St. Clare and her Order, a story of seven centuries

Originally published in 1912 by:
London, Mills

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ST. CLARE
AND HER ORDER
ST. CLARE AND HER ORDER
A SELECTION FROM
MILLS & BOON'S LIST OF
GENERAL LITERATURE

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ST. CLARE AND HER ORDER

A STORY OF SEVEN CENTURIES

EDITED BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE ENCLOSED NUN"

ILLUSTRATED

MILLS & BOON, LIMITED
49 RUPERT STREET
LONDON, W.
Published 1912
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NOTE

Thanks are due to Mr. Gallatly for permission to reproduce the hitherto unpublished portrait of St. Francis and St. Clare. Thanks are also due to various Ab... for illustrations, and for information, and the loan of books. To the sisters and others who have translated and worked on this compilation, we wish the blessing of St. Clare.
ST. CLARE AND HER ORDER

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Just seven hundred years ago, on the 19th of March, 1212, Chiara Scifi, a young Italian girl living in the little town of Assisi, ran away from home and entered on a life of poverty, penance and prayer—a life which is the negation of all ordinary human desires. She persevered in that life for over forty years, and princesses and peasants alike joined her in it. Thousands of women continued all down the ages to embrace this extraordinary life; there are over ten thousand still living it in this twentieth century.

It is not only a life of poverty, chastity and obedience—it is a life of absolute seclusion from the world; for the Poor Clare never leaves her cloister, never shows her face to seculars again. It is a life of perpetual fasting; the Poor Clare has only one meal a day, except on Sundays, and she never eats meat. It is a life of constant mortification of the body—the Poor Clare wears harsh, clumsy clothing, goes ever barefoot, scourges herself constantly.

"Oh! what is the use of it all?" asks the worldling. Why not go on committees instead of praying? Why not modify the coarse and cumbersome dress? Why not change the perpetual fasting for a moderate diet suited to the climate?—and so on, and so on. That life behind...
convent walls seems cruel and useless and miserable to many outside.

But there is this to be said; that for those inside the life of the world appears still more cruel and useless and miserable. To play at power by discussing trifles on committee; to modify your dress constantly at the orders of your dressmaker; to change your diet constantly at the orders of your doctor—where is freedom and opportunity for the inner life if the mind is thus continually nagged by worldly details?

And from an impartial point of view there is as much hardship and absurdity in going with bare arms to dance at midnight, as in going with bare feet to prayer at midnight.

Surely even to the most worldly there come times when the restless life of society seems some mad dream—too cruel to be true. That there should be corners in wheat and deaths from starvation; that hundreds of infants should be born only to die; that an earthquake should swallow up just and unjust alike: these conundrums must come before us all sometimes, and where for the worldling is the answer?

A recent writer, who was thrown into prison by our social system and given time to think, wrote as follows: "I am conscious now that behind all this beauty there is some spirit hidden of which the painted forms and shapes are but modes and manifestations, and it is with this spirit that I desire to become in harmony. I have grown tired of articulate utterances of men and things."

And a modern poet says—

"Strange the world about me lies,
Never yet familiar grown—
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me like a face half known.

In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gem-like plains and seas,
Shall I never feel at home,
Never wholly feel at ease?"

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INTRODUCTORY

Poe and philosophers and the religious have always had this feeling of the unreality of earthly things; of the reality of spiritual things. There will always be some to whom chairs and tables and gods are not, and to whom heaven and angels and saints and God are real. And one must live according to one's belief —must enter the path to which one is called. We shall learn of a nun who always lived her life when she had the help of another who did you with a thing for her. Then may help us to understand the world of Poor Clare.

And it is a spiritual king that will remain. Look back at the Emperor and Stoic, Marcus Aurelius, who was a humble Christian. For his firm and true, so exalted his firm and Roman foundationist was passing in man, their primitiveWall-pain, illogical cult. Which would a worldly man could philosophy and the philosophy and temp of Christ? I y all material pow and I know with them that Emperor—but it is good of the Christ that fill the world to-day, it is philosophy of Christ. All over the world—only are in spot to burst out more hotly in ano...

It is an extraordinary phenomenon: is it nothing more? The key in the fact that are Aurélus did not appeal to soul, only to intellect. If intellect were supreme, then would Aurelius have conquered; but since the soul exists—in spirit of the materialist—it is Galilean who has conquered.

Nearly every convent of Poor Clares has certain small...
regulations and ways peculiar to itself, but the following orarium may be taken as typical.

5 a.m. Rise. Way of the Cross and meditation.
6.0. Prime and Terce.
6.30. Litany (Postulants and novices and externs do their cells). Sick have cup of tea.
8.0. Frustrulum—a mug of tea and piece of dry bread, eaten standing.
8.30. Choir nuns do their cells; others wash up, etc.
9.0. Sext and none.
9.30. Occupations—or ordered duties, such as care of the Sanctuary, etc.
11.30. Assembly in choir; silent prayer; to refectory in procession.
11.45. Dinner; a typical meal is given as consisting of potatoes with onion sauce, followed by milk pudding and stewed fruit. During the meal there is reading, the book being handed round and each nun reading a chapter. The book is generally the Lives of Saints. Back to choir in procession for grace or prayer.

1 p.m. “Obediences” or “occupations.”
3.0. Obediences.
5 to 6. Meditation in choir.
6.0. Collation; consisting of tea or cocoa and dry bread. On Feasts there is butter or jam.
7.30. Silent bell. Nuns go to their cells, each taking up a can of water to wash with. They sleep on a sloping wooden couch, with one square hard pillow: they never lie flat down. The nuns sleep in their habit; the novices sleep in tunic, with kerchief and wimple of cotton (the day ones are of linen).
INTRODUCTORY

11.50. P’t.
12 midnight. tins, follow b Litan and prayers, and, for prof’ an hour’ i- tion.
2.0 p.m. P urn ll for p.
Twia k is a br’ “wh con-
v’ tion is allowed

The, f’ w of
lif of a Poor C. 
Y in, da out, for r af r, b’ith a b and
f ben ha late jubi.
ch that any day ld’ or p’ma a1 r, and (dan rou’ i that’ 1) thro r forth
nnil on t world, wit t ivine r rh or
i for thi rbi in p ful
pl’s ! Th’ cin on in F and ital
d y; on t 10th of r, 1 11, th P’ l of
N n d only xpel from th t; in
L l nns of S. in w
ld that must turn out of t’ir anc’nt’.
But u’ onl v and
in bol n and t mo’ntl into
m o b’ spot and wait till y be’ lled. What
it Tenn n ro of Parisions?—

“Why the your !
You fools! ’ll want them all ”

And it has always so far hap r that the country that
xpell th’ Poor Cla. in a few y g them
to return.
That the nun is little bet r than a prisoner, and is ever
 craving to return to world, and that her privation
and austeriti make her miserabl, is th theory held
by many ou’ders. If only t y could b r th laughter
when the Cl play g on Christmas Day! Th is
no such ex’l lent preparation for a f t and for fun, than
the fasting and silence of Advent.
Or how about the story of the Jubilee of Charitas, Abbess of Nuremburg, in 1529? Sister Catherine, her niece, writes to her father a joyful account of it: "We conducted the Rev. Mother to the refectory, and because of the occasion she allowed all the sisters to sing as much as they pleased. Our friends had not been mean, but had furnished us with good wine, and the Rev. Mother gave a generous helping to all. Towards evening we all danced, and Mother Apollonia Fucherin, who has been here fifty-seven years, danced with me, and in the most sprightly manner too!"

If outsiders are to be shocked, it is better they should hold up hands of horror over this innocent gaiety on a great occasion than over that daily routine of prayer and fasting which covers the spiritual life of the sisters, and which is too holy to be dwelt on here.

But it must never be forgotten that the spiritual life is not devoid of adventures and romances. Here is a little story that begins in Bruges and ends in London.

Sister Margaret was a young religious at Bruges, who was noted for her equitable and cheerful temper, and great affection and charity. She had had difficulty in persuading her father to let her enter the convent: he would give his consent, and then when the day of parting came near, withdraw it again. But at last Sister Margaret’s cheerful patience was rewarded, and she found her soul’s desire. Her own difficulties in following her vocation made her very sympathetic to others; especially she prayed for a young man of noble family who desired to become a Jesuit, but could not gain his parents’ consent. On the vigil of St. Joseph 1842 Mother Mary Dominie specially asked the community to once more make earnest prayer for this young man, and Sister Margaret, striking the table with her hand, cried—

"We will pray so fervently to-night, we will carry heaven by assault!"

And truly she chanted the office with an extraordinary
INTROD 'CTORY

fervour, and wh- hour of in a fuore of pra. Af swiftly u in advan of t o and to her couch. Suddenl- y in cell; S r... S M J ph, a holig and simplicity, y choir for hour of hin. S for youn nun he had y i t t ; il and ht indulg b pra f soul of S. f pra had a br- of a radiant na- on h h. S J ph fil with bu b. Had a b a b a b a b a Humbl im our Lord gi. that But r f pra... old only...

"Oh s from O God, I m... and will you in bi doubt. T no : and T ru ft. Di pped wit t a sudden- w clo illumina ith a brill- liant, unn tural light br h en than mid-da; it l ral , so that could not be i... t black night fell do n. Oh, ho b God! How full of p joy the humble t God had to l ve her lit f! T ry next day t young noble came to y tha all difficul" had ly f from his path; his paren had b ab; he w n on his way r novicia. H attribu th' entirely to pra of nuns, peci all to S' argare.

And do you doubt that the nuns w fully ured that Si. Margaret had gained this grace at the cost of her own lif? Put it qui ma rially, if you like, and call
it heart disease following on religious excitement and the swift mounting of the stairs. It is none the less true that her life was given for another, that she followed her high adventure to the death, even like any knight of old.

Sister Mary Joseph was sent later to London as vicarress, and here also she could feel herself very near our Lord. She had often prayed that her soul might be purified by earthly suffering, so that after death she should not be long deprived of the Beatific Vision. God granted her request; she was struck with a slow and painful illness. At last, in 1872, on Holy Thursday, she seemed scarcely able to draw another breath.

"Mother Vicarress, I think the good Lord will come and fetch you to-day," said the abbess.

"Oh no, Mother Abbess," she replied, "not till Saturday."

And in truth her agony was drawn out till then.

At the moment of her death all of the community were gathered round her, and they suddenly saw her transfigured. She raised her eyes towards the head of her bed with an air of joyous surprise impossible to describe, as though she saw some ravishing vision, and at the same time she gave up her soul to God, saying—

"Venez, Marie, Venez!"

Those who were present at the scene say they can never forget that transport of joy, which seemed suddenly to obliterate from her face all the traces of her past terrible sufferings.

There is a little book, The Contemplative Life, written by a Carthusian monk, and published by the Angelus Co., of Norwood, which describes the life of the Trappists, Poor Clares and others, and which makes clear the sweetness and satisfaction of the life of the cloister. It scarcely seems worth while to quote it here, however, for we hope that those who read the following pages will easily be convinced that there is no freedom that exceeds the free-
INTRODUCTORY

dom of the clo’r, no joy that x of prayer, no lov mo perfervid—mo preme—than th
Poor Cla’ love of J Christ

Bu to turn to more worldl things, and d giv
an ou’ of numerical history of Order.

In Hol pl I’s Ha k of th re’ Or, it’t
that t w v t conv’ of Poor
about of th of S. Cl, number of
inna varyin from t ty hundred. T
Ord had n firm roo in Spain, F and
Germany, and in x it all o r
Euro, n to Cyprus and Pa. In 1 t
w con’, of hich 1 w in Ital. t
end of f nth century about 15.
Cl.

At beginning of t fif th tury man com-
plain w n of t laxit in t lif of Order,
and Innnt VII w’ to a form. If al
particu of el tion of ab, but it
till William of Casal w G ral that any t chang
w brouht abou, largly through f of St.
Col t. At th nd of fif th tury w
Poor Clare Col t in of larg towns of Fran
and Belgium. They for t
strictn of their lif.

Few exact fac are known of spread of the Order
from th fif nth century. W only kno t y’
in t European countr’ and sp to
ially South America. In 1587, after t Reformation
had dstroyed many conven, there were till six hundred
hou. Then t Order again grew, and ms in 1680
to have reached its highest point of 925 convents, enclos-
ing 84,100 nuns. (It appears that some bo of strict
tertiaries are included in this to 1.) The above were all
under the General of the Order. If one can believe th
chronicl of the time, there were 70,000 sisters, counting
those under the bishops.
From the end of the seventeenth century the number of nuns decreased, though the number of convents still increased. The French Revolution and the later secularization destroyed the growth of the Order, except in Spain.

Still in the nineteenth century it recovered past all expectation; in 1907 there were 518 convents and 10,204 sisters. This is counting in the Conceptionist houses, of which there are in Spain 80, in South America 5 and in Belgium 3.

So far according to Holzapfel.

In 1895 Mgr. Ricard published at Paris a life of St. Clare in which he gave, so far as he could ascertain, a list of all the monasteries of Poor Clares throughout the world. On the 1st of January, 1894, according to this list, there were then in Spain over 100 convents, Italy 83, France 47, Belgium 29, England 7, Ireland 7, United States 4, Germany 4, Austria 2, Syria 2, Philippines 1, Canaries 1, Portugal 1—giving a total of 288 monasteries enumerated by name. The list is obviously incomplete, but it is more detailed than Holzapfel.

So far as we have been able to ascertain the state of affairs on the 1st of January, 1912, there were in Belgium 33 convents: Malonne near Namur, Mons, Quiévrain, Arlon, Wavre, Renaix, Lambermont, Hasselb, and Boom near Antwerp, which do not appear on Mgr. Ricard’s list. Many of these are French foundations of exiled Claras. The older convents are Ghent, Bruges, Brussels, Louvain, Antwerp, Lierre, Malines, Turnhout, Courtray, Newport, Ostend, Roulers, Ypres, Alost, Ecloo, Grammont, Lokeren, St. Nicholas, Termonde, Beaumont, Enghien, Tournai, Tongres, and St. Trond.

In France, we, of course, have to mark a decrease, with great astonishment that so many of the Poor Clares still manage to remain at their posts of prayer. Even in the heart of Paris, in the Impasse de Saxe, they still pursue their tranquil lives, though the Carmelites and other Orders who used to be their neighbours have gone. It
INTRODUCTORY

is the power of pov —the 7 om from s. It is ly worth while to turn out Poor C, who hav no gold or sil candl icks! T 1912 li_ gi
31 Fr nch con n 7 in 1 list. T
31 a : B'iers, B a , P , illa, G r-
don, St. O , , Polign , Pu ,
, Gr bl , Pa , P , Ca brai ,
, Lnçon, L , B tua (C ), Ro ,
, Val , Cr , ur-d -Barr , h , rd , P ra -
onial, R n , Val ' Bai , and -
The following fou n of
th t on M. Ricard's , and which ha b n
supp or hav remo : B , P r ,
ars , , rillac, Nant , Lll , T , P ,
I'vian-l -Bai , , , V ill , ha ,
and v ll .
Mgr. F. 's l for ENGLAND gi 7 na ; to
which w ha no to add 3 in land and 1 in Scot-
land, making a total of 11. Curiously h all 1
founds at p innin ith L. !—Liberton (n ar Edinburgh), Liv rpool, Lynton and Lut orth.
To 7 in IRELAND given by Mgr. Ricard, we
have to add Carlow and Donnybrook: m king a total of 9.
In NORTH AMERICA w ha to add t of
and Evansvill , m king 6 for Uni Sta ; and
Valleyfield and or other in Canada, mounting up to a
total of 8.

From other countri w have been unable to g t xact
figures—the Poor Cla. shun publicity—so that t
giv n must be taken as approximate. The Order is
numerous in Spain (though Government has confisc-
cated some convents) and South America; decre
slowly in Austria and I ly; lingerers in Germ ny, and is
dispelled (for the moment) from Portugal. It has ever
been thus with the Ord r—constant fluctuations. It is
most interesting to watch i growth in the new countr-
like th Uni Sta .
However obvious it may be that it is not desirable for large numbers to enter contemplative Orders, it is equally obvious that there ever has been, and ever will be, a small number who can in that life alone find happiness and outlet for their spiritual energies.

**Numerical Position of the Order, Jan. 1, 1912.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No. of Houses</th>
<th>No. of Inmates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>5500 (about)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalmatia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Allowing for differences as to inclusion of Conceptionists, etc., it is possible to safely state that the Order numbers about 500 houses, with about 10,500 inmates.)
ST. CLARE.
(Simone Memmi.)
CHAPTER II

LI O ST. C

C born in A 1 th of July, 11 H r nativ cit., though a small to n, as of ancient in Umbria, and it probably to-da much t it had in t thntury. It is t small, wal-in ns ha cha littl, and ideal of S. and St. Clas.

h n kept in by their follo, that ab to this day to pic so ly l t bright and utiful ry of C. Prof. W. Collins, w n p' di at fi. ral t ung In 'nal Soci ty of nciscan tud', 'T is con-
mpory, or ly con mpory, li ratu bout St. Francis than about any other man of Middle , un it t." And all this li tu. Is also with Clare, w lif and mission w or out in union with St. Francis; and we can her let and her rule, go and t dormitory w al and th garden nded, and put to scorn t niggling quibbl who to throw doubt and detractions on very lif which abov t normal level.

Clare's rs w of noble nt: her mother, Ortolana, w of the bo of Fiume, Coun of Sterpeto; and this family is still xisting, and re ins th ir he ditary castle n Petignano. When in a library in Assisi in 1911 I picked up a life of "La Beata Ortolana," and found with inte it had been p nted in 1904 by Conte a Fiume—the p nt rep ntati e of her family. These delightful links seem to hold us very near to Clare,
so that these seven hundred years slip away, and one almost feels as though writing of a contemporary.

Ortolana married Count Favorino of Sassorosso—a castle on the slopes of Monte Subasio, near Assisi—and they had five children: Don Boso, Penenda, Clare, Agnes and Beatrix. They lived in a palace in Assisi, part of which can still be seen. Ortolana was of noted piety; both Wadding and Joseph of Madrid state that she went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, no light undertaking in those days, and Thomas of Celano tells us that when in prayer shortly before Clare's birth she heard a voice saying to her: "Fear not, Ortolana; thou shalt safely bring forth a light which shall enlighten the whole world clearly." It was because of the last word of the prophecy that Clare received her name—a name of which we have no previous example. She was baptized in the font at the cathedral of St. Rufino, where Francis had been baptized some twelve years previously—that font which can still be seen, and in which all the children of Assisi are still baptized.

The official biographer of St. Clare, Thomas of Celano, thus speaks of her early years—

"She learnt with docility the lessons her mother taught her. . . . Her hands were gladly opened to the poor, and out of the goods which abounded in her house she supplied the wants of many. . . . She loved the practice of prayer, and so often experienced its pleasant fragrance that little by little she attained to contemplation; and in that she had no beads on which to count her prayers she used little heaps of stones, and thus made her devotions in orderly manner. . . . She wore a small hair shirt hidden under her robes, thus conforming to the world outwardly and to Christ inwardly. And when her family would that she should marry she would in nowise consent, desiring to devote her virginity to our Lord." And Loccatelli in his Life states: "Her purity was without blemish, and showed itself in her rare and imperturbable joyousness.
It was noticed that her only recreation was to gather flowers, and ve ribands of chaple, and oth adorn th imag of th Bl. Virgin and of J. Christ.” Obviously the tradition is of a y and good child, trained by a devout mother, and growing ily in grace. S must also have in sympathy with her, for t two younger or, A and t. la follow her into t cloister. Th ld r, P, nds, married, so did t only bro r; but of their children w in Clare’s foo , and w shall find ab iving her ni no.

And whil Clare w growing up in irlhood, Francis w growing up in manhood. S must of hav heard of him—probably of n n him, for t mov in me rank of lif. F’ would of g youn spark who sp nt too much of his f’s mo, who often el r of re ls by youths of th town, who rly joi in on P.; then sb would t t of hlp poor pr to build up his ruined church—of spending his fat r’s mon y, not in rioting, but in al ivi ; and finall of that dramatic ou ide St. Rufino when t youth finally stripped himself of t v garmen he wo, and forsook fath r and mother to folo Chri in evangeli l poverty. It w enough to fire any girl’s imagination. Here no w ing of a hair shrt under a silk robe, no giving away of th crumb from a rich table—but b lutely a following of Christ’s command to fo all and follow Him. Dr in a rude garment of sackcloth tied round his waist with a rope, Francis w nursing lepers in the wretched hu on the plain below Assisi. And already other young men had joined him, including Rufino Scifi, a cousin of Clare’s. When they came up into the town the small boys stoned th m and j red at them—the d ndants of the same small boys still stone and deride in Assisi any one who d not conform to the customs of the day.
In the Lent of 1212—just seven hundred years ago—Francis was preaching in the church of San Giorgio. We all know those Lenten sermons in Italy—the chosen preacher, the great dim church, the crowds of standing men and sitting women; the gradual working up towards Holy Week, and the marvellous representation of the Passion. Clare attended those sermons, and wept. Aided by her aunt, Bianca Guelfucci, Clare had audience with Francis, and told him of her spiritual aspirations, of her desire to embrace the life of poverty and prayer, to forsake all for Christ. Francis desired to put her to the proof, and bade her beg for bread from door to door at Assisi. Dressed as a mendicant, Clare fulfilled this order—she was even then of the brave and persistent race of those who not only aspire but obtain. All through her life she showed the same calm courage and persistence; she was not to be daunted or turned aside.

When, in 1207, Francis was helping to build the little wayside church of St. Damiano—half-way between the leper huts and Assisi—he had called out to the passers-by: "Come and help me, for here you shall see flourish a convent of poor ladies, whose holy life and reputation shall redound to the credit of our Heavenly Father and the kingdom of Christ." This prediction probably came back to him; certainly he accepted Clare as his disciple in the life of poverty and Gospel simplicity, and arranged for her to come to the Portiuncula on the night of Palm Sunday, and there take the vows. It has been so in the material as well as in the spiritual life, that the man and the woman were needed for the development of the ideal. Witness Pericles and Aspasia, Augustine and Monica, Socrates and Diotima, Jerome and Paula, Benedict and Scholastica, Francis and Clare.

And yet Canon Knox Little has written a life of Francis in which he never even mentions Clare!

Clare was now eighteen years of age—which is not young in Italy—and doubtless the question of her mar-
riage was being p upon her. Her father was a man of arms, and his brothers, Monaldo and Paolo, we are told, had a "warlik spirit." Umbria was torn by internal conflict and strife, and religion was only just recovering from the degradations of the twelfth century. Turn to Hallam or Rank, to Froude or Dom C., they all admit that the papacy before the Council of Trent in 1545 had fallen into a very bad way. "By acquisition and, in some instances, by mere brute force, the ancient monastic orders had forfeited much of their public mindedness," says Hallam; and Fleury says that the use of much taxation of discipline. To this worldly and belon to Count Favorino. But let us return the history to period to which Francis and Clare belonged:—"The noonday of the papal dominion extends from pontificate of Innocent III inclusively to that of Boniface VIII. ... The institution of mendicant orders, amongst other circumstances, principally contributed to the aggrandizement of Rome," says Hallam. "The new pious orders received with astonishing approbation by the laity, who were religious, usually depends a good deal upon their opinion of the sincerity and disinterestedness of their inhabitants."

So there stood Clare between the two spirits: Count Favorino, her father, ambitious, timid and warlike, and of the world; a man of about fifty, and one by no means to be lightly thwarted. On the other side was Francis, aged about thirty, who for three years had renounced the world and we lived for the sake of Christ. We know from his Rule what portions of the Gospel Francis put foremost, what words would be ringing in the ears of Clare: "If thou wilt be perfect go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me." "If any man come to Me and leave not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, c
yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”
“And call no man your father on earth, for one is your
Father which is in heaven.” “I come to set a man at
variance against his father, and the daughter against her
mother.”

Palm Sunday on that year 1212 fell on the 18th of
March, a date ever dear to the Poor Clares down these
seven hundred years. It is one of the feasts of Holy
Church most travellers have seen in Italy: have seen the
sheaves of grey olive boughs carried into the church;
have seen the Lenten mourning put aside for the day,
whilst the palms are waved and the Church cries:
“Hosanna to the Son of David!”

Clare was at Mass at the cathedral with her family,
“adorned and resplendent amongst the other ladies. And
it happened, as it were a noteworthy presage, that when
the rest went forward to receive their palms that Clare
stayed silent and absorbed in her place. Whereupon the
Bishop came down to her and put the palm in her hand.”
She had need of prayer in the impasse in which she found
herself; and the palm was only to be hers after forty years
of striving. But she was no creature of doubt and hesita-
tion; how could she doubt the Gospel story of Christ,
when here in Assisi was Francis literally living the Gospel
life—taking no thought for the morrow, and blessing those
that cursed? It would be easy to believe in Christ if we
could see Christians living the Christ life.

Like the early disciples, Clare had heard the call,
“Come, follow Me,” and like them she left all and
followed.

Shortly after midnight, with her aunt as companion,
she made her way down a back staircase and out through
a disused door; through the unlit streets, under the great
arched gateway in the city walls, and then across two miles
of olive groves she fled that chill spring night. This was
the second test of Clare’s courage; think of it, ye modern
women, who are so proud of your little deeds of to-day.
ST. FRANCIS
(Tiberio D'Aslai.)
When, on the 19th of March, 1911, would he have been before the dawn, in order to try and find the thimble among the untold numbers of swallows that had returned to their nests.

At the little church of the Portiuncula down on the plain Cla was exalted. After ying midnight off the brother, with Francis the third, to make her into that humble actuary which is the cradle of the Franciscan Order.

The clock stood divided in her world robe, to put on a round with ro, and tresses cut off her useful hair and threw a black, obliterating veil over her shorn Chiara Scifi to the world.

Francis knew very well that Claret in a poor cell, as his teacher took her to the St. Paolo convent of the nuns, but two miles off on the plain. The remains of the lit walled-in cloister with a vault of cy yet x't, but it is d and forgot n. Here, on Holy Monday, her relations t and follow her, and they by the and argument to secu her return. C was firm; the vows were taken, she could not turn back. At Count F the vorino got angry and threw to u for; C clur on to the altar with on hand, while with other threw back her veil and show her shorn. With groans and her relations turned and went.

Holy Week, and the next at be nia in; it is 'd that at this time Clare told her mother not to weep, for she should certainly die in her daughter's arms — prophecy that came true, for Ortolana, who was a widow, joined the Poor Clares, and died at St. Damiano ten months before Clare. But the did not conduct to the spiritual calm of either Clare or the nuns, her hos.; so one day Francis and the elder Fra Bernardino, lately a magister and man of dignity and 81th in Assisi, came and fetched Clare away to a lonely little
ST. CLARE AND HER ORDER

convent on the side of Mount Subasio called St. Angelo in Panso.

Clare had left behind her her younger sister, Agnes, aged fourteen, whom she loved devotedly, and with whom she had grown up in sympathy and affection. Probably she had felt scruples about telling Agnes of her intended flight and vows; but now she had no scruples in praying God that Agnes should taste of the sweetness of the cloister and forsake the world, as she had done. And a fortnight after Clare had entered the convent of St. Angelo Agnes announced to her parents that she was going forth to join her sister, and should not return to the paternal roof. The anger of Count Favorino was rekindled, and a family council was hastily summoned. The citizens of Assisi must indeed have been astonished: what madness was it that was leading young women and old men alike to forsake their noble palaces and beautiful town for the mud huts on the plains? What was going to be the end of the movement inaugurated by that wild son of Bernardone's?

While the family talked Agnes fled, and Clare received her and led her to the altar, and with loving words offered her to the Lord. Close on her footsteps came her uncle, Count Monaldo, and twelve men of arms; he was a fierce and resolute man, and to him had the family entrusted the enterprise of rescuing Agnes. Strange, this gentle young girl showed herself as inflexible as Clare had done; she attended to neither threats nor entreaties, and at last the warrior's rage blazed forth, and he commanded his soldiers to seize her and bring her along by force. They dragged and pushed their victim down the mountain path with such violence that the rocks and stones were marked with a line of blood, and Agnes, in her agony, cried: "Clare, help me! Help me, my sister, that I be not taken away from Jesus."

Torn by these cries, Clare raised her eyes to heaven and prayed for succour—and again her prayers were heard,
for th body of Agr. became so heavy in th arms of th soldiers th t they could not lift h r. Th y called some nt who were tending the v to come and h lp them, but neither could th y move that frail body. "S mu have fed on lead!" cried o of them. Th n Count Mon ido rai d his sword to strik the irl, but a sudden pain shot through his arm, wing it pow rl , and h’ sword drop’d to the ground. The terrified soldi fl , and Clare, running down, i and emb l r’ r, and led her back within t conv nt to giv thanks to God. A f w days la Francis cam with som of his com nions, and gave t habit and ’v her vow. So far Clare had n pting th h pitality of Benedi ct nuns, but t central id l of Francis’s m i n to o back to G pel sim plicity ially to re urn to t lu freedom from personal ns of fi ; and this w no ’bl under t labora and ly ’tine rul of th t l Order of the Church. It w absolu ly n rry that t wom n who ’red to follow th Franc n id l should hav a clo’r of their own; so Francis pl Clare and Agr at t littl hermi ne of St. Damiano, and there other of the nobl dam ls of A ’si soon joined them, and there Clare lived till her death.

San Damiano! Birthplace of the Order of Poor C and shrine of in. Little grey nctuary t amon th oliv below t walls of isi—one of t m prayer-compelling, m wondrous spo on h! For time seems to have unh ed over i lowly walls, and there can till be seen the refectory and dormitory and choir as they were in th time of St. Clare, and there you can see her breviary written for her by Fra Leo, and there you can hear th very bell she used to ring to summon the sisters to prayers.

Wadding says that the Benedictines who gave St. Francis the Portiuncula also gave him St. Damiano; but
the Little Brothers who now dwell there are very
decisively against this. They have been diving into the
records of Assisi, and assert that the hermitage in the
thirteenth century certainly was a dependence of the
canons of the cathedral. The point is only interesting
as showing greater acknowledgment of the Franciscan
movement, if the grant came from the church dignitaries
of the town. It is also interesting to find the present
friars not only so full of loving care of St. Damiano and
all its precious relics, but so keen as to its past history
and anxious for accuracy.

Here, then, Clare entered on her life of penance and
of prayer; Francis gave her as her rule and as his most
precious gift the privilege of poverty; the sisters never
had any money, and they had only such food as the friars
begged for them and brought to them. It is said that
Count Favorino became reconciled to his daughters and
gave them their dowries, but they at once gave the money
away to the poor: “That being entirely disburdened of
earthly things they might run the more lightly after Jesus
Christ.”

Probably for the first three years, until Clare was made
to assume the position of abbess, there was close connec-
tion with the Brothers Minor, and aid in their work in
nursing the lepers and caring for the sick. The question
of the enclosure of the Poor Clares is a very thorny one;
it is an absolutely definite rule now, and the Poor Clares
themselves are the most strenuous upholders of it; but
when a writer like Father Paschal Robinson refuses the
story in the Fioretti of St. Clare going to supper at the
Portiuncula for the last time with St. Francis, because,
apparently, he is afraid to acknowledge that Clare was not
always strictly enclosed, the need for courage rather than
cautions is obvious. Why accept other stories of the
Fioretti, and not this one? We shall come across many
stories showing how Francis turned to Clare for help and
advice, and how close and beautiful was their spiritual

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friendship, so that Clare is spoken of as "the chief rival of the Bl. Francis in the servance of Gospel perfection." It is with reference to divers merit of the active and contemplative life that one of the twain is told in Bonaventure's Life of St. Francis: The twain in doubt as to whether to pray in or out of prayer; the need of meditation and prayer; the twain are lovers of meditation and union. And bad them go and put the question before Silvanus, then in retirement, and before virgin Clare, and them to pray for light and in the name of the virgin were marvelously in the anchor in their anchor, for the Holy Spirit led them to say that the Divine will that they should go forth and ponder their days. So Francis and girded himself, and without delay went forth on his journey.

The following from the own history of their Order shows how they view this question of secluded life: "The C of the first religious devoted to the solemn life of Franciscan or Recluse. I is the title by which they were honored in early all a tolic l of G. IX nd of Innocent IV."

And this legendary day is told in Hone of the First Franciscans, but also told to the point written by a smiling Brown Brother, who said it need not be belied. Francis and Clare walked one winter's day in 1215 to Spello, a little town some seven or eight miles from Assisi in the Spoleto valley, where the Camaldoli nuns of the Vallombrosa convent desired to come under the Franciscan rule. They went into the inn for food, and mine host was an evil-minded man, who grumbled away that it was scandalous for a man and woman to go tramping about the country together under cover of religion. It was a Friday, and, determined to
put his guests in the wrong, mine host placed a fat fowl on the table. Now, Francis had taken as part of his rule the Gospel verse: "Eat such things as are set before you" (Luke x. 8), and the law of the Church forbade meat on a Friday. So Francis made the sign of a cross over the fowl and it flew away, and a fish took its place, and mine host was converted. But Francis was sad that such things should be thought, and when they left Spello Francis bade Clare return by the upper path which runs along the hill-side, and he himself took the road along the valley. Now Clare had not heard the scandal and did not understand, and she called down to Francis to know when they should meet again. And Francis, in confusion, put her off with the phrase: "When the roses blow on Mount Subasio." And Clare went forward puzzled, but as she walked the snow melted before her feet, and behold! briars were blooming in her pathway; and joyfully she picked the flowers and put them in her robe, and gathered it up and ran down the hill-side to St. Francis, and showed him the roses. And he was convinced that pure-mindedness should triumph, and together they walked back to Assisi. Now this legend must have a wide range, for there are several pictures of St. Clare (not St. Elizabeth!) extant, where she is represented with her lap full of roses, whilst her bare feet are in the snow. And however unsupported it may be by evidence, it is proof that the tradition is of the working and walking together of Francis and Clare. And at least the Camaldulense nuns did become Poor Ladies in 1215—one of the first foundations of Clare.

Here is another account of these early days, and this time we have the authority of the Bishop Jacques de Vitry, in a letter still preserved in the library at Ghent. He was passing through Italy in 1216, and writes: "Here are men and women who have voluntarily stripped themselves of all earthly possessions, the better to serve God. The men are called Friars Minor. . . . The women dwell
in hospic in the environs of ci , nd live in common on t fruit of their labour, but accept no mon y.” This sounds like a fairly live, though it is doubtful if th u of t word “hospie” ly t that th l “ho “th ick or t vell . W know that Franci to send t sick to Cl , for w d in Clano’s Lif : “Bl. Francis nt to St. Clare brot r who w named Stephen, and who w . And sh m th sign of ove r t brother, and him sp a littl in t w usually prayed. And afr a littl a ne and cu A littl boy of y , call t , had fixed a n in hi n tril so th t no man could x t it And Franci nt him to St. Cl , nd soon had mad t sign of t he drew out and cured.”

T stran would t if t lif of this growing band of Poor had been ty in firs y rs: th y had no labora rul ; th y w re sworn to obey Francis, and h , glad ul, would uredly wish them to work and sing well to pray. There was much to be don : t poor churc th broth w rebuilding and tablishing r ’ed altar-lin n and v men , and th re w re arrangemen to t m for all th n w nov’ who w re arriving, nd for t oth r conven at Severino, Florence and Isewh which wished to come under the Franciscan rul of poverty.

Many of th oth r young girls of long d to imita Clare and Agn , and the rich and th nobl were m k n to come. Nor was it only girls who embraced the life of penance and mortification; many married coupl separated, the men entering a monastery and the women a convent, and all dedicating themselves to God.

History mak mention of some of the nuns who joined Clare in the first years at St. Damiano. First, th re was
her sister Agnes, whose reception we have described; then
her aunt, Bianca Guelfucci, who had aided Clare's flight,
and who became Sister Pacifica. She outlived St. Clare,
and in 1253 we find her giving evidence of the sanctity of
St. Clare at the canonical investigation ordered by Inno-
cent IV. She spent two years at Spello, but died at
St. Damiano, and her body was subsequently removed to
St. Chiara.

Amata Cornaro, Clare's niece, daughter of Penenda
Scifi and Martino di Corano, a noble of Assisi. She was
on the eve of marriage when, one day visiting St.
Damiano to ask her aunt's prayers, she suddenly felt
the call to the cloister. Her parents and fiancé were very
angry, but Amata was decided and unbending, and the
family had to give way before so decided a vocation. She
also was one of the witnesses of the saintliness of
Clare, in the year 1253. We are told that St. Clare
specially loved Amata for her innocence and affectionate
disposition.

Agnes Opertula, daughter of Bernardo of Assisi, was
only a child when she joined St. Clare. The pretty story
told by Wadding is that she was visiting St. Damiano
with her mother one day, and leaving her mother's hand
ran and clung to Clare's habit and refused to depart. She
was left under Clare's influence, and in due time became
a nun, and was granted the gift of contemplation. Once
when a friar was preaching she heard the Divine voice
whisper: "In medio vestri sum." She moved, with other
nuns, to San Giorgio in 1260, and died on the 1st of
February of the following year.

Francesca of Perugia entered St. Damiano in 1213,
and followed worthily in the footsteps of St. Clare. She
died in 1238. To her belongs the beautiful phrase:—
"Aeternum sit amoris insanabili vulnus."

Balbina (or Baluina) Cornaro, sister of Amata, and
niece of Clare; she was the first abbess of the Poor Clares
at Vallegloria, Spello, where she lived a vigorous and