

entering his currach, sailed away for the mainland; but he often turned his streaming eyes to look back on Aran, the home of his heart, and on the little cells where his brethren dwelt, and the oratory of his beloved father, Euda, and the billowy cliffs of the holy island now fast fading from his view.

There is hardly a single one of the great saints of the Second Order who did not spend some time in Aran. It was, as we have said, the novitiate of their religious life. St. Jarlath of Tuam, St. Carthage the Elder of Lismore, the two St. Kevins of Glendalough, and others. There is no other part of Ireland so interesting as these Aran Islands, not only from their past history, but also from the great number of Christian remains that are still to be found on these shores. Nowhere else do we find so many and so various specimens of early Christian architecture. Euda divided Aran Mor into two parts. One-half he assigned to his own monastery at Killeany; the other or western half he assigned to such of his disciples as chose to erect permanent religious houses in the island. This, however, seems to have been a later arrangement, for at first it is said that he had 150 disciples under his own care; but when the establishment grew to be thus large in numbers, he divided the whole island into ten parts—each having its own religious house, and its own superior, while he himself retained a general superintendence over them all. The existing remains prove conclusively that there must have been several distinct establishments on the island, for we find separate groups of ruins at Killeany, at Killronan, at Kilmurvey, and further west at 'the seven churches.' (Dr. Healy.)

Such was St. Euda of Aran and his monks. Their lives were full of sunny hope and true happiness. That desert island was a paradise for those children of God; its arid rocks were to them as a garden of delights; the sunlight on its summer seas was a picture for them of heavenly joys; and the roar of its wintry billows reminded them of the power and the wrath of God. So they passed their blameless lives living only for God, and waiting not in fear, but in hope, for the happy hour when their Heavenly Father would call them home. Their bodies were laid to rest beside the walls of the little churches—their graves may still be seen stretched side by side, and who can doubt that their sinless souls went up to God in heaven?

WHAT THE MONKS DID FOR BELGIUM

When the German invasion closed the University of Louvain (says the *New World*), the professors of this historic institution were driven to many quarters of the globe. They found shelter and occupation in various universities of other countries, particularly in the United States. One of these scholars, Leon Van Der Essen, Ph.D., LL.D., Professor of History at the University of Louvain and member of the Royal Academy of Archaeology of Belgium, came to Chicago and for a while conducted a series of lectures at the Chicago University. While here he noticed how few were the histories of his country published in the English tongue. So he set himself to the task of preparing such a history. The volume has now been published.

Professor Van Der Essen treats of the whole of Belgium's history, starting with the Roman invasion up to, though not including the present struggle. A remarkable characteristic of the work is the cool, dispassionate even sympathetic manner in which the author treats all persons and people whose hands helped mould Belgium's past, whether to her joy or sorrow. Particularly notable is the manner in which he speaks of the work of the monks and monasteries and the influence they had upon the land. Belgium owes its civilisation entirely to the efforts of the monks, the Benedictines. This the author asserts boldly in the following paragraphs:—

Civilised by Monks.

'If the conversion to the Catholic faith was mainly the task of the missionaries, the introduction of civilisa-

tion was mainly the task of the monasteries. Here the Benedictine monks played a very large part, both as civilisers and colonisers. Their monasteries were, from the sixth century on, centres of economic and intellectual life. Whilst some of their monks attacked the thick forests of southern and central Belgium with axes, others engaged in literary labors in the monasteries' libraries, transcribing the ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts, composing hymns and lives of saints, and opening schools for the education of the people. They planted in the very hearts of the people the roots of that strong religious spirit, which has steadily developed and which has become one of the characteristics of the national spirit of Belgium.

Each monastery became a kind of model farm, where the population of the neighborhood could learn the best agricultural methods. In the monastery, too, they could find physicians who knew how to take care of the sick. The monastery, being protected by the respect that was inspired by the saint to whom it was dedicated, was also a place of safety in time of danger. Consequently, dwellings became more and more numerous around the monasteries, and villages developed under their influence and protection.

'It is not, then, surprising that in the course of time, tales and legends developed wherein the founders of those monasteries became the heroes of poetical and sometimes extraordinary adventures. In this manner, did the people of medieval times express their gratitude for all they owed to those early pioneers of culture and civilisation.'

In Feudal Times.

Feudal times have a harsh ring in our ears. Still even those times found in the monasteries a redeeming institution. The monks were active in preaching the Church's message of peace in a time when war and murder were the popular pastime. Their preaching was not without effect. To this the professor testifies in the following passages:

Belgium became a country of monasteries in the eleventh century, and ever since that time the people have shown that deep religious spirit that is one of the distinctive traits of the national character. The monks exerted a very strong influence on the minds of the rough feudalists, who thought mainly of war and robbery: one of the most powerful dukes of Lotharinga, Godefrid the Bearded, desired to be buried in the dress of a monk. The robber-knights, pursuing an enemy or a convoy of merchants, thought only of plunder; once in sight of the walls of a monastery, however, they would cease their pursuit and turn back. Carrying through the country the relics of their saints, the monks would often succeed in stopping private wars and murder. An example of the religious spirit is the great "procession" of Tournai, that attracted every year thousands of pilgrims and visitors, Flemish and Walloon together, and that acted as a unifying factor, to both races of Belgium.'

Cistercian Monks.

If Belgium was in the days before the present war a fertile and prosperous country, then that is owing in a great measure to the monks of the middle ages who cleared the lands of the forests and for the first time turned up their rich soil with the ploughshare.

Hitherto only one monastic Order had influenced religious life in Belgium—namely, the Benedictines. In the twelfth century other Orders were born—the Cistercians and the Norbertines or Premontres. The Cistercians, founded by St. Bernard in France, played the part, mainly, of clearers of wild land and colonisers; they introduced new economic and agricultural methods and exerted a deep influence in economic life. The Premontres were canons, rather than monks who passed their time in study and in administering the parishes. But they, too, did much for the colonisation of the country, and they transformed into fruitbearing lands the barren soil of the Antwerp Campine. The number of parishes increased in the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries. New chapels were founded in cases where the nearest parish church was too far removed, or where a number of people sufficient for the formation