

VIII.—ST. JULIAN THE HARBINGER, AND THE FIRST OF THE ENGLISH PERCYS.

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The stately volumes of the learned historian of the *House of Percy* are based upon so much research that I venture to think that what has eluded Mr. de Fonblanque may be unfamiliar to other antiquaries. A curious story told by an anonymous monk in a manuscript written in the twelfth century, perhaps at Bardney abbey, is not without points of interest.

Into the obscure question of the origin of the cult of St. Julian the Harbinger, or, as the French name him, St. Julien l'hôpitalier, I do not propose to enter here. It will suffice to say that there are few saints to whom it is so difficult to attach any one historical fact. His life, as given in Latin prose in the *Legenda Aurea*, is an elaborate piece of poetical fiction, the source of which is unknown. The thirteenth century French verse romance, by one Roger, on the same subject, and the Breton folk-songs have probably the same origin. But that this legend, the story of the hunted stag that spoke to Julian and told him he should slay his father and mother, the strange way in which the prophecy was fulfilled, and Julian's subsequent penitence and establishment of a hospice and ferry over a great river, and the supernatural visitor whom he tended there, was known to our monk, this we are not necessarily entitled to assume. We do not know whether the cult of the Harbinger grew out of the legend of the hunter or *vice versa*, and we have nothing to show whether the original object of the cult was, or was not, identical with any of the historical saints of the

same name. Those who wish to read the legend in a highly polished literary form will find it in the rendering of M. Gustave Flaubert. If it be the fact that some French romance is the ultimate authority for the tale, it is a little remarkable that our monk seems to regard the cult as specially English. Every prudent Englishman, he tells us, when about to set out on a journey which involves spending even a single night from home, makes a point, before he crosses his threshold, of saying a 'Pater-noster,' accompanied by a prayer to St. Julian for protection against ghostly and other foes by the wayside, both for man and beast and for goods and chattels, and that he may securely take his ease at his inn or wheresoever he may find hospitality on his travels. Of the good effects of this precaution we may see an example in the prosperity which attended one of William the Conqueror's great vassals so long as he observed it. William de Percy, born at Percy in Normandy, accompanying his sovereign in one of his wars against Scotland, was careful to give directions to his chaplains for the observance of this custom, and therefore on the march and in the camp, in his going out and his coming in, was blessed with good fortune beyond all the other great ones of England, his fellow soldiers in the campaign.

But, alas for human arrogance, on his return home, when but a single day's journey from his own house at Topcliffe, the great lord, presuming on his unbroken successes and in too great haste to think himself safe in his own country, refused to take part in any further invocations of the saint. 'What need we further of St. Julian and his petty hospitality?' thus in jest he asks his chaplains. 'To-night we shall sleep in our own houses. Why ask for what is our own?' The chaplain protests, but is answered with the rough side of the layman's tongue. 'Who hinders you to pray as you will? Only let me be and do not trouble us with your prayers.' The whole cavalcade set

off in eager haste to regain their houses and see their friends once more, and to make up for the discomforts of the campaign in the abundance and peace of home. Hardly a mile separated them from Topcliffe when a heavy smoke was seen hanging over the house, which was built in country fashion of wood and thatched with straw. They hurry on to see what may be saved, but the flames burst out and an hour's time reduces to nothing the work of years.

After a short night spent in the miserable hovels of the cottagers round the great house, they set out for Tadcaster. The chaplain again suggests a prayer, and the lord replies with an oath. On entering the town, all Percy's granaries and barns are discovered to have been burnt, and the resources of the little town afford even more scanty comfort than Topcliffe. The retinue, in spite of their ill-lodging, begin to appreciate the facts of the situation, and entering into the spirit of the contest, smile covertly as they whisper to one another, 'See which wins, the saint or Sir William.'

However, they are ready enough to make an early start on the morrow for York, where at least they may hope to find food enough. But their infatuated lord again scoffing to his chaplain shortly before they arrive at the city, in that very hour his tall and stately mansion, Hart house, is wrecked by a furious wind, and beams, vaulting, rafters and partitions scattered on the ground. The citizens of York look askance upon them when they hear the story, and William finds it best to leave the city again at daybreak for Nafferton, where his wife is. His following does not venture even to mention the saint to him.

Again fire is found ascending from the house, and the party arrives at a gallop to be met by the wife, who is being carried forth from the burning house in an apparently moribund state, together with her new-born son. Grief for their lord's beauti-

ful lady, the kind mistress who has been to them a second Dorcas, overcomes all other feelings, they forget all other disasters and are all prostrate under this new affliction, and pray to St. Julian for mercy and for the conversion of their lord. This is the turning-point of the tale. As the narrator tells us, translating, apparently, from an English proverb, ‘Ubi pestis maxima ibi emendatio proxima.’ When the plague is severest the mending is nearest, we may say. But the means by which Sir William’s heart is finally softened are as notable as the series of disasters so far recorded.

After a wretched night the lord and his retinue crossed the Humber into Lincolnshire. Here they were met by the reeve of his Immingham manor, who reported that five weeks before this he had received letters under Sir William’s seal, bidding him to get together provisions for three or four hundred men for forty days, and to be ready to receive him on the day he actually arrived. Not only so, but the reeve’s success in meeting this severe requisition had been such that he smilingly tells his master that he knows now that God’s favour must be upon him, for everything he has done in execution of his orders has prospered marvellously. Food for five hundred men, horses and dogs, for the period specified, is all ready. Sir William turned to his notary and chamberlain, and asked if any such letters had been sent. They answered ‘No,’ and all marvelled at so obviously supernatural an occurrence. What man could have foreseen the necessity which brought them thither? The chaplain drove home the moral and Sir William broke down and confessed his sin. All ends happily in prolonged feasting, which may be regarded either as a new marriage festival for the lord and his recovered wife, or as a birthday festival for the infant son Alan, or as a feast in honour of St. Julian. The accumulated provisions prove more ample even than the reeve had calculated, and take full fifty days to consume.

The text of the story from the manuscript, 7A III, in the Royal Collection in the British Museum, follows:

Deum in sanctis suis ammirabilem sanctosque eius in ipso mirabiles laudare semper ac praedicare nos condecet, cunctis videlicet et sermone praesentibus et scriptura futuris. Sed licet eorum omnium impossibile sit singula enarrare miracula, tamen dignum valde et aequum est aliqua aliquorum non tacere magnalia. Ego igitur fide catholicus et quamvis indigne vocatus pro religionis habitu monachus, tamen in rerum attestacione veridicus, debito tante aequitatis excitor unum sancti Juliani martyris viri praeclarissimi cunctis saeculis et maxime iter agentibus relatione dignissimum propalare praeconitum. Est enim in Anglia mos virorum prudentium quoquam sine respectu redeundi in ipso die pergentium se ab hospicii sui limine progressos iumentaque sua cum universis quae gestantur per intercessionem beati Juliani misericordiae dei commendare et omnipotentiae, quatinus eos a malignorum spirituum hominumque pravorum insidiis muniat, res suas ab omissionis damno custodiat, incepturnque iter sine impedimento dirigat, et ad oportunum in omnibus perducat hospicium. Sic namque aliquis promotis sociis suis praefari gestiens mox vulgariter incipit dicens: Dicamus pater noster sancti Juliani, et tunc illa quae praescripsimus vel secundum sensum suum subtiliora vel plura subnectit. Tante igitur consuetudinis auctoritate delectatus vir quidam genere Normannus, nomine Wilhelmus, cognomine de Perci, villa nativitatis sua, de primatis Angliae procer dignitatis honore vocatus, in praelium iturus cum rege Anglorum adversus exercitum regis Scottorum, convocatis capellanis suis praecipit, ut singulis diebus eum mane ab hospiciis vel castris exeuntem circumvenirent pariterque secum et omni collegio suo sanctum Julianum sibi prosperatorem in omnibus itineris sui necessitatibus et praecipue ad hospitalitatis gratiam invocarent. Quod dum facerent et in exitu et in castris et in reditu pree cunctis commilitonibus suis omnia sibi prospere successerunt.

Cum autem rediens mane progrederetur ab hospicio quod¹ itinere diei unius a Toppeclive opido suo distabat, circumdantibus eum capellanis solitoque more sancti patrocinia postulare suadentibus, ipse non solum pro acceptis beneficiis gratias exibens, sed velud iam sancti martiris interventione non indigens et in suis nimis presumptuose confidens, stulte respondit: Satis iam pro hospitalitatis penuria Julianum invocabimus, nunc ad propria nostre possessionis hospicia approximantes conquiescamus, quia quae impromptu habemus cur rogemus? Quod magister capellanus cum sociis suis et sanioris consilii militibus moleste ferens voce lacrimabili dixit: Velud

¹ *Quidem.*—MS.

quisque laudans invocat dominum ita et eum invocans laudat et sic ab inimicis saluus erit; et nos ergo dominum laudemus in sancto suo sanctumque in domino, et vere sicut hucusque prosperati perducimur sic de caetero indubitanter et sancti intercessio et domini omnipotentis dignatio ubique nos liberabit a dampno. Quibus communis laicorum usu acriter intulit ipse: Quis vobis prohibet? quantum vultis vos laudate, vos canite et nos facere sicut poterimus sinite.

Nec mirum si ab hominibus dimitti se postulat, qui ut credo preterita beneficia a deo sibi esse collata dubitaverat et iccirco ad horam, sicut in futuro narrabitur, ipsum sibi deus reliquerat, ut paulo post eum melioratum reciperet et sic in eo evangelicum Petri resuscitaret miraculum. Quid enim est Petrus iussus ambulare super mare, nisi fidelis quislibet ad adversa seculi calcanda a deo adiutus, cuius iussio est operatio, quia dixit et facta sunt? Sed Petrus fide dubius, sicut audivit: Modice fidei quare dubitasti? coepit turbari et mergi, id est a deo derelinqui. Si enim a deo teneretur non mergeretur, quia iustus, id est dei iure stans, confidit ut leo, qui ad nullius pavebit occursum. Denique vero Petrus clamat et mox erectus dominum sequitur, quia quiske penitens de peccatis elevatus dominum operibus bonis persequitur, et hic prius adiutus post per diffidentiam derelictus demum per penitentiam levatur a domino. Sed nunc evangelicam doctrinam tacentes ad ammirandam prelibate derelictionis et revelationis revertamur historiam.

Omissa itaque bone consuetudinis oratione cuncti alacriter pernici cursu viam arripiunt, isti propria recipere, illi amicos cernere, omnes pro longi exilii inedia, pro assidui laboris tumultu patriam et quietis tranquillitatem desiderantes. Iam autem illis tanquam unius miliarii spatium poreturis ad opidum apparuit fumus grandis super domos domini, quae satis magne et honeste, sed ad patriae morem ligneae et feno contecte fuerunt. Infra quas incendium valde resistentibus praevalens et iam cuncta corripiens globos flammarum eructuavit in aerem, qui vento agitat multorum dierum opera fere in unius horae brevitate telluri coaequerunt. Dominus ergo et sui visa flamma existimantes se aliquid erupturos incendio quam concito cursu quisque potuerit festinare coeperunt, quo advenientes totum dominium in carbones et cineres subversum esse repererunt. Quod domino casui non ultioni attribuente caeteri eius sodales plangendo conclamat: Qui in exilio semper alienum acutissime nobis paravit hospicium, ipse nostrum proprium merito sic redegit in nichilum, quia hodie nullus eius invocavit auxilium. Quare qui ante eum pro beneficiis dilexerant, exinde velud benefacere et se a neglectoribus suis vindicare potentem omni reverentia dignum esse praedicabant.

Nocte igitur illa in ruricolorum tuguriis circumiacentibus tarde et in mendicitate et vilitate hospitati mane ad Tatacastra iter arripiunt, quo itinere capellano sugerente domino orationem facere, ferunt eum sibi met odium

imprecatum esse si diceret. Culpis ergo eius exigentibus, secundum beati Job sententiam, quanto magis fugiunt arma ferrea, tanto amplius incident in arcum eneum. Ineuntes enim villam omnem annonam, cuncta cibaria cum suis officinis totius dominii igne consumpta reperiunt. Sed quantum in hac villa minor quam in prefato opido fuerat opulentia, tanto maior hospitatis aderat indigentia. Nec iccirco minus sanctum dilexere Julianum, sed ampliori laude eum reverebantur et haec infortunia domini sui improbitati imponentes subannando dixerunt. Experiatur² dominus Wilhelmus si plus sanctum contempnere, aut plus sanctus eum valeat apporiare.

Sed summo mane omnes tanquam hostium impetu exagitati ad civitatem Eboracum confugint, se esurientes, se sitientes, insomnes et lassos, volentes reficere. Ubi deus arbiter aequus et familiam contra has passiones refocillavit, et cor domini pro ruina domus sua valde collisit. Nec immorito, paulo namque prius quam civitatem intraverat, quibusdam ei orationem suadentibus: Ite vestras vias, proterve respondit. In qua hora et domus illius nobilissime, et pro speciositate sue celsitudinis Hert idest cervus appellate, exurgens turbo postes confregit, laquearia et tigna communivit, tecta et parietes concussit in aream. Unde cives Willelmi dementiam et dei munificentiam simulque iusticiam audientes, stupefacti tam maligni hominis consorcium detestabantur contra quem deum pie et iuste³ disposuisse confitebantur.

His ergo de causis Wilhelmus aurora illucescente cum suis ad Naffartun, ubi erat uxor sua, tetendit, quasi post naufragia portum, post dampno ibi sumpturus solatium. Quem in hac die nemo dominum invocare commonuit. Cum autem accelerantes fere ad locum pervenissent, sonitum langoris audiunt, et primo fumum (et)⁴ ignem domos dominii late invadentem aspiciunt, mox laxatis (h)⁵ abenis equos⁶ in cursus calcaribus urgent, et sic in atrium recepti descendunt. Quibus obviam moribunda fertur de ardente thalamo domina in tapeto cum filio, quem eadem hora pepererat vel pariebat. Pro qua res ardentes et edes obliti confusis planetibus eiulant, crines avellunt, pectora tundunt, se in terram prosternunt, et amarissime flendo liquescunt. Fuerat enim eis altera Dorcas, non solum parentibus generosa et facie speciosa sed et operibus bonis et castitate suis omnibus preciosa. In tanta etenim necessitate subventionis omnium virorum et sui sicut venenum a se cohiberi ut potuit praecepiebat accessum, quod familia in magnum sui doloris augmentum dure audiens sancto Juliano dicebat: Sancte⁷ Julianae vir fortis et potens nunc tibi tam multiplex vindicta sufficiat, deumque pro nobis exora, ut et dominum nostrum convertat, dominamque non interficiat, et nos non amplius ne moriamur affligat. Mira alternatio seruientis et non seruientis deo: prius ab

² Experatur.—MS.

³ Piae et iustae.—MS.

⁴ Omit et.—MS.

⁵ h interlined.

⁶ Aequos,—MS.

⁷ Sanctae,—MS.

omni adversitate liberi tantum dei beneficia deprecabantur, nunc etiam necessariis destituti tantum a mortis afflictione postulant liberari, quia si non pro culpis domini, pro suis tamen erant cruciatibus digni.

Sed nolite timere, quia sicut in gente nostra proverbialiter dicitur, ubi pestis maxima ibi emendatio proxima. Qui vestram vidistis derelictionem nunc vestrae revelationi nobiscum gaudenter occurrite: nobiscum inquam occurrite, vos fruendo, nos enarrando.

Noctis igitur illius toleratis utcumque miseriis, oriente Lucifero porrexerunt transire Umbriam, quia plurimas ex altera parte villas habebat. In cuius fluminis ripa venit obviam domino suo Wilhelmo prepositus Immigham cum optimatibus ville; qui ut ex more dominum suum cum familia salutatum osculati sunt, praepositus cunctis audientibus gaudentissime dixit: Domine quinque septimanis praeteritis venit ad me legatus quidam, et sigillo vestro signatas mihi tradidit litteras praecipientes ut vobis procautionem quadraginta dierum quadrangentis vel ad minus trecentis hominibus quererem et hodierna die prandium vobis pararem, et hic in hac (h^o) ora vestrum expectarem adventum. Et nunc domine scio quia deus vos diligit; quicquid enim de vestra iussione volui, facillime ipso adiuvante obtinui. Scitote enim per ipsum quingentis hominibus equis⁹ et canibus per xl dies omnem plenitudinem vobis esse paratam. Vénite ergo et cum magno honore et hilaritate prandete. Tunc dominus exhilaratus paululum subsidens notarium et camerarium, si ipse has litteras mississe(t¹⁰) interrogavit. Quibus dicentibus Non. Dicite ergo, inquit, si vel tu umquam scripsisti, aut tu tales litteras sigillasti, et ego vos nulló modo ledendos in fide et veritate promitto. Quod omni modo illis negantibus et caeteris de tam inaudita re ammirantibus, et dei nuntium qui tam certa praediceret et non hominis nec hominem esse affirmantibus, accessit ad dominum suum capellanus et dixit: O miser, O execrate, O immemor omnium beneficiorum sancti martyris, si tu superbiae vanitate tumidus de negligentia tua pro rerum tuarum conflatione in cineres, (si¹¹) pro turbinis impulsione necdum paenitere digneris, saltem (pro tam¹²) manifesta diuine providentiae benignitate simul etiam pro vitae tuae incolumitate paeniteat de toto cordé humiliatum invocatione sancti adiutoris tui, et solita gratiarum actione pro eiusdem subventione esse evacuatum¹³; timeo enim tibi impenitenti non tantum iam consimilem imminentem subversionem, sed et in proximo vitae presentis afflictionem et amissionem et aeternae mortis incommodum. Scimus enim multos a veritate devios in primis rebus secularibus expoliari deinde membris omnibus flagellari et tunc castigatos converti, reprobatos aeterna morte dampnari. Quo ordine expoliandi videlicet et flagellandi, multorum etiam¹⁴ deus augmentat coronam.

⁸ h interlined.

⁹ Aequis.—MS.

¹⁰ t over erasure.

¹¹ Interlined.

¹² Interlined.

¹³ A verb seems to be lost.

¹⁴ Aetiam,—MS.

Job enim omni possessione sublata toto permisit corpore affligi. Qui olim duppliciter restitutus nunc regnat aeternus. Elige ergo aut cum obstinatis cor durum et impenitens habens condemnari in inferis, aut cor contritum et humiliatum adeptus cum supplicibus coronari in caelis.

Cum haec et similia capellanus praedicaret, Wilhelmus spiritu compunctionis in lacrimas resolutus ad deum genua flexus et pedibus sacerdotis advolutus se peccasse et valde penitere fatebatur, et a deo peccatorum suorum veniam et ab illo absolutionis benedictionem deprecabatur. Quod capellanus ei annuens orare omnes consodales suos ammonuit, ut domino suo haec eadem deus ipse concederet. His ita gestis omnes ineffabili gaudio unanimiter velud invitati a deo ad epulas quas sibi ab eo preparatas esse dicebant cum immensis laudibus Christi pro suis beneficiis et gratiarum actione pro sua liberatione concurrunt. Et fuerunt multi qui Willelmum de Perci novas nuptias uxori suae recepte, quidam natalicia primogenito filio suo Alano, tali enim nomine vocabatur, alii autem verius beato Juliano sollempnia per dies fere quinquaginta cælebrasse dixerunt. Erat enim ipsis et innumeris cotidie supervenientibus procuratio illa fere inconsueta. Omnes igitur et primam divinae hospitalitatis gratiam, et quatuor dies pro diffidentia desolatorios, et tot dies tranquillitatis et satietatis pro penitentia reditos audientes, deum, qui sperantes in se non derelinquit, qui et conversos ad se non despicit, laudavere libentius, sanctumque Julianum in itineris sui exitibus invocavere frequentius. Quod et vos facere quibuscumque hoc scriptum advenerit, non contempnite. Et haec verissima, multis et magnis testibus comprobata, praedicare non pudeat. Sed me morem abbreviantis, non rem plene describentis, secutum esse scitote. Non enim simplex sed multiplex descripsi miraculum, et singula suis commendationibus, et nostris exortationibus palliari deberent. In omni enim miraculo vel scriptura dei virtutem magnificare, et nobis bone vitae magisterium resuscitare debemus. Sic lingua sapientium Jeronimi, Augustini, Gregorii, similiisque adornat scientiam. Set quicquid minus debito vel pro auditorum fastidio, vel pro periciae inopia, fecimus, indulget nobis omnipotens dominus, et per intercessionem preciosi martiris Juliani nos viventes oportunis hospiciis, mortuos catholicorum more sepulchris, animas aeternae quietis mansionibus inferat, donec resuscitatos in regno suo nos collocet, qui in unitate et trinitate perfecta in aeternum vivit et regnat deus per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.