

## THE REVISION OF THE VULGATE

Abbot Gasquet was in London in the early part of July. He was taking a short spell of rest, which meant with him change of occupation. The brief opportunity was not to be lost of seeking an interview for the *Universe* to learn what progress he is making in his stupendous work of revising the Vulgate. The writer found him at home the most genial and accessible of men, for he has the gift of most men of strenuous lives of never being in a hurry. The note of the true Benedictine is in him in all his ways—placidity. When Leo XIII. charged him and other Benedictines with the work of historical research, they took a house midway between the British Museum and the Record Office, an old Georgian house, which was in the heart of fashion in other days, now as secluded a retreat as any cloister remote from madding crowds. A flower garden, fresh and green and full of bloom, is free from any prying eyes. The heavy traffic of railway vans, ugly and hideous, is within a hundred yards, in Theobald's road, and parallel with that the ceaseless roar of Oxford street, but the cheery, courteous Abbot looks out upon his garden, and, surrounded by precious treasures gathered from all the libraries of Europe, works on in the undisturbed quietness of thought for the benefit of unborn ages. His central work is carried on at the International College of St. Anselm in Rome, but wherever Abbot Gasquet is there is his workshop, if only for a day, and the Revision of the Vulgate is his life's mission.

But do not picture a dry-as-dust historian. Courteous, cheery, with the quick wit and the ready laugh of a man who knows men as widely as he knows books; the heir of the ages looking out into the future with the optimism of faith, with that charm of perfect humility which is not at pains either to display or to hide the truth about himself—for humility is truth—he is every inch a monk and a gentleman. And so he is just himself to the poorest and the proudest in the world. A simple monk if you will, but with all the mitred Abbot of St. Albans, in unbroken line from St. Austin of Canterbury, President-General of the Order of Benedictines in England, and a scholar and historian of European fame, honored by the Pope with the most momentous duties, and singled out for the most exalted distinction, the Right Rev. Francis Aidan Gasquet, D.D., O.S.B. The late Pope would have made him a Prince of the Church, but Providence reserved him for a work which will carry his name down the centuries linked with that of St. Jerome in the task for which no man in the world is so well equipped, the Revision of the Vulgate.

For centuries it has been realised that a critical revision of the text of the Latin Bible must be made, but not till May, 1907, did the Pope determine that well recognised principles of textual criticism should be applied to establish the best Latin text of the Holy Scriptures. On Abbot Gasquet fell the commission. St. Jerome made his translation in the fourth century. Present-day scholars are agreed as to his competence. Our present-day text substantially represents that which St. Jerome produced, but through centuries of copies minor errors have crept in, requiring close examination and much correction. The aim of the Commission, therefore, is not to produce any new version, but with all possible exactness to determine the Latin text of St. Jerome. It will be the work of some future Commission to determine the accuracy of St. Jerome's translation.

Limited as the scope of the Commission is, the work grows with amazing rapidity. A series of reports have just been published, which show the number of Bibles already in process of collation. Abbot Gasquet has done in this work of text comparisons what astronomers did to eliminate the personal equation when they introduced celestial photography. Every text is photographed. One alone, the Codex Amiatinus, has been reproduced in photographs in twenty-two folio volumes. The photograph cannot lie. It is a most costly undertaking—this Bible alone cost £200—and

there are hundreds of others, the most astonishing collection ever made. All the libraries of Europe have been scoured, and all the resources of the Benedictine Order are strained to achieve the stupendous undertaking. 'And when will it be finished?' the Abbot was asked by the writer. With a hearty laugh he answered, 'Not in my time, not in my time. I am just beginning; it will be for others to finish it.' That is the way of the old builders; that is the way of the monks. Their work is for the eternal years.

But the amazing thing is that this man, who is in his intellectual youth at sixty-six, has done and is doing work that would crush the heart out of most men and dry up the springs of human kindness, and yet he laughs and is as cheery as only a monk can be. Not only has he to organise and pay a staff, but he has to find the money to pay all the cost of printing and photography. Thousands of letters have been written by him with his own hand soliciting subscriptions. He has lectured in Rome, in Paris, and America to raise the necessary funds. And he is contemplating an early return visit to America, where he has met with much sympathetic interest. And yet some Mæcenas might write his name in history, and peradventure win the grace of God for himself, by the gift of an unconsidered million, more or less, to a work which will be one of the priceless treasures of the future.

Francis Gasquet was born in 1845 in London, served Dr. Manning's first Mass in Bayswater, joined the Benedictines at Downside, was ordained priest in 1874, held nearly every office in the Order, served as Prior for eight years, began the work of development at Downside which has become his monument, the present year witnessing the last addition, and brought himself to death's door by his exertions. By his historical discoveries at the Vatican he practically settled the question of Anglican Orders. His English historical works are a library of authoritative reference on the periods of the Reformation and the fourteenth century. He has been elected a member of learned societies. The President-Generalship of the Order, with its visitations and responsibilities, is one man's work. He is due at the Vienna Congress on his way to Rome in September. For the International Historical Congress, of which he is a vice-president, he is due back in London in the spring. Probably a lecturing tour will take him to America, and then to St. Anselm's in Rome, to his workshop, once more, in September.

In the midst of all his multifarious duties and interests, however, Abbot Gasquet remains an ideal historian. With a phenomenal memory, a judicial mind, a respecter of neither persons nor policies, endowed with a literary gift, the saving grace of humour, and an indomitable perseverance in research, with a large horizon of vision for comparative history, truth is his only goal. He is not a special pleader, but an impartial judge, and for that he was a man after Leo XIII.'s own heart.

With the completion of the new £7,000,000 depot at Leipzig, that city will be able to lay claim to the largest railroad station in Europe. It has long been one of the dingiest in the country. For ten years artists and architects put their heads together to make it the acme of beauty and convenience, and now for ten years the builder has been busy. It has a frontage of 350 yards; 26 lines of rail run into it; it will see 400 trains a day; there are 50 clocks to tell the time. The finishing touches will take till 1915.

The death of Ex-Superintendent Brennan took place at St. Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst, on August 8. The deceased, who was in his 72nd year, was born in Tullabrin, County Kilkenny. He joined the police in exciting days—when the gold fever was at its height, and riot and crime of every sort were rampant. He had encounters with many desperadoes who would stop at nothing, and whilst in the gold escort he carried his life in his hands, attacks by armed robbers being frequent. Ex-Superintendent Brennan's pride in his record was all the more just, because he won promotion by sheer merit, scaling rung after rung of the ladder of position.