Schools of Paris by the sale of holy water, *quæstu aquæ benedictæ*;—to this good chaplain he did give a vicarage,

5 adequate to the comfortable sustenance of him.' 'The Son of Elias, too, that is, of old Abbot Hugo's Cupbearer, coming to do homage for his Father's land, our Lord Abbot said to him in full court: "I have, for these seven years, put off taking thy homage for the land which Abbot Hugo gave thy Father, because that gift was to the

10 damage of Elmswell and a questionable one: but now I must profess myself overcome; mindful of the kindness thy Father did me when I was in bonds; because he sent me a cup of the very wine his master had been drinking, and bade me be comforted in God."

'To Magister Walter, son of Magister Willelm de Dice, who wanted the vicarage of Chevington, he answered: "Thy Father was Master of the Schools; and when I was an indigent *clericus*, he granted me freely and in charity an entrance to his School and opportunity of learning; wherefore I now, for the sake of God, grant to thee what thou askest.'" Or lastly, take this good instance,—and a glimpse,

20 along with it, into long-obsolete times: 'Two *Milites* of Risby, Willelm and Norman, being adjudged in Court to come under his mercy, *in misericordia ejus*,' for a certain very considerable fine of Twenty shillings, 'he thus addressed them publicly on the spot: "When I was a cloister-monk I was once sent to Durham on business of our church; and coming home again, the dark night caught me at Risby, and I had to beg a lodging there. I went to Dominus Norman's, and he gave me a flat refusal. Going then to Dominus Willelm's, and begging hospitality, I was by him honourably received. The twenty shillings therefore of *mercy*, I, without mercy, will exact from Dominus Norman; to Dominus Willelm on the other hand I, with thanks, will wholly remit the said sum.'" Men know not always to whom they refuse lodgings; men have lodged Angels unawares!—

It is clear Abbot Samson had a talent; he had learned to judge

35 better than Lawyers, to manage better than bred Bailiffs:—a talent shining out indisputable, on whatever side you took him. 'An eloquent man he was,' says Jocelin, 'both in French and Latin; but intent more on the substance and method of what was to be said,

than on the ornamental way of saying it. He could read English Manuscripts very elegantly, *elegantissime*: he was wont to preach to the people in the English tongue, though according to the dialect of Norfolk where he had been brought up; wherefore indeed he had caused a Pulpit to be erected in our church both for ornament of the same, and for the use of his audiences.' There preached he, according to the dialect of Norfolk: a man worth going to hear. 5

That he was a just clear-hearted man, this, as the basis of all true talent, is presupposed. How can a man, without clear vision in his heart first of all, have any clear vision in the head? It is impossible! 10
 Abbot Samson was one of the justest of judges; insisted on understanding the case to the bottom, and then swiftly decided without feud or favour. For which reason, indeed, the Dominus Rex, searching for such men as for hidden treasure and healing to his distressed realm, had made him one of the new Itinerant Judges,—such as 15
 continue to this day. "My curse on that Abbot's court," a suitor was heard imprecating, "*Maledicta sit curia istius Abbatis*, where neither gold nor silver can help me to confound my enemy!" And old friendships and all connexions forgotten, when you go to seek an office from him! "A kinless loon," as the Scotch said of Cromwell's new 20
 judges,—intent on mere indifferent fair-play!

Eloquence in three languages is good; but it is not the best. To us, as already hinted, the Lord Abbot's eloquence is less admirable than his *ine*loquence, his great invaluable 'talent of silence'! "*Deus, Deus,*" 25
 said the Lord Abbot to me once, when he heard the Convent were murmuring at some act of his, "I have much need to remember that Dream they had of me, that I was to rage among them like a wolf. Above all earthly things I dread their driving me to do it. How much do I hold in, and wink at; raging and shuddering in my own secret mind, and not outwardly at all!" He would boast to me at other 30
 times: "This and that I have seen, this and that I have heard; yet patiently stood it." 'He had this way, too, which I have never seen in any other man, that he affectionately loved many persons to whom he never or hardly ever shewed a countenance of love.' Once on my venturing to expostulate with him on the subject, he reminded me of 35
 Solomon: "Many sons I have; it is not fit that I should smile on them." He would suffer faults, damage from his servants, and know what he suffered, and not speak of it; but I think the reason was, he

waited a good time for speaking of it and in a wise way amending it. He intimated, openly in chapter to us all, that he would have no eavesdropping: "Let none," said he, "come to me secretly accusing another, unless he will publicly stand to the same; if he come otherwise, I will openly proclaim the name of him. I wish too that every
5 Monk of you have free access to me, to speak of your needs or grievances when you will."

The kinds of people Abbot Samson liked worst were these three: 'Mendaces, ebriosi, verbosi, Liars, drunkards, and wordy or windy persons;'—not good kinds, any of them! He also much condemned 'persons given to murmur at their meat or drink, especially Monks of that
10 disposition.' We remark, from the very first, his strict anxious order to his servants to provide handsomely for hospitality, to guard 'above all things that there be no shabbiness in the matter of meat and drink, no look of mean parsimony *in novitate mea*, at the beginning of my
15 Abbotship;' and to the last he maintains a due opulence of table and equipment for others: but he is himself in the highest degree indifferent to all such things.

'Sweet milk, honey, and other naturally sweet kinds of food, were
20 what he preferred to eat: but he had this virtue,' says Jocelin, 'he never changed the dish (*ferculum*) you set before him, be what it might. Once when I, still a novice, happened to be waiting table in the refectory, it came into my head' (rogue that I was!) 'to try if this were true; and I thought I would place before him a *ferculum* that
25 would have displeased any other person, the very platter being black and broken. But he, seeing it, was as one that saw it not: and now some little delay taking place, my heart smote me that I had done this; and so, snatching up the platter (*discus*), I changed both it and its contents for a better, and put down that instead; which emenda-
30 tion he was angry at, and rebuked me for,'—the stoical monastic man! 'For the first seven years he had commonly four sorts of dishes on his table; afterwards only three, except it might be presents, or venison from his own parks or fishes from his ponds. And if, at any time, he had guests living in his house at the request of some great
35 person, or of some friend, or had public messengers, or had harpers (*citharædos*), or any one of that sort, he took the first opportunity of

shifting to another of his Manor-houses, and so got rid of such superfluous individuals,*—very prudently, I think.

As to his parks, of these, in the general repair of buildings, general improvement and adornment of the St. Edmund Domains, 'he had laid out several, and stocked them with animals, retaining a proper huntsman with hounds: and, if any guest of great quality were there, our Lord Abbot with his Monks would sit in some opening of the woods, and see the dogs run; but he himself never meddled with hunting that I saw.†

'In an opening of the woods;'—for the country was still dark with wood in those days; and Scotland itself still rustled shaggy and leafy like a damp black American Forest, with cleared spots and spaces here and there. Dryasdust advances several absurd hypotheses as to the insensible but almost total disappearance of these woods; the thick wreck of which now lies as *peat*, sometimes with huge heart-of-oak timberlogs imbedded in it, on many a height and hollow. The simplest reason doubtless is that by increase of husbandry, there was increase of cattle; increase of hunger for green spring food; and so more and more the new seedlings got yearly eaten out in April; and the old trees, having only a certain length of life in them, died gradually, no man heeding it, and disappeared into *peat*.

A sorrowful waste of noble wood and umbrage! Yes,—but a very common one; the course of most things in this world. Monachism itself, so rich and fruitful once, is now all rotted into *peat*; lies sleek and buried,—and a most feeble bog-grass of Dilettantism, all the crop we reap from it! That also was frightful waste; perhaps among the saddest our England ever saw. Why will men destroy noble Forests, even when in part a nuisance, in such reckless manner; turning loose four-footed cattle and Henry-the-Eighths into them! The fifth part of our English soil, Dryasdust computes, lay consecrated to 'spiritual uses,' better or worse: solemnly set apart to foster spiritual growth and culture of the soul, by the methods then known: and now—it too, like the four-fifths, fosters what? Gentle shepherd, tell me what!—

* Jocelini Chronica, p. 31.

† Jocelini Chronica, p. 21.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ABBOT'S TROUBLES.

THE troubles of Abbot Samson as he went along in this abstemious, reticent, rigorous way, were more than tongue can tell. The Abbot's mitre once set on his head, he knew rest no more. Double, double, toil and trouble; that is the life of all governors that really govern: not
5 the spoil of victory, only the glorious toil of battle can be theirs. Abbot Samson found all men more or less headstrong, irrational, prone to disorder; continually threatening to prove *ungovernable*.

His lazy Monks gave him most trouble. 'My heart is tortured,'
10 said he, 'till we get out of debt, *cor meum cruciatum est.*' Your heart, indeed;—but not altogether ours! By no deviseable method, or none of three or four that he devised, could Abbot Samson get these Monks of his to keep their accounts straight; but always, do as he might, the Cellerarius at the end of the term is in a coil, in a flat deficit,—verging
15 again towards debt and Jews. The Lord Abbot at last, declares sternly he will keep our accounts too himself; will appoint an officer of his own to see our Cellerarius keep them. Murmurs, thereupon among us: Was the like ever heard? Our Cellerarius a cipher; the very Townsfolk know it: *subsannatio et derisio sumus*, we have become a laughstock to mankind. The Norfolk barrator and paltener!—

20 And consider, if the Abbot found such difficulty in the mere economic department, how much in more complex ones, in spiritual ones perhaps! He wears a stern calm face; raging and gnashing teeth, *fremens* and *frendens*, many times, in the secret of his mind. Withal,

however, there is a noble slow perseverance in him; a strength of 'subdued rage' calculated to subdue most things: always in the long run he contrives to gain his point.

Murmurs from the Monks, meanwhile, cannot fail; ever deeper murmurs, new grudges accumulating. At one time, on slight cause, some drop making the cup run over, they burst into open mutiny: the Cellarer will not obey, prefers arrest on bread and water to obeying; the Monks thereupon strike work; refuse to do the regular chaunting of the day, at least the younger part of them with loud clamour and uproar refuse:—Abbot Samson has withdrawn to another residence, acting only by messengers: the awful report circulates through St. Edmundsbury that the Abbot is in danger of being murdered by the Monks with their knives! How wilt thou appease this, Abbot Samson? Return; for the Monastery seems near catching fire!

Abbot Samson returns; sits in his *Thalamus* or inner room, hurls out a bolt or two of excommunication: lo, one disobedient Monk sits in limbo, excommunicated, with foot-shackles on him, all day; and three more our Abbot has gyved 'with the lesser sentence, to strike fear into the others!' Let the others think with whom they have to do. The others think; and fear enters into them. 'On the morrow morning we decide on humbling ourselves before the Abbot, by word and gesture, in order to mitigate his mind. And so accordingly was done. He, on the other side, replying with much humility, yet always alleging his own justice and turning the blame on us, when he saw that we were conquered, became himself conquered. And bursting into tears, *perfusus lachrymis*, he swore that he had never grieved so much for anything in the world as for this, first on his own account, and then secondly and chiefly for the public scandal which had gone abroad, that St. Edmund's Monks were going to kill their Abbot. And when he had narrated how he went away on purpose till his anger should cool, repeating this word of the philosopher, "I would have taken vengeance on thee, had not I been angry," he arose weeping, and embraced each and all of us with the kiss of peace. He wept; we all wept:—what a picture! Behave better ye remiss Monks, and

* Jocelini Chronica, p. 85.

thank Heaven for such an Abbot; or know at least that ye must and shall obey him.

5 Worn down in this manner, with incessant toil and tribulation, Abbot Samson had a sore time of it; his grizzled hair and beard grew daily greyer. Those Jews, in the first four years, had ‘visibly emaciated him:’ Time, Jews, and the task of Governing, will make a man’s beard very grey! ‘In twelve years,’ says Jocelin, ‘our Lord Abbot had grown
10 wholly white as snow, *totus efficitur albus sicut nix.*’ White atop, like the granite mountains:—but his clear-beaming eyes still look out in their stern clearness, in their sorrow and pity; the heart within him remains unconquered.

15 Nay sometimes there are gleams of hilarity too; little snatches of encouragement granted even to a Governor. ‘Once my Lord Abbot and I, coming down from London through the Forest, I inquired of an old woman whom we came up to, Whose wood this was; and of what manor, who the master, who the keeper?’—All this I knew very well beforehand, and my Lord Abbot too, Bozzy that I was! But ‘the old woman answered, The wood belonged to the new Abbot of St.
20 Edmund’s, was of the Manor of Harlow, and the keeper of it was one Arnald. How did he behave to the people of the manor? I asked farther. She answered that he used to be a devil incarnate, *demon vivus*, an enemy of God, and flayer of the peasants’ skins,’—skinning them like live eels, as the manner of some is: ‘but that now he dreads
25 the new Abbot, knowing him to be a wise and sharp man, and so treats the people reasonably, *tractat homines pacifice.*’ Whereat the Lord Abbot *factus est hilaris*,—could not but take a triumphant laugh for himself; and determines to leave that Harlow Manor yet unmeddled with, for a while.*

30 A brave man, strenuously fighting, fails not of a little triumph, now and then, to keep him in heart. Everywhere we try at least to give the adversary as good as he brings; and, with swift force or slow watchful manœuvre, extinguish this and the other solecism, leave one solecism less in God’s Creation; and so *proceed* with our battle, not
35 slacken or surrender in it! The Fifty feudal Knights, for example, were of unjust greedy temper, and cheated us, in the Installation-day, of

* Jocelini Chronica, p. 24.

ten knights' fees;—but they know now whether that has profited them aught, and I Jocelin know. Our Lord Abbot for the moment had to endure it, and say nothing; but he watched his time.

Look also how my Lord of Clare, coming to claim his *undue* 'debt' in the Court at Witham, with barons and apparatus, gets a Rowland for his Oliver! Jocelin shall report: 'The Earl, crowded round (5 *constipatus*) with many barons and men at arms, Earl Alberic and others standing by him, said, "That his bailiffs had given him to understand they were wont annually to receive for his behoof, from the Hundred of Risebridge and the bailiffs thereof, a sum of five 10 shillings, which sum was now unjustly held back;"—and he alleged farther that his predecessors had been infest, at the Conquest, in the lands of Alfric son of Wisgar, who was Lord of that Hundred, as may be read in Domesday Book by all persons.—The Abbot, reflecting for a moment, without stirring from his place, made answer: "A wonder- 15 ful deficit, my Lord Earl, this that thou mentionest! King Edward gave to St. Edmund that entire Hundred, and confirmed the same with his Charter; nor is there any mention there of those five shillings. It will behove thee to say, for what service, or on what ground, thou exactest those five shillings." Whereupon the Earl, consulting 20 with his followers, replied, That he had to carry the Banner of St. Edmund in war-time, and for this duty the five shillings were his. To which the Abbot: "Certainly, it seems inglorious, if so great a man, Earl of Clare no less, receive so small a gift for such a service. To the Abbot of St. Edmund's it is no unbearable burden to give five shil- 25 lings. But Roger Earl Bigot holds himself duly seised, and asserts that he by such seisin has the office of carrying St. Edmund's Banner; and he did carry it when the Earl of Leicester and his Flemings were beaten at Fornham. Then again Thomas de Mendham says that the right is his. When you have made out with one another, that this right is thine, come then and claim the five shillings, and I will promptly pay them!" Whereupon the Earl said, He would speak with Earl Roger his relative; and so the matter *cepit dilationem*,⁷ and lies unde- 30 cided to the end of the world. Abbot Samson answers by word or act, in this or the like pregnant manner, having justice on his side, innumerable persons: Pope's Legates, King's Viscounts, Canterbury Arch- 35 bishops, Cellarers, *Sochemanni*;—and leaves many a solecism extinguished.

On the whole, however, it is and remains sore work. ‘One time, during my chaplaincy, I ventured to say to him: “*Domine*, I heard thee, this night after matins, wakeful, and sighing deeply, *valde suspirantem*, contrary to thy usual wont.” He answered: “No wonder. Thou, son Jocelin, sharest in my good things, in food and drink, in riding and such like; but thou little thinkest concerning the management of House and Family, the various and arduous businesses of the Pastoral Care, which harrass me, and make my soul to sigh and be anxious.” Whereto I, lifting up my hands to Heaven: “From such anxiety, Omnipotent Merciful Lord deliver me!”—I have heard the Abbot say, If he had been as he was before he became a Monk, and could have anywhere got five or six marcs of income,’ some three pound ten of yearly revenue, ‘whereby to support himself in the schools, he would never have been Monk nor Abbot. Another time he said with an oath, If he had known what a business it was to govern the Abbey, he would rather have been Almoner, how much rather Keeper of the Books, than Abbot and Lord. That latter office he said he had always longed for beyond any other. *Quis talia crederet*,’ concludes Jocelin, ‘Who can believe such things?’

Three pound ten, and a life of Literature, especially of quiet Literature, without copyright, or world-celebrity of Literary-Gazettes,—yes, thou brave Abbot Samson, for thyself it had been better, easier, perhaps also nobler! But then, for thy disobedient Monks, unjust Viscounts; for a Domain of St. Edmund overgrown with Solecisms, human and other, it had not been so well. Nay neither could *thy* Literature, never so quiet, have been easy. Literature, when noble, is not easy; but only when ignoble. Literature too is a quarrel and internecine duel with the whole World of Darkness that lies without one and within one;—rather a hard fight at times, even with the three pound ten secure. Thou, there where thou art, wrestle and duel along, cheerfully to the end; and make no remarks!—

CHAPTER XIII.

IN PARLIAMENT.

OF Abbot Samson's public business we say little, though that also was great. He had to judge the people as Justice Errant, to decide in weighty arbitrations and public controversies; to equip his *milites*, send them duly in war-time to the King;—strive every way that the Commonweal, in his quarter of it, take no damage.

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Once, in the confused days of Lackland's usurpation, while Cœur-de-Lion was away, our brave Abbot took helmet himself, having first excommunicated all that should favour Lackland; and led his men in person to the siege of *Windleshora*, what we now call Windsor; where Lackland had entrenched himself, the centre of infinite confusions; some Reform Bill, then as now, being greatly needed. There did Abbot Samson 'fight the battle of reform,'—with other ammunition one hopes, than 'tremendous cheering' and such like! For these things he was called 'the magnanimous Abbot.'

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He also attended duly in his place in Parliament *de arduis regni*; attended especially, as in *arduissimo*, when 'the news reached London that King Richard was captive in Germany.' Here 'while all the barons sat to consult,' and many of them looked blank enough, 'the Abbot started forth, *prosiliit coram omnibus*, in his place in Parliament, and said, That *he* was ready to go and seek his Lord the King, either clandestinely by subterfuge (*in tapinagio*), or by any other method; and search till he found him, and got certain notice of him; he for

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one! By which word,' says Jocelin, 'he acquired great praise for himself,'—unfeigned commendation from the Able Editors of that age.

By which word;—and also by which *deed*: for the Abbot actually went, 'with rich gifts to the King in Germany;'^{*} Usurper Lackland being first rooted out from Windsor, and the King's peace somewhat settled.

As to these 'rich gifts,' however, we have to note one thing: In all England, as appeared to the Collective Wisdom, there was not like to be treasure enough for ransoming King Richard; in which extremity certain Lords of the Treasury, *Justiciarii ad Scaccarium*, suggested that St. Edmund's Shrine, covered with thick gold, was still untouched. Could not it, in this extremity be peeled off, at least in part; under condition, of course, of its being replaced, when times mended? The Abbot, starting plumb up, *se erigens*, answered: "Know ye, for certain, that I will in no wise do this thing; nor is there any man who could force me to consent thereto. But I will open the doors of the church: Let him that likes enter; let him that dares come forward!" Emphatic words which created a sensation round the woolsack. For the Justiciaries of the *Scaccarium* answered, 'with oaths, each for himself: "I won't come forward, for my share; nor will I, nor I! The distant and absent who offended him, Saint Edmund has been known to punish fearfully; much more will he those close by, who lay violent hands on his coat, and would strip it off!" These things being said, the Shrine was not meddled with, nor any ransom levied for it.'[†]

For Lords of the Treasury have in all times their impassable limits, be it by 'force of public opinion' or otherwise; and, in those days, a heavenly Awe overshadowed and encompassed, as it still ought and must, all earthly Business whatsoever.

30 * Jocelini Chronica, pp. 39, 40.

 † Jocelini Chronica, p. 71.

CHAPTER XIV.

HENRY OF ESSEX.

OF St. Edmund's fearful avengements have they not the remarkablest instance still before their eyes? He that will go to Reading Monastery may find there, now tonsured into a mournful penitent Monk, the once proud Henry Earl of Essex; and discern how St. Edmund punishes terribly yet with mercy! This Narrative is too significant to be omitted as a Document of the Time. Our Lord Abbot, once on a visit at Reading, heard the particulars from Henry's own mouth; and thereupon charged one of his Monks to write it down,—as accordingly the Monk has done, in ambitious rhetorical Latin; inserting the same, as episode, among Jocelin's garrulous leaves. Read it here; with ancient yet with modern eyes. 5 10

Henry Earl of Essex, Standard-bearer of England, had high places and emoluments; had a haughty high soul, yet with various flaws, or rather with one many-branched flaw and crack, running through the texture of it. For example, did he not treat Gilbert de Cereville in the most shocking manner? He cast Gilbert into prison; and with chains and slow torments wore the life out of him there. And Gilbert's crime was understood to be only that of innocent Joseph: the Lady Essex was a Potiphar's Wife, and had accused poor Gilbert! Other cracks, and branches of that widespread flaw in the Standard-bearer's soul we could point out: but indeed the main stem and trunk of all is too visible in this, That he had no right reverence for the Heavenly in 15 20

Man,—that far from shewing due reverence to St. Edmund, he did not even shew him common justice. While others in the Eastern Counties were adorning and enlarging with rich gifts St. Edmund's resting-place, which had become a city of refuge for many things, this Earl of Essex flatly defrauded him, by violence or quirk of law, of five shillings yearly, and converted said sum to his own poor uses! Nay, in another case of litigation, the unjust Standard-bearer, for his own profit, asserting that the cause belonged not to St. Edmund's Court, but to *his* in Lailand Hundred, 'involved us in travellings and innumerable expenses, vexing the servants of St. Edmund for a long tract of time.' In short, he is without reverence for the Heavenly, this Standard-bearer; reveres only the Earthly, Gold-coined; and has a most morbid lamentable flaw in the texture of him. It cannot come to good.

Accordingly, the same flaw, or St.-Vitus *tic*, manifests itself ere long in another way. In the year 1157, he went with his Standard to attend King Henry, our blessed Sovereign (whom *we* saw afterwards at Waltham), in his War with the Welsh. A somewhat disastrous War; in which while King Henry and his force were struggling to retreat Parthian-like, endless clouds of exasperated Welshmen hemming them in, and now we had come to the 'difficult pass of Coleshelle,' and as it were to the nick of destruction,—Henry Earl of Essex shrieks out on a sudden (blinded doubtless by his inner flaw, or 'evil genius' as some name it), That King Henry is killed, That all is lost,—and flings down his Standard to shift for itself there! And, certainly enough, all *had* been lost, had all men been as he;—had not brave men, without such miserable jerking *tic-douloureux* in the souls of them, come dashing up, with blazing swords and looks, and asserted That nothing was lost yet, that all must be regained yet. In this manner King Henry and his force got safely retreated, Parthian-like, from the pass of Coleshelle and the Welsh War.* But, once home again, Earl Robert de Montfort, a kinsman of this Standard-bearer's, rises up in the King's Assembly to declare openly that such a man is unfit for bearing English Standards, being in fact either a special traitor, or something almost worse, a coward namely, or universal traitor. Wager of Battle in consequence; solemn Duel, by the King's appointment, 'in a cer-

* See Lyttelton's Henry II., ii. 384.

tain Island of the Thames-stream at Reading, *apud Radingas*, short way from the Abbey there.' King, Peers, and an immense multitude of people, on such scaffoldings and heights as they can come at, are gathered round, to see what issue the business will take. The business takes this bad issue, in our Monk's own words faithfully rendered: 5

'And it came to pass, while Robert de Montfort thundered on him manfully (*viriliter intonâsset*) with hard and frequent strokes, and a valiant beginning promised the fruit of victory, Henry of Essex, rather giving way, glanced round on all sides; and lo, at the rim of the horizon, on the confines of the River and land, he discerned the glorious King and Martyr Edmund, in shining armour, and as if hovering in the air; looking towards him with severe countenance, nodding his head with a mien and motion of austere anger. At St. Edmund's hand there stood also another Knight, Gilbert de Cerville, whose armour was not so splendid, whose stature was less gigantic; casting vengeful looks at him. This he seeing with his eyes, remembered that old crime brings new shame. And now wholly desperate, and changing reason into violence, he took the part of one blindly attacking, not skilfully defending. Who while he struck fiercely was more fiercely struck; and so, in short, fell down vanquished, and it was thought, slain. As he lay there for dead, his kinsmen, Magnates of England, besought the King, that the Monks of Reading might have leave to bury him. However, he proved not to be dead, but got well again among them; and now, with recovered health, assuming the Regular Habit, he strove to wipe out the stain of his former life, to cleanse the long week of his dissolute history by at least a purifying sabbath, and cultivate the studies of Virtue into fruits of eternal Felicity.*' 10 15 20 25

Thus does the Conscience of man project itself athwart whatsoever of knowledge or surmise, of imagination, understanding, faculty, acquirement or natural disposition he has in him; and, like light through coloured glass, paint strange pictures 'on the rim of the horizon' and elsewhere! Truly, this same 'sense of the Infinite nature of Duty' is the central part of all with us; a ray as of Eternity and Immortality immured in dusky many-coloured Time and its deaths and births. 30 35

* Jocelini Chronica, p. 52.

Your 'coloured glass' varies so much from century to century;—and, in certain money-making game-preserving centuries, it gets so terribly opaque! Not a Heaven with cherubim surrounds you then, but a kind of vacant leaden-coloured Hell. One day it will again cease to be
 5 *opaque*, this 'coloured glass.' Nay, may it not become at once translucent and *un*coloured? Painting no Pictures more for us, but only the everlasting Azure itself? That will be a right glorious consummation!—

Saint Edmund from the horizon's edge, in shining armour, threatening the misdoer in his hour of extreme need: it is beautiful, it is
 10 great and true. So old, yet so modern, actual; true yet for every one of us, as for Henry the Earl and Monk! A glimpse as of the Deepest in Man's Destiny, which is the same for all times and ages. Yes, Henry my brother, there in thy extreme need, thy soul is *lamed*; and behold thou canst not so much as fight! For Justice and Reverence *are* the
 15 everlasting central Law of this Universe; and to forget them, and have all the Universe against one, God and one's own Self for enemies, and only the Devil and the Dragons for friends, is not that a 'lameness' like few? That some shining armed St. Edmund hang minatory on thy
 20 horizon, that infinite sulphur lakes hang minatory, or do not now hang,—this alters no whit the eternal fact of the thing. I say, thy soul is lamed, and the God and all Godlike in it marred: lamed, paralytic, tending towards baleful eternal death, whether thou know it or not;—nay hadst thou never known it, that surely had been worst of all!—

Thus, at any rate, by the heavenly Awe that overshadows earthly
 25 Business, does Samson, readily in those days, save St. Edmund's Shrine, and innumerable still more precious things.

CHAPTER XV.

PRACTICAL-DEVOTIONAL.

HERE indeed, perhaps by rule of antagonisms, may be the place to mention that, after King Richard's return, there was a liberty of touring given to the fighting men of England: that a Tournament was proclaimed in the Abbot's domain, 'between Thetford and St. Edmundsbury,'—perhaps in the Euston region on Fakenham Heights midway between these two localities: that it was publicly prohibited by our Lord Abbot; and nevertheless was held in spite of him,—and by the parties as would seem, considered 'a gentle and free passage of arms.'

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Nay, next year, there came to the same spot four-and-twenty young men, sons of Nobles, for another passage of arms; who, having completed the same, all rode into St. Edmundsbury to lodge for the night. Here is modesty! Our Lord Abbot, being instructed of it, ordered the Gates to be closed; the whole party shut in. The morrow was the Vigil of the Apostles Peter and Paul; no outgate on the morrow. Giving their promise not to depart without permission, those four-and-twenty young bloods dieted all that day (*manducaverunt*) with the Lord Abbot, waiting for trial on the morrow. 'But after dinner,'—mark it, posterity!—'the Lord Abbot retiring into his *Thalamus*, they all started up, and began caroling and singing (*carolare et cantare*); sending into the Town for wine; drinking, and afterwards howling (*ululantes*);—totally depriving the Abbot and Convent of their afternoon's nap; doing all this in derision of the Lord Abbot,

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and spending in such fashion the whole day till evening, nor would they desist at the Lord Abbot's order! Night coming on, they broke the bolts of the Town-Gates, and went off by violence!*" Was the like ever heard of? The roysterous young dogs; caroling, howling, breaking the Lord Abbot's sleep,—after that sinful chivalry cock-fight of theirs! They too are a feature of distant centuries, as of near ones. St. Edmund on the edge of your horizon, or whatever else there, young scamps, in the dandy state, whether cased in iron or in whalebone, begin to caper and carol on the green Earth! Our Lord Abbot excommunicated most of them; and they gradually came in for repentance.

Excommunication is a great recipe with our Lord Abbot; the prevailing purifier in those ages. Thus when the Townsfolk and Monkmenials quarrelled once at the Christmas Mysteries in St. Edmund's Churchyard, and 'from words it came to cuffs, and from cuffs to cuttings and the effusion of blood,'—our Lord Abbot excommunicates sixty of the rioters, with bell, book and candle (*accensis candelis*), at one stroke.† Whereupon they all come suppliant, indeed nearly naked, 'nothing on but their breeches, *omnino nudi præter femoralia*, and prostrate themselves at the Church door.' Figure that!

In fact, by excommunication or persuasion, by impetuosity of driving or adroitness in leading, this Abbot, it is now becoming plain everywhere, is a man that generally remains master at last. He tempers his medicine to the malady, now hot, now cool; prudent though fiery, an eminently practical man. Nay sometimes in his adroit practice there are swift turns almost of a surprising nature! Once, for example, it chanced that Geoffrey Riddell Bishop of Ely, a Prelate rather troublesome to our Abbot, made a request of him for timber from his woods towards certain edifices going on at Glemsford. The Abbot, a great builder himself, disliked the request; could not however give it a negative. While he lay, therefore, at his Manorhouse of Melford not long after, there comes to him one of the Lord Bishop's men or monks, with a message from his Lordship, "That he now begged permission to cut down the requisite trees in Elmswell Wood,"—so said the monk: *Elmswell*, where there are no trees but scrubs and

* Jocelini Chronica, p. 40.

† Ibid. p. 68.

shrubs, instead of *Elmset*, our true *nemus*, and high-towering oak-wood, here on Melford Manor! *Elmswell*? The Lord Abbot, in surprise, inquires privily of Richard his Forester; Richard answers that my Lord of Ely has already had his *carpentarii* in *Elmset*, and marked out for his own use all the best trees in the compass of it. Abbot Samson thereupon answers the monk: “*Elmswell*? Yes surely, be it as my Lord Bishop wishes.” The successful monk, on the morrow morning, hastens home to Ely; but, on the morrow morning, ‘directly after mass,’ Abbot Samson too was busy! The successful monk, arriving at Ely, is rated for a goose and an owl; is ordered back to say that *Elmset* was the place meant. Alas, on arriving at *Elmset*, he finds the Bishop’s trees, they ‘and a hundred more,’ all felled and piled, and the stamp of St. Edmund’s Monastery burnt into them,—for roofing of the great tower we are building there! Your importunate Bishop must seek wood for *Glemsford* edifices in some other *nemus* than this. A practical Abbot!

We said withal there was a terrible flash of anger in him. Witness his address to old Herbert the Dean, who in a too thrifty manner has erected a wind-mill for himself on his glebe-lands at *Haberdon*. On the morrow, after mass, our Lord Abbot orders the *Cellerarius* to send off his carpenters to demolish the said structure *brevi manu*, and lay up the wood in safe keeping. Old Dean Herbert, hearing what was toward, comes tottering along hither, to plead humbly for himself and his mill. The Abbot answers: “I am obliged to thee as if thou hadst cut off both my feet! By God’s face, *per os Dei*, I will not eat bread, till that fabric be torn in pieces. Thou art an old man, and shouldst have known that neither the King nor his Justiciary dare change aught within the Liberties without consent of Abbot and Convent: and thou hast presumed on such a thing? I tell thee it will *not* be without damage to my mills; for the Townsfolk will go to thy mill, and grind their corn (*bladum suum*) at their own good pleasure; nor can I hinder them, since they are free men. I will allow no new mills on such principle. Away, away; before thou gettest home again, thou shalt see what thy mill has grown to!”*—The very reverend, the old Dean totters home again in all haste; tears the mill in pieces by

* *Jocelini Chronica*, p. 43.

his own *carpentarii*, to save at least the timber; and Abbot Samson's workmen, coming up, find the ground already clear of it.

5 Easy to bully down poor old rural Deans, and blow their windmills
away: but who is the man that dare abide King Richard's anger; cross
the Lion in his path, and take him by the whiskers! Abbot Samson
too; he is that man, with justice on his side. The case was this. Adam
de Cokefield, one of the chief feudatories of St. Edmund, and a
principal man in the Eastern Counties, died, leaving large possessions,
10 and for heiress a daughter of three months; who by clear law, as all
men know, became thus Abbot Samson's ward; whom accordingly he
proceeded to dispose of to such person as seemed fittest. But now
King Richard has another person in view, to whom the little ward and
her great possessions were a suitable thing. He by letter requests that
15 Abbot Samson will have the goodness to give her to this person.
Abbot Samson, with deep humility, replies that she is already given.
New letters from Richard, of severer tenor; answered with new deep
humilities, with gifts and entreaties, with no promise of obedience.
King Richard's ire is kindled; messengers arrive at St. Edmundsbury,
20 with emphatic message to obey or tremble! Abbot Samson, wisely
silent as to the King's threats, makes answer: "The King can send if
he will, and seize the ward: force and power he has to do his pleasure,
and abolish the whole Abbey. But I, for my part, never can be bent
to wish this that he seeks, nor shall it by me be ever done. For there
25 is danger lest such things be made a precedent of, to the prejudice of
my successors. *Videat Altissimus*, Let the Most High look on it.
Whatsoever thing shall befall I will patiently endure."

 Such was Abbot Samson's deliberate decision. Why not? Cœur-de-
Lion is very dreadful, but not the dreadfullest. *Videat Altissimus*. I
30 reverence Cœur-de-Lion to the marrow of my bones, and will in all
right things be *homo suus*; but it is not, properly speaking, with terror,
with any fear at all. On the whole, have not I looked on the face of
'Satan with outspread wings;' steadily into Hellfire these seven-and-
forty years;—and was not melted into terror even at that, such the
35 Lord's goodness to me? Cœur-de-Lion!

 Richard swore tornado oaths, worse than our armies in Flanders,
To be revenged on that proud Priest. But in the end he discovered
that the Priest was right; and forgave him, and even loved him. 'King

Richard wrote, soon after, to Abbot Samson, That he wanted one or two of the St. Edmundsbury dogs, which he heard were good.' Abbot Samson sent him dogs of the best; Richard replied by the present of a ring which Pope Innocent the Third had given him. Thou brave Richard, thou brave Samson! Richard too, I suppose, 'loved a man,' and knew one when he saw him. 5

No one will accuse our Lord Abbot of wanting worldly wisdom, due interest in worldly things. A skilful man; full of cunning insight, lively interests; always discerning the road to his object, be it circuit, be it short-cut, and victoriously travelling forward thereon. Nay rather it might seem, from Jocelin's Narrative, as if he had his eye all but exclusively directed on terrestrial matters, and was much too secular for a devout man. But this too if we examine it, was right. For it is *in* the world that a man, devout or other, has his life to lead, his work waiting to be done. The basis of Abbot Samson's, we shall discover, was truly religion, after all. Returning from his dusty pilgrimage, with such welcome as we saw, 'he sat down at the foot of St. Edmund's Shrine.' Not a talking theory that; no, a silent practice: Thou St. Edmund with what lies in thee, thou now must help me or none will! 10 15 20

This also is a significant fact: the zealous interest our Abbot took in the Crusades. To all noble Christian hearts of that era, what earthly enterprise so noble? 'When Henry II, having taken the cross, came to St. Edmund's, to pay his devotions before setting out, the Abbot secretly made for himself a cross of linen cloth, and, holding this in one hand and a threaded needle in the other, asked leave of the King to assume it!' The King could not spare Samson out of England;—the King himself indeed never went. But the Abbot's eye was set on the Holy Sepulchre, as on the spot of this Earth where the true cause of Heaven was deciding itself. 'At the retaking of Jerusalem by the Pagans, Abbot Samson put on a cilice and hair-shirt, and wore undergarments of hair-cloth ever after; he abstained also from flesh and flesh-meats (*carne et carneis*) thenceforth to the end of his life.' Like a dark cloud eclipsing the hopes of Christendom, those tidings cast their shadow over St. Edmundsbury too: Shall Samson Abbas take pleasure while Christ's Tomb is in the hands of the Infidel? Samson, in pain of body, shall daily be reminded of it, daily be admonished to grieve for it. 25 30 35

The great antique heart: how like a child's in its simplicity, like a man's in its earnest solemnity and depth! Heaven lies over him where-soever he goes or stands on the Earth; making all the Earth a mystic Temple to him, the Earth's business all a kind of worship. Glimpses of bright creatures flash in the common sunlight; angels yet hover doing God's messages among men: that rainbow was set in the clouds by the hand of God! Wonder, miracle encompass the man; he lives in an element of miracle; Heaven's splendour over his head, Hell's darkness under his feet. A great Law of Duty, high as these two Infinitudes, dwarfing all else, annihilating all else,—making royal Richard as small as peasant Samson, smaller if need be!—The 'imaginative faculties'? 'Rude poetic ages'? The 'primeval poetic element'? O for God's sake, good reader, talk no more of all that! It was not a Dilettantism this of Abbot Samson. It was a Reality, and it is one. The garment only of it is dead; the essence of it lives through all Time and all Eternity!—

And truly, as we said above, is not this comparative silence of Abbot Samson as to his religion, precisely the healthiest sign of him and of it? 'The Unconscious is the alone Complete.' Abbot Samson all along a busy working man, as all men are bound to be, his religion, his worship was like his daily bread to him;—which he did not take the trouble to talk much about; which he merely ate at stated intervals, and lived and did his work upon! This is Abbot Samson's Catholicism of the Twelfth Century;—something like the *Ism* of all true men in all true centuries, I fancy! Alas, compared with any of the *Isms* current in these poor days, what a thing! Compared with the respectablest morbid struggling Methodism, never so earnest; with the respectablest ghastly, dead or galvanised, Dilettantism, never so spasmodic!

Methodism with its eye forever turned on its own navel; asking itself with torturing anxiety of Hope and Fear, "Am I right, am I wrong? Shall I be saved, shall I not be damned?"—what is this, at bottom, but a new phasis of *Egoism* stretched out into the Infinite; not always the heavenlier for its infinitude! Brother, so soon as possible, endeavour to rise above all that. "Thou *art* wrong; thou art like to be damned:" consider that as the fact, reconcile thyself even to that, if thou be a man;—then first is the devouring Universe subdued

under thee, and from the black murk of midnight and noise of greedy Acheron, dawn as of an everlasting morning, how far above all Hope and all Fear, springs for thee, enlightening thy steep path, awakening in thy heart celestial Memnon's music!

But of our Dilettantisms, and galvanised Dilettantisms; of Puseyism—O Heavens, what shall we say of Puseyism, in comparison to Twelfth Century Catholicism? Little or nothing; for indeed it is a matter to strike one dumb.

The Builder of this Universe was wise,
 He plann'd all souls, all systems, planets, particles:
 The Plan He shap'd all Worlds and Æons by
 Was——Heavens!—Was thy small Nine-and-thirty Articles?

That certain human souls, living on this practical Earth, should think to save themselves and a ruined world by noisy theoretic demonstrations and laudations of *the* Church, instead of some unnoisy, unconscious, but *practical*, total, heart-and-soul demonstration of *a* Church: this, in the circle of revolving ages, this also was a thing we were to see. A kind of penultimate thing, precursor of very strange consummations; last thing but one? If there is no atmosphere, what will it serve a man to demonstrate the excellence of lungs? How much profitabler when you can, like Abbot Samson, breathe; and go along your way!

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CHAPTER XVI.

ST. EDMUND.

ABBOT SAMSON built many useful, many pious edifices; human dwellings, churches, church-steeple, barns;—all fallen now and vanished, but useful while they stood. He built and endowed ‘the Hospital of Babwell;’ built ‘fit houses for the St. Edmundsbury Schools.’ Many
5 are the roofs once ‘thatched with reeds’ which he ‘caused to be covered with tiles;’ or if they were churches, probably ‘with lead.’ For all ruinous incomplete things, buildings or other, were an eye-sorrow to the man. We saw his ‘great tower of St. Edmund’s;’ or at least the roof-timbers of it lying cut and stamped in Elmset Wood. To change
10 combustible decaying reed-thatch into tile or lead, and material, still more, moral wreck into raintight order, what a comfort to Samson!

One of the things he could not in any wise but rebuild was the great Altar, aloft on which stood the Shrine itself; the great Altar,
15 which had been damaged by fire, by the careless rubbish and careless candle of two somnolent Monks, one night,—the Shrine escaping almost as if by miracle! Abbot Samson read his Monks a severe lecture: “A Dream one of us had that he saw St. Edmund naked and in lamentable plight. Know ye the interpretation of that Dream? St.
20 Edmund proclaims himself naked, because ye defraud the naked Poor of your old clothes, and give with reluctance what ye are bound to give them of meat and drink: the idleness moreover and negligence of the Sacristan and his people is too evident from the late misfortune

by fire. Well might our Holy Martyr seem to lie cast out from his Shrine, and say with groans that he was stript of his garments, and wasted with hunger and thirst!"

This is Abbot Samson's interpretation of the Dream;—diametrically the reverse of that given by the Monks themselves, who scruple not to say privily, "It is *we* that are the naked and famished limbs of the Martyr; we whom the Abbot curtails of all our privileges, setting his own official to control our very Cellarer!" Abbot Samson adds, that this judgement by fire has fallen upon them for murmuring about their meat and drink.

Clearly enough, meanwhile, the Altar, whatever the burning of it mean or foreshadow, must needs be reedified. Abbot Samson reedifies it, all of polished marble; with the highest stretch of art and sumptuosity, reembellishes the Shrine for which it is to serve as pediment. Nay farther, as had ever been among his prayers, he enjoys, he sinner, a glimpse of the glorious Martyr's very Body in the process; having solemnly opened the *Loculus*, Chest or sacred Coffin, for that purpose. It is the culminating moment of Abbot Samson's life. Bozzy Jocelin himself rises into a kind of Psalmist solemnity on this occasion; the laziest monk 'weeps' warm tears, as *Te Deum* is sung.

Very strange;—how far vanished from us in these unworshipping ages of ours! The Patriot Hampden, best beatified man we have, had lain in like manner some two centuries in his narrow home, when certain dignitaries of us, 'and twelve grave-diggers with pulleys,' raised him also up, under cloud of night; cut off his arm with penknives, pulled the scalp off his head,—and otherwise worshipped our Hero Saint in the most amazing manner!* Let the modern eye look earnestly on that old midnight hour in St. Edmundsbury Church, shining yet on us, ruddy-bright, through the depths of seven hundred years; and consider mournfully what our Hero-worship once was, and what it now is! We translate with all the fidelity we can:

'The Festival of St. Edmund now approaching, the marble blocks are polished, and all things are in readiness for lifting of the Shrine to its new place. A fast of three days was held by all the people, the cause and meaning thereof being publicly set forth to them. The

* Annual Register (year 1828, Chronicle, p. 93), Gentleman's Magazine, &c. &c.

Abbot announces to the Convent that all must prepare themselves for transferring of the Shrine, and appoints time and way for the work. Coming therefore that night to matins, we found the great Shrine (*feretrum magnum*) raised upon the Altar, but empty; covered all
 5 over with white doeskin leather, fixed to the wood with silver nails; but one pannel of the Shrine was left down below, and resting thereon, beside its old column of the Church, the Loculus with the Sacred Body yet lay where it was wont. Praises being sung, we all proceeded to commence our disciplines (*ad disciplinas suscipiendas*). These finished,
 10 the Abbot and certain with him are clothed in their albs; and, approaching reverently, set about uncovering the Loculus. There was an outer cloth of linen, enwrapping the Loculus and all; this we found tied on the upper side with strings of its own: within this was a cloth of silk, and then another linen cloth, and then a third; and so
 15 at last the Loculus was uncovered, and seen resting on a little tray of wood, that the bottom of it might not be injured by the stone. Over the breast of the Martyr, there lay, fixed to the surface of the Loculus, a Golden Angel about the length of a human foot; holding in one hand a golden sword, and in the other a banner: under this there was
 20 a hole in the lid of the Loculus, on which the ancient servants of the Martyr had been wont to lay their hands for touching the Sacred Body. And over the figure of the Angel was this verse inscribed:

*Martiris ecce zoma servat Michaelis agalma.**

25 At the head and foot of the Loculus were iron rings whereby it could be lifted.

‘Lifting the Loculus and Body, therefore, they carried it to the Altar; and I put-to my sinful hand to help in carrying, though the
 30 Abbot had commanded that none should approach except called. And the Loculus was placed in the Shrine; and the pannel it had stood on was put in its place, and the Shrine for the present closed. We all thought that the Abbot would shew the Loculus to the people; and bring out the Sacred Body again, at a certain period of the
 35 Festival. But in this we were wofully mistaken, as the sequel shews.

* This is the Martyr’s Garment, which Michael’s Image guards.

‘For in the fourth holiday of the Festival, while the Convent were all singing *Completorium*, our Lord Abbot spoke privily with the Sacristan and Walter the Medicus; and order was taken that twelve of the Brethren should be appointed against midnight, who were strong for carrying the pannel-planks of the Shrine, and skilful in unfixing them, and putting them together again. The Abbot then said that it was among his prayers to look once upon the Body of his Patron; and that he wished the Sacristan and Walter the Medicus to be with him. The Twelve appointed Brethren were these: The Abbot’s two Chaplains, the two Keepers of the Shrine, the two Masters of the Vestry; and six more, namely, the Sacristan Hugo, Walter the Medicus, Augustin, William of Dice, Robert, and Richard. I, alas, was not of the number.

‘The Convent therefore being all asleep, these Twelve, clothed in their albs, with the Abbot, assembled at the Altar; and opening a pannel of the Shrine, they took out the Loculus; laid it on a table, near where the Shrine used to be; and made ready for unfastening the lid, which was joined and fixed to the Loculus with sixteen very long nails. Which when, with difficulty, they had done, all except the two forenamed associates are ordered to draw back. The Abbot and they two were alone privileged to look in. The Loculus was so filled with the Sacred Body that you could scarcely put a needle between the head and the wood, or between the feet and the wood: the head lay united to the body, a little raised with a small pillow. But the Abbot, looking close, found now a silk cloth veiling the whole Body, and then a linen cloth of wondrous whiteness; and upon the head was spread a small linen cloth, and then another small and most fine silk cloth, as if it were the veil of a nun. These coverings being lifted off, they found now the Sacred Body all wrapt in linen; and so at length the lineaments of the same appeared. But here the Abbot stopped; saying he durst not proceed farther, or look at the sacred flesh naked. Taking the head between his hands, he thus spake groaning: “Glorious Martyr, holy Edmund, blessed be the hour when thou wert born. Glorious Martyr, turn it not to my perdition that I have so dared to touch thee, I miserable and sinful; thou knowest my devout love, and the intention of my mind.” And proceeding, he touched the eyes; and the nose, which was very massive and prominent (*valde grossum et valde eminentem*); and then he touched the breast and arms; and

raising the left arm he touched the fingers, and placed his own fingers between the sacred fingers. And proceeding he found the feet standing stiff up, like the feet of a man dead yesterday; and he touched the toes, and counted them (*tangendo numeravit*).

5 ‘And now it was agreed that the other Brethren should be called forward to see the miracles; and accordingly those ten now advanced, and along with them six others who had stolen in without the Abbot’s assent, namely, Walter of St. Alban’s, Hugh the Infirmarius, Gilbert brother of the Prior, Richard of Henham, Jocellus our Cellarer, and Turstan the Little; and all these saw the Sacred Body, but
10 Turstan alone of them put forth his hand, and touched the Saint’s knees and feet. And that there might be abundance of witnesses, one of our Brethren, John of Dice, sitting on the roof of the Church, with the servants of the Vestry, and looking through, clearly saw all these
15 things.’

 What a scene; shining luminous effulgent, as the lamps of St. Edmund do, through the dark Night; John of Dice, with vestrymen, clambering on the roof to look through; the Convent all asleep, and
20 the Earth all asleep,—and since then, Seven Centuries of Time mostly gone to sleep! Yes, there, sure enough, is the martyred Body of Edmund landlord of the Eastern Counties, who, nobly doing what he liked with his own, was slain three hundred years ago: and a noble awe surrounds the memory of him, symbol and promoter of many
25 other right noble things.

 But have not we now advanced to strange new stages of Hero-worship, now in the little Church of Hampden, with our penknives out, and twelve grave-diggers with pulleys? The manner of men’s Hero-worship, verily it is the innermost fact of their existence, and determines all the rest,—at public hustings, in private drawing-rooms, in church, in market, and wherever else. Have true reverence, and what indeed is inseparable therefrom, reverence the right man, all is well; have sham-reverence, and what also follows, greet with it the wrong man, then all is ill, and there is nothing well. Alas, if Hero-worship become Dilettantism, and all except Mammonism be a vain
30 grimace, how much, in this most earnest Earth, has gone and is evermore going to fatal destruction, and lies wasting in quiet lazy ruin, no man regarding it! Till at length no heavenly *Ism* any longer
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coming down upon us, *Isms* from the other quarter have to mount up. For the Earth, I say, is an earnest place; Life is no grimace, but a most serious fact. And so, under universal Dilettantism much having been stript bare, not the souls of men only, but their very bodies and bread-cupboards having been stript bare, and life now no longer possible,—all is reduced to desperation, to the iron law of Necessity and very Fact again; and to temper Dilettantism, and astonish it, and burn it up with infernal fire, arises Chartism, *Bare-back-ism*, Sansculottism so-called! May the gods, and what of unworshipped heroes still remain among us, avert the omen.—

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But however this may be, St. Edmund's *Loculus*, we find, has the veils of silk and linen reverently replaced, the lid fastened down again with its sixteen ancient nails; is wrapt in a new costly covering of silk, the gift of Hubert Archbishop of Canterbury: and through the sky-window John of Dice sees it lifted to its place in the Shrine, the pannels of this latter duly refixed, fit parchment documents being introduced withal;—and now John and his vestrymen can slide down from the roof, for all is over, and the Convent wholly awakens to matins. 'When we assembled to sing matins,' says Jocelin, 'and understood what had been done, grief took hold of all that had not seen these things, each saying to himself, "Alas, I was deceived." Matins over, the Abbot called the Convent to the great Altar; and briefly recounting the matter, alleged that it had not been in his power, nor was it permissible or fit, to invite us all to the sight of such things. At hearing of which, we all wept, and with tears sang *Te Deum laudamus*; and hastened to toll the bells in the Choir.'

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Stupid blockheads, to reverence their St. Edmund's dead Body in this manner? Yes, brother;—and yet, on the whole, who knows how to reverence the Body of a Man? It is the most reverend phenomenon under this Sun. For the Highest God dwells visible in that mystic unfathomable Visibility, which calls itself "I" on the Earth. 'Bending before men,' says Novalis, 'is a reverence done to this Revelation in the Flesh. We touch Heaven when we lay our hand on a human Body.' And the Body of one Dead;—a temple where the Hero-soul once was and now is not: O, all mystery, all pity, all mute *awe* and wonder; *Supernaturalism* brought home to the very dullest; Eternity laid open, and the nether Darkness and the upper Light-Kingdoms;—

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do conjoin there, or exist nowhere! Sauerteig used to say to me, in his peculiar way: "A Chancery Lawsuit; justice, nay justice in mere money, denied a man, for all his pleading, till twenty, till forty years of his Life are gone seeking it: and a Cockney Funeral, Death revered by hatchments, horsehair, brass-lacker, and unconcerned bipeds carrying long poles and bags of black silk:—are not these two reverences, this reverence for Death and that reverence for Life, a notable pair of reverences among you English?"

Abbot Samson, at this culminating point of his existence, may, and indeed must, be left to vanish with his Life-scenery from the eyes of modern men. He had to run into France, to settle with King Richard for the military service there of his St. Edmundsbury Knights; and with great labour got it done. He had to decide on the dilapidated Coventry Monks; and with great labour, and much pleading and journeying, got them reinstated; dined with them all, and with the 'Masters of the Schools of Oxneford,'—the veritable Oxford *Caput* sitting there at dinner, in a dim but undeniable manner, in the City of Peeping Tom! He had, not without labour, to controvert the intrusive Bishop of Ely, the intrusive Abbot of Cluny. Magnanimous Samson, his Life is but a labour and a journey; a bustling and a justling, till the still Night come. He is sent for again over sea to advise King Richard touching certain Peers of England, who had taken the cross, but never followed it to Palestine; whom the Pope is inquiring after. The magnanimous Abbot makes preparation for departure; departs, and——and Jocelin's Boswellian Narrative, suddenly shorn through by the scissars of Destiny, *ends*. There are no words more; but a black line, and leaves of blank paper. Irremediable: the miraculous hand that held all this theatric-machinery, suddenly quits hold; impenetrable Time-Curtains rush down; in the mind's eye all is again dark, void; with loud dinning in the mind's ear, our real-phantasmagory of St. Edmundsbury plunges into the bosom of the Twelfth Century again, and all is over. Monks, Abbot, Hero-worship, Government, Obedience, Cœur-de-Lion and St. Edmund's Shrine, vanish like Mirza's Vision; and there is nothing left but a mutilated black ruin amid green botanic expanses, and oxen, sheep and dilet-tanti pasturing in their places.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BEGINNINGS.

WHAT a singular shape of a man, shape of a Time, have we in this Abbot Samson and his history; how strangely do modes, creeds, formularies, and the date and place of a man's birth, modify the figure of the man!

Formulas too, as we call them, have a *reality* in Human Life. They are real as the very *skin* and *muscular tissue* of a Man's Life; and a most blessed indispensable thing, so long as they have *vitality* withal, and are a *living* skin and tissue to him! No man, or man's life, can go abroad and do business in the world without skin and tissues. No; first of all these have to fashion themselves,—as indeed they spontaneously and inevitably do. Foam itself, and this is worth thinking of, can harden into oyster-shell; all living objects do by necessity form to themselves a skin. 5 10

And yet, again, when a man's Formulas become *dead*; as all Formulas, in the progress of living growth, are very sure to do! When the poor man's integuments, no longer nourished from within, become dead skin, mere adscititious leather and callosity, wearing thicker and thicker, uglier and uglier; till no *heart* any longer can be felt beating through them, so thick, callous, calcified are they; and all over it has now grown mere calcified oyster-shell, or were it polished mother-of-pearl, inwards almost to the very heart of the poor man:—yes then, you may say, his usefulness once more is quite obstructed; once more, he cannot go abroad and do business in the world; it is time that *he* 15 20

take to bed, and prepare for departure which cannot now be distant!— —

Ubi homines sunt modi sunt. Habit is the deepest law of human nature. It is our supreme strength,—if also in certain circumstances our miserabest weakness.—From Stoke to Stowe is as yet a field, all pathless, untrodden: from Stoke where I live, to Stowe where I have to make my merchandises, perform my businesses, consult my heavenly oracles, there is as yet no path or human footprint; and I, impelled by such necessities, must nevertheless undertake the journey. Let me go once, scanning my way with any earnestness of outlook, and successfully arriving, my footprints are an invitation to me a second time to go by the same way. It is easier than any other way: the industry of ‘scanning’ lies already invested in it for me; I can go this time with less of scanning, or without scanning at all. Nay the very sight of my footprints, what a comfort for me; and in a degree for all my brethren of mankind! The footprints are trodden and re-trodden; the path wears ever broader, smoother, into a broad highway where even wheels can run, and many travel it;—till—till the Town of Stowe disappear from that locality (as towns have been known to do), or no merchandising, heavenly oracle, or real business any longer exist for one there: then why should anybody travel the way?—Habit is our primal, fundamental law; Habit and Imitation, there is nothing more perennial in us than these two. They are the source of all Working and all Apprenticeship, of all Practice and all Learning, in this world.

Yes, the wise man too speaks, and acts, in Formulas; all men do so. And in general, the more completely cased with Formulas a man may be, the safer, happier is it for him. Thou who, in an All of rotten Formulas, seemest to stand nigh bare, having indignantly shaken off the superannuated rags and unsound callosities of Formulas,—consider how thou too art still clothed! This English Nationality, whatsoever from uncounted ages is genuine and a fact among thy native People, in their words and ways: all this, has it not made for thee a skin or second-skin, adhesive actually as thy natural skin? This thou hast not stript off, this thou wilt never strip off: the humour that thy mother gave thee has to shew itself through this. A common, or it may be an uncommon Englishman thou art: but good Heavens, what sort of Arab, Chinaman, Jew-Clothesman, Turk, Hindoo, African

Mandingo, wouldst thou have been, *thou* with those mother qualities of thine!

It strikes me dumb to look over the long series of faces, such as any full Church, Courthouse, London-Tavern Meeting, or miscellany of men will shew them. Some score or two of years ago, all these were little red coloured pulpy infants; each of them capable of being kneaded, baked into any social form you chose: yet see now how they are fixed and hardened,—into artizans, artists, clergy, gentry, learned serjeants, unlearned dandies, and can and shall now be nothing else henceforth!

Mark on that nose the colour left by too copious Port and viands; to which the profuse cravat with exorbitant breastpin, and the fixed, forward, and as it were menacing glance of the eyes correspond. That is a ‘man of business;’ prosperous manufacturer, house-contractor, engineer, law-manager; his eye, nose, cravat have, in such work and fortune, got such a character: deny him not thy praise, thy pity. Pity him too, the Hard-handed, with bony brow, rudely combed hair, eyes looking out as in labour, in difficulty and uncertainty; rude mouth, the lips coarse, loose, as in hard toil and life long fatigue they have got the habit of hanging:—hast thou seen aught more touching than the rude intelligence, so cramped, yet energetic, unsubduable, true, which looks out of that marred visage? Alas, and his poor wife, with her own hands, washed that cotton neckcloth for him, buttoned that coarse shirt, sent him forth creditably trimmed as she could. In such imprisonment lives he for his part; man cannot now deliver him: the red pulpy infant has been baked and fashioned *so*.

Or what kind of baking was it that this other brother-mortal got, which has baked him into the genus Dandy? Elegant Vacuum; serenely looking down upon all Plenums and Entities, as low and poor to his serene Chimeraship and *Non*-entity laboriously attained! Heroic Vacuum; inexpugnable—while purse and present condition of Society hold out; curable by no hellebore. The doom of Fate was, Be thou a Dandy! Have thy eye-glasses, opera-glasses, thy Long-Acre cabs with white-breeched tiger, thy yawning impassivities, pococurantisms; *fix* thyself in Dandyhood, undeliverable; it is thy doom.—

And all these, we say, were red-coloured infants; of the same pulp and stuff, few years ago; now irretrievably shaped and kneaded as we see! Formulas? There is no mortal extant, out of the depths of Bedlam, but lives all skinned, thatched, covered over with Formulas; and

is, as it were, held in from delirium and the Inane by his Formulas! They are withal the most beneficent, indispensable of human equipments: blessed he who has a skin and tissues, so it be a living one, and the heart pulse everywhere discernible through it. Monachism, Feudalism, with a real King Plantagenet, with real Abbots Samson, and their other living realities, how blessed!—

Not without a mournful interest have we surveyed that authentic image of a Time now wholly swallowed. Mournful reflexions crowd on us,—and yet consolatory. How many brave men have lived before Agamemnon! Here is a brave governor Samson, a man fearing God, and fearing nothing else; of whom as First Lord of the Treasury, as King, Chief Editor, High Priest, we could be so glad and proud; of whom nevertheless Fame has altogether forgotten to make mention! The faint image of him, revived in this hour, is found in the gossip of one poor Monk, and in Nature nowhere else. Oblivion had so nigh swallowed him altogether, even to the echo of his ever having existed. What regiments and hosts and generations of such has Oblivion already swallowed! Their crumbled dust makes up the soil our life-fruit grows on. Said I not, as my old Norse Fathers taught me, The Life-tree Igdrasil, which waves round thee in this hour, whereof thou in this hour art portion, has its roots down deep in the oldest Death-Kingdoms; and grows; the Three Nornas, or *Times*, Past, Present, Future, watering it from the Sacred Well!—

For example, who taught thee to *speak*? From the day when two hairy-naked or fig-leaved Human Figures began, as uncomfortable dummies, anxious no longer to be dumb, but to impart themselves to one another; and endeavoured, with gaspings, gesturings, with unsyllabled cries, with painful pantomime and interjections, in a very unsuccessful manner,—up to the writing of this present copyright Book, which also is not very successful! Between that day and this, I say, there has been a pretty space of time; a pretty spell of work, which *somebody* has done! Thinkest thou there were no Poets till Dan Chaucer? No heart burning with a thought, which it could not hold, and had no word for; and needed to shape and coin a word for,—what thou callest metaphor, trope, or the like? For every word we have, there was such a man and poet. The coldest word was once a glowing new metaphor, and bold questionable originality. ‘Thy very

ATTENTION, does it not mean an *attentio*, a STRETCHING-TO?' Fancy that act of the mind, which all were conscious of, which none had yet named,—when this new 'poet' first felt bound and driven to name it! His questionable originality, and new glowing metaphor, was found adoptable, intelligible; and remains our name for it to this day. 5

Literature:—and look at Paul's Cathedral, and the Masonries and Worships and Quasi-Worships that are there; not to speak of Westminster Hall and its wigs! Men had not a hammer to begin with, not a syllabled articulation: they had it all to make;—and they have made it.—What thousand thousand articulate, semi-articulate, earnest-stammering *Prayers* ascending up to Heaven, from hut and cell, in many lands, in many centuries, from the fervent kindled souls of innumerable men, each struggling to pour itself forth incompletely as it might, before the incompletest *Liturgy* could be compiled! The Liturgy, or adoptable and generally adopted Set of Prayers and Prayer-Method, was what we can call the Select Adoptabilities, 'Select Beauties' well-edited (by Œcumenic Councils and other Useful-knowledge Societies) from that wide waste imbroglio of Prayers already extant and accumulated, good and bad. The good were found adoptable by men; were gradually got together, well-edited, accredited: the bad, found inappropriate, unadoptable, were gradually forgotten, disused and burnt. It is the way with human things. The first man who, looking with opened soul on this august Heaven and Earth, this Beautiful and Awful, which we name Nature, Universe and such like, the essence of which remains forever UNNAMEABLE; he who first, gazing into this, fell on his knees awestruck, in silence as is likeliest,—he, driven by inner necessity, the 'audacious original' that he was, had done a thing, too, which all thoughtful hearts saw straightway to be an expressive, altogether adoptable thing! To bow the knee was ever since the attitude of supplication. Earlier than any spoken Prayers, *Litanias*, or *Leitourgias*; the beginning of all Worship,—which needed but a beginning, so rational was it. What a Poet he! Yes, this bold original was a successful one withal. The well-head this one, hidden in the primeval dusks and distances, from whom as from a Nile-source all *Forms of Worship* flow;—such a Nile-river (somewhat muddy and malarious now!) of Forms of Worship sprang there, and flowed, and flows, down to Puseyism, Rotatory Calabash, Archbishop Laud at St. Catherine Creed's, and perhaps lower!— 10 15 20 25 30 35

Things rise, I say, in that way. The *Iliad* Poem, and indeed most other poetic, especially epic things, have risen as the Liturgy did. The great *Iliad* in Greece, and the small *Robin Hood's Garland* in England, are each, as I understand, the well-edited 'Select Beauties' of an immeasurable waste imbroglio of Heroic Ballads in their respective centuries and countries. Think what strumming of the seven-stringed heroic lyre, torturing of the less heroic fiddle-catgut, in Hellenic Kings' Courts and English wayside Public Houses; and beating of the studious Poetic brain, and gasping here too in the semi-articulate windpipe of Poetic men, before the Wrath of a Divine Achilles, the Prowess of a Will Scarlet or Wakefield Pinder, could be adequately sung! Honour to you ye nameless great and greatest ones, ye long-forgotten brave!—

Nor was the Statute *De Tallagio non concedendo*, nor any Statute, Law-method, Lawyer's-wig, much less were the Statute-Book and Four Courts, with Coke upon Lyttleton and Three Estates of Parliament in the rear of them, got together without human labour,—mostly forgotten now! From the time of Cain's slaying Abel by swift head-breakage, to this time of killing your man in Chancery by inches, and slow heart-break for forty years,—there too is an interval! Venerable Justice herself began by Wild-Justice; all Law is as a tamed furrowfield, slowly worked out, and rendered arable, from the waste jungle of Club-Law. Valiant Wisdom tilling and draining; escorted by owl-eyed Pedantry, by owlish and vulturish and many other forms of Folly;—the valiant husbandman assiduously tilling; the blind greedy enemy *too* assiduously sowing tares! It is because there is yet in venerable wigged Justice some Wisdom, amid such mountains of wiggeries and Folly, that men have not cast her into the river; that she still sits there, like Dryden's Head in the *Battle of the Books*,—a huge helmet, a huge mountain of greased parchment, of unclean horsehair, first striking the eye, and then in the innermost corner, visible at last, in size as a hazelnut, a real fraction of God's Justice, perhaps not yet unattainable to some, surely still indispensable to all;—and men know not what to do with her! Lawyers were not all Pedants, voluminous voracious persons; Lawyers too were Poets, were Heroes,—or their Law had been past the Nore long before this time. Their Owlisms, Vulturisms, to an incredible extent, will disappear by and by, their

Heroisms only remaining, and the helmet be reduced to something like the size of the head, we hope!—

It is all work and forgotten work, this peopled, clothed, articulate-speaking, high-towered, wide-acred world. The hands of forgotten brave men have made it a world for us; they,—honour to them; they, in *spite* of the idle and the dastard. This English Land, here and now, is the summary of what was found of wise, and noble, and accordant with God's Truth, in all the generations of English Men. Our English Speech is speakable because there were Hero-Poets of our blood and lineage; speakable in proportion to the number of these. This Land of England has its conquerors, possessors, which change from epoch to epoch, from day to day; but its real conquerors, creators, and eternal proprietors are these following, and their representatives if you can find them: all the Heroic Souls that ever were in England; each in their degree, all the men that ever cut a thistle, drained a puddle out of England, contrived a wise scheme in England, did or said a true and valiant thing in England. I tell thee, they had not a hammer to begin with; and yet Wren built St. Paul's: not an articulated syllable; and yet there have come English Literatures, Elizabethan Literatures, Satanic-School, Cockney-School and other Literatures;—once more, as in the old time of the *Leitourgia*, a most waste imbroglio and world-wide jungle and jumble; waiting terribly to be 'well-edited,' and 'well-burnt'! Arachne started with forefinger and thumb, and had not even a distaff; yet thou seest Manchester, and cotton cloth, which will shelter naked backs, at twopence an ell.

Work? The quantity of done and forgotten work that lies silent under my feet in this world, and escorts and attends me, and supports and keeps me alive, wheresoever I walk or stand, whatsoever I think or do, gives rise to reflexions! Is it not enough, at any rate, to strike the thing called 'Fame' into total silence for a wise man? For fools and unreflective persons, she is and will be very noisy, this 'Fame,' and talks of her 'immortals' and so forth: but if you will consider it, what is she? Abbot Samson was not nothing because nobody *said* anything of him. Or thinkest thou, The Right Honourable Sir Jabesh Windbag can be made something by Parliamentary Majorities and Leading Articles? Her 'immortals'! Scarcely two hundred years back can Fame recollect articulately at all; and there she but maunders and

mumbles. She manages to recollect a Shakspeare or so, and prates, considerably like a goose, about him;—and in the rear of that, onwards to the birth of Theuth, to Hengst's Invasion, and the bosom of Eternity, it was all blank; and the respectable Teutonic Languages, Teutonic Practices, Existences all came of their own accord, as the
 5 grass springs, as the trees grow; no Poet, no work from the inspired heart of a Man needed there; and Fame has not an articulate word to say about it! Or ask her, What, with all conceivable appliances and mnemonics, including apotheosis and human sacrifices among the
 10 number, she carries in her head with regard to a Wodan, even a Moses, or other such? She begins to be uncertain as to what they were, whether spirits or men of mould,—gods, charlatans; begins sometimes to have a misgiving that they were mere symbols, ideas of the mind; perhaps nonentities, and Letters of the Alphabet! She is the
 15 noisiest, inarticulately babbling, hissing, screaming, foolishlest unmusicalest of Fowls that fly; and needs no 'trumpet,' I think, but her own enormous Goose-throat,—measuring several degrees of celestial latitude, so to speak. Her 'wings,' in these days, have grown far swifter than ever; but her goose-throat hitherto seems only larger,
 20 louder and foolisher than ever. *She* is transitory, futile, a Goose-goddess;—if she were not transitory, what would become of us! It is a chief comfort that she forgets us all; all, even to the very Wodans; and grows to consider us, at last, as probably nonentities and Letters of the Alphabet.

25 Yes, a noble Abbot Samson resigns himself to Oblivion too, feels *it* no hardship but a comfort; counts it as a still resting place from much sick fret, and fever, and stupidity, which in the night-watches often made his strong heart sigh. Your most sweet voices, making one enormous Goose-voice, O Bobus and Company, how can they be a
 30 guidance for any Son of Adam? In *silence* of you and the like of you, the 'small still voices' will speak to him better; in which does lie guidance.

My friend, all speech and rumour is shortlived, foolish, untrue. Genuine WORK alone, what thou workest faithfully, that is eternal,
 35 the Almighty Founder and World-Builder himself. Stand thou by that; and let 'Fame' and the rest of it go prating.

'Heard are the Voices,
Heard are the Sages,
The Worlds and the Ages:
"Choose well, your choice is
Brief and yet endless. 5

Here eyes do regard you,
In Eternity's stilness;
Here is all fulness,
Ye brave, to reward you; 10
Work, and despair not."*"

* Goethe.