CHAPTER III.

THE WORK OF THE HAGIOGRAPHER.

I.

The meaning of the term "hagiographer"—Literary methods—Moralities—Ancient ideas concerning history—Special views of mediæval hagiographers.

THE unconscious mental processes of the people when occupied with the manufacture of stories about the saints leads, as we have shown, to a weakening and obscuring of historical testimony, sometimes even to its almost entire suppression. Have hagiographers proved themselves more faithful guardians of historical tradition?

Let us remember, in the first place, that we do not propose to include under the term hagiographer every man of letters who has occupied his pen with the lives of saints. There are among them some who have simply recorded what they have seen with their eyes and touched with their hands. Their narratives constitute authentic historical memoirs no less than works of edification. These candid witnesses, known to every one, and accepted on all sides as furnishing the most pure sources of hagiography, will be excluded from our present inquiry. Neither need we occupy ourselves here with that class of writers, possessing both literary power and the necessary information, who have under-

taken to discharge the functions of a historian, men like Sulpicius Severus, Hilary of Poitiers, Fortunatus, Ennodius or Eugippius. They are the last representatives of classic antiquity, and their writings, instinct with art and life, must not be confused with the artificial productions of later periods, which affect at times to be inspired by them. Again, we write with similar respect of those conscientious biographers who, at various periods of the Middle Ages, succeeded in closely following these models, and produced work the value of which is in no way contested. We must reserve our full attention for those conventional and factitious productions composed at a distance from the events recorded and without any tangible relation to the facts.

If we should mentally subtract from the martyrologies or lectionaries of the West and from the menologies of the Greek Church the writings which every one is agreed in accepting as historic documents, there will still remain a considerable collection of the Passions of martyrs and of the lives of saints of an inferior quality, amongst which some have been unanimously rejected by the critics, while others are regarded with suspicion. The authors of this residuum—for the most part anonymous—are the hagiographers whose methods we propose to study. The acts of the martyrs composed long after the persecutions—I wish to emphasise this point—constitute the greater part of their literary wares. We shall therefore occupy ourselves almost exclusively with this class of compositions. It will be easy to extend to other writings what we shall have to say about these.

There is no need for drawing a distinction between Greek and Latin authors. If from a purely literary point of view the former usually possess an advantage,

as regards the historic sense there is nothing to choose between them, and in point of fact they constitute but a single group.

The first question that should be addressed to an author the value of whose work one wishes to estimate, concerns the class of literature that he professes to produce, for it would be manifestly unjust to condemn, on the ground of historical inaccuracy, one whose only aim was to write a work of fiction. Certain hagiographic documents are clearly of this nature; they are parables or tales designed to bring home some religious truth or some moral principle. The author relates as a means of teaching, and never pretends to be dealing with real facts. Just as the ancient story-tellers brought kings and princes on the scene, so the Christian moralist would quite naturally fortify his precepts by the authority of a martyr or an ascetic. And even when it was not a question of inculcating some truth, but merely of giving pleasure to the reader by an attractive narrative, the outlines of a saint's life at a time when lives of saints were the favourite reading of the faithful, offered an element of interest that was not to be despised.

More than one solemn lesson has been preached to the people in the guise of a hagiographic document. The celebrated *Passio S. Nicefori*[1] had no other aim, and the same may be said of the histories of Theodulus the Stylite,[2] of St. Martinianus,[3] of Boniface of Tarsus,[4]

1 *Acta SS.*, Feb., vol. ii., pp. 894-95.
2 *Ibid.*, May, vol. vi., pp. 756-65. [See H. Delehaye, *Les saints stylites*, Brussels, 1923, p. cxviii-cxix. 3d ed.]
3 *Acta SS.*, Feb., vol. ii., p. 666; P. Rabbow, *Die Legende des Martinian* in *Wiener Studien*, 1895, pp. 253-93.
4 Ruinart, *Act. mart. sincera*, pp. 289-91.

and of Cyprian of Antioch, the theme of which last may be recognised in the legend of Faust.[1] What save a little religious romance is the oft-repeated tale of the adventures of a pious woman hiding herself in a monastery with the name and in the garb of a man, accused of misconduct and proved to be innocent after her death? The heroine is called, as the case may be, Marina, Pelagia, Eugenia, Euphrosyne, Theodora, Margaret or Apollinaria.[2] It is obvious that this was a favourite theme among pious story-tellers. In many cases they did not put themselves to the trouble of inventing, but made shift with a simple adaptation. The story of Œdipus in all its gloomy horror has been applied to others besides St. Gregory.[3] Attributed in turn to St. Albanus,[4] an imaginary personage, to St. Julian the Hospitaller,[5] to a St. Ursius[6] and to others, it was widely read throughout the Middle Ages as the biography of a saint.[7] And which of us to-day is unaware that the life of the saints Barlaam and Joasaph is merely an adaptation of the Buddha legend?[8] In

1 Zahn, *Cyprian von Antiochien und die deutsche Faustsage*, Erlangen, 1882, 8°, 153 pages.
2 See later, chap. vii. Compare *Acta SS.*, Jan., vol. i., p. 258.
3 *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina*, n. 3649-51.
4 *Catalogus codd. MSS. hagiogr. lat. bibl. Regiæ Bruxellensis*, vol. ii., pp. 444-56. Compare *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xiv., p. 124.
5 *Acta SS.*, Jan., vol. i i.,p. 974.
6 *Ibid.*, May, vol. i., pp. 926-27.
7 It is well known that this legend has also been applied to Judas Iscariot. It may be read in the *Legenda Aurea*, chap. xlv., *De S. Mathia Apostolo*. See Creizenach, *Judas Iscarioth in Legende und Sage des M.-A.*, 1875; V. Istrin, *Die griechische Version der Judas Legende* in *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, vol. xx., 1898, pp. 605-19.
8 E. Cosquin, *La légende des saints Barlaam et Josaphat, son origine*, in the *Revue des Questions historiques*, Oct., 1880; Kuhn, *Barlaam und Joasaph* in *Abhandlungen der k. bayer. Academie*, i. Cl., vol. xx., 1893, pp. 1-88. G. Paris, *Poèmes et légendes du moyen*

the mind of the monk John, to whom we owe it in its Christian form, it was nothing more than a pleasant and piquant narrative serving as a vehicle for religious and moral instruction.

Nevertheless, fictions of this type are not without a certain danger. As long as they continue to be read in the spirit in which they were written, all goes well. But a moment comes, and in some cases comes very quickly, when people no longer recall the original intention of the story. Indeed the classification of literature is not always an easy task, and we can imagine our own great-grandchildren finding themselves much embarrassed by some of our contemporary novels of a vivid and convincing realism. In such cases, however, our ancestors suffered from no hesitations. In their eyes all noble narratives which delighted them were history, and the heroes therein depicted were genuine saints equal in all respects to those who enjoyed traditional honours.

It also happened—though less frequently than one might be tempted to suppose—that, under favourable circumstances, these new saints quitted the literary sphere in which they had been created and really became the object of public devotion. The fact is greatly to be deplored wherever it occurred. Yet was it not the outcome of a natural evolution, and is it not likely to occur wherever hagiographic documents are accepted in an uncritical spirit? In point of fact it is quite unjust on such occasions to blame the hagiographer, and he might well reproach us in our turn. We should first ascertain what he intended to produce, and judge him only from his own standpoint.

âge, pp. 181-215. Concerning devotion to the two saints, see *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxii., p. 131.

It is true that to the question of intention the hagiographer in most cases will reply that he intended to write history. Hence, in such cases it is important to ascertain what ideas he entertained concerning historical writing, and in what sense he understood the duties of a historian. It goes without saying that he did not entertain the same ideas on the subject as we do now.

When we attempt to arrive at some understanding of how the ancients themselves understood history, we are less surprised at the naïve conceptions concerning it held by men of letters in the Middle Ages. With rare exceptions—Polybius, who was never popular with the general public, might be quoted as one—classic antiquity saw but little difference between history and rhetoric. The historian holds, as it were, a place midway between the rhetorician and the poet. And when one remembers how easy a conscience rhetoricians had in matters of truth, it is not difficult to measure the distance that separates us from antiquity in our manner of judging the qualifications and duties of a historian.[1] What for us is merely accessory, for the ancients was the very essence. Then historians had regard, above all else, to literary effect; material truth troubled them less, accuracy scarce at all, and of the critical spirit they had, as a rule, no conception whatever. The main thing was to give pleasure to the reader by the interest of the narrative, the beauty of the descriptions and the brilliancy of the style.

It can easily be imagined that the Middle Ages which, in a sense, were the inheritors of the literary traditions of the ancients did not open up new paths

[1 Fine passages by the ancients on the ideal and duties of the historian are well known. . . . Study of the sources and processes should rather understand the concept that they had of historical genre and the manner of realizing it. Concerning all this see H. Peter, *Die geschichtliche Litteratur über die römische Kaiserzeit bis Theodosius I*, Leipzig, 1897, vol. i, p. 200-4; E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa*, Leipzig, 1898, vol. i, p. 81 ff. 3d ed.]

in the domain of history. Above all, their tendencies were not in the direction of criticism. When the historian no longer desired to be restricted to the *rôle* of annalist or witness he became a compiler, one lacking discernment, and far more preoccupied with his readers' tastes than with a laborious quest after truth. The ancients who might have been his models knew as little as he did of those complicated processes by means of which we hope to disentangle the true from the false, and to reconstruct the characteristic features of a personage or a period. Moreover, the simple minds of these semi-barbarous scribes were lacking in the very first qualification for exercising the critical faculty in however slight a degree. They were devoid of guile, and they never suspected that a written testimony might be false, or that a likely tale need not necessarily be true. The confusion between history and legend was never-ending. History, in the Middle Ages, meant everything that was told, everything that was written in books.

It goes without saying that this elementary conception of history was shared by the hagiographers. Their writings, no less than their own declarations, testify to the fact. Nothing is more common in the prefaces to lives of saints than excuses for imperfections of form and a preoccupation concerning style. The author frequently laments his incapacity, and professes anxiety lest he should bore his reader. Meanwhile, he obviously ignores the many delicate problems that assail the historian, and, save in very rare instances, his only guarantee of the quality of his wares consists in commonplace protestations of sincerity which leave the reader wholly unmoved if they do not actually awaken his suspicions.

Among the many hagiographers whom we might interrogate as to the manner in which, in their day, their profession was understood, here is one—the author of the Martyrdom of St. Fortunata—who, in his opening lines, testifies to the discredit into which his predecessors and rivals had allowed the form of history which he professed to cultivate to fall. "Sanctorum martyrum passiones idcirco minoris habentur auctoritatis, quia scilicet in quibusdam illarum falsa inveniuntur mixta cum veris."[1] The opening words are far from ordinary, and one asks oneself with a certain curiosity how the author proposes in the case of this new Passion that he has been engaged to write to give it that authoritative character which is so desirable. He hastens to let us into his secret: "Passionem sanctissimæ virginis Fortunatæ hac ratione stilo propriæ locutionis expressi, superflua scilicet resecans, necessaria quæque subrogans, vitiata emendans, inordinata corrigens atque incomposita componens".[2]

Thus a writer, who is quite conscious that everything is not for the best in the hagiographic world, can suggest nothing more efficacious as regards the abuses he chronicles than improved editing and an amended style. The idea of undertaking fresh researches, of studying documents, of comparing and weighing evidence, has not even occurred to him.

In point of fact the requirements of the reading

1 "The Passions of the holy martyrs are held to be of less authority because in some of them falsehood is found mixed up with truth." *Prologus ad Passionem S. Fortunatæ v. et m.* Mai, *Spicilegium Romanum*, vol. iv., p. 289.

2 "My method has been to set down the Passion of the holy martyr Fortunata in my own words, cutting away what was superfluous, adding anything necessary, amending what was corrupt, correcting what was extravagant and rearranging what was disorderly."

public did not go beyond his suggestions. When the monk Theodoric arrived in Rome, the Canons of St. Peter's begged him to turn his attention to the life of Pope St. Martin, of whom they possessed a biography: "in tantum rusticano stilo prævaricata atque falsata, quæ doctas aures terrerent potius quam mulcerent".[1] It is the classic complaint of all those who would persuade an author to rewrite a biography or a martyrdom. They are shocked by the barbarity of the style. All else is indifferent to them.

The hagiographer, then, is inspired by the ideas of history current in his day. Nevertheless he writes with a special and clearly defined object, not without influence on the character of his work. For he does not relate simply in order to interest, but above all else to edify. Thus a new form of literature is created which partakes at once of the nature of biography, panegyric and moral instruction.

The inevitable pitfalls are too familiar to need recapitulation. It follows from the very purpose of his writing that the panegyrist is not bound to draw a portrait of which every detail is in precise accordance with the truth. Every one knows that he is painting an ideal picture, and that he is free to omit those aspects in which his hero appears to less advantage. In the same way the eulogy of a saint was held incompatible with the slightest suggestion of blame, and as the saints themselves were subject to human infirmities the task of the hagiographer intent on sacrificing nothing to truth presents difficulties of a somewhat delicate nature.

1 "So ill-favoured and corrupt owing to its barbarous style as to horrify rather than charm learned ears." *Theodorici monachi præfatio in vitam S. Martini papæ*, Mai, vol. cit., p. 294. [On the monk Thierry, read A. Poncelet, in *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxvii, p. 5-27. 3d ed.]

His fidelity, as a rule, depends largely on his state of mind. If, for instance, while pursuing his aim of edification, he can persuade himself that the sins of the saint before and even after his conversion, far from clouding his glory, actually enhance the triumph of divine grace, he is not likely to leave the more human side of his hero in the shade, and will beware of placing him on those inaccessible heights which discourage imitators. But there exists a school of hagiographers who would gladly strike out the denial of St. Peter from the Gospel, in order not to tarnish the aureola of the prince of the apostles. They submit themselves, more than we could wish, to the stern exigencies of their craft. But before we condemn them as faithless historians, we should ask ourselves whether the name of history, as we moderns understand it, should be applied to their writings at all.

Nor must we omit to bear in mind a further circumstance which assists us to grasp the attitude of the mediæval hagiographer. He was acquainted with two species of books: those in which every one was obliged to believe, *i.e.*, Holy Scripture in all its parts, and those to which no one was compelled to give credence. He was acutely conscious of the fact that his own writings belonged to the latter category, and that his readers were fully aware of it. Thus for him some books contained absolute truth, others only relative truth, and this conviction naturally gave him an easy conscience in regard to historic exactitude. Hence the feigned indignation, so frequently met with among hagiographers against all who do not give credence to their narratives. It betrays the man whose conscience is not entirely clear.

II.

Sources—False attributions—Written Tradition—Oral Tradition—Pictorial Tradition—Relics of the Past—Choice of Sources—Interpretation of Sources—Inscriptions—Use of the various Categories of Documents.

We have already seen in what sense our pious authors usually interpreted their duties while professing to discharge the function of a historian. We have now to examine how they exercised it, and what historical elements we may look for in their work. Here, as always, it is a case of solving in each individual instance the twofold problem: What sources of information had they at their disposal, and what use did they make of them?

As a general rule the hagiographer is not very eager to inform his readers from whence he has drawn his information. He may even display a certain affectation, not infrequently met with in classical authors, in hiding the sources of his knowledge. At other times he may pose as an ocular witness of facts drawn from some written document,[1] or of incidents that he himself has invented. For if chroniclers worthy of credence [2] have made justifiable use of the scriptural phrase, *Quod vidimus oculis nostris quod perspeximus* (1 John i. 1),[3] there have also been no lack of impostors to abuse it.[4]

1 An example of this may be found in an author of the Carlovingian period, who when re-writing the life of St. John of Réome († about the year 544) by Jonas, introduces the following phrase: *Et ne quis hoc fabulosum putet esse quod dicimus, referente viro venerabili Agrippino diacono, ipsius Agrestii filio, cognovimus.* See also M. G.; *Scr. rer. Merov.*, vol. iii., p. 504.

2 *Passio Perpetuæ*, i., 5.

3 "What we have seen with our eyes, what we have beheld."

4 *Passio S. Andreæ*, n. 1. Bonnet, *Acta apostolorum apocrypha*, vol. ii., 1, p. 1. *Cf. Acta Barnabæ*, n. 1; *ibid.*, vol. ii., 2, p. 292.

Others have appropriated the familiar formula of Eusebius when he describes the persecution of Diocletian in Palestine, ὁ καθ' ἡμᾶς διωγμός,[1] and by this means have passed themselves off as contemporaries.[2] Above all, must we beware of authors who profess to have discovered engraved tablets.[3]

We must assume, so numerous are the examples of it, that the hagiographer felt justified in making use of the literary fiction which consists in speaking in the name of a disciple of the saint in order to give greater weight to his narrative. We are all acquainted with Eurippus, the pretended disciple of St. John the Baptist;[4] with Pasicrates, the servant of St. George;[5] Augarus, the secretary of St. Theodore;[6] Athanasius, the stenographer of St. Catherine;[7] Nilus, the companion of St. Theodotus;[8] Theotimus, the attendant of St. Margaret;[9] Evagrius, the disciple of St. Pancratius of Tauromenium;[10] Florentius, the servant of SS. Cassiodorus, Senator and Dominata;[11] Gordianus,

1 "The persecution of our own time."—*De Martyribus Palestinæ*, 3, 6, 8. See *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xvi., pp. 122, 127.

2 *Passio S. Sebastianæ*, n. 1. *Acta SS.*, June, vol. vi., p. 60.

3 The proceeding was already familiar to the novelists of antiquity. E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman*, p. 271.

4 A. Vassiliev, *Anecdota Græco-Byzantina*, Moscow, 1893, p. 1.

5 *Bibliotheca hagiographica græca*, p. 47, n. 3, 6.

6 *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. ii., p. 359.

7 Viteau, *Passion des Saints Ecatérine et Pierre d'Alexandrie*, Paris, 1897, p. 23.

8 *Acta SS.*, May, vol. iv., p. 149. *Also Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxii., pp. 320-28.

9 *Acta SS.*, July, vol. v., pp. 31-32.

10 *Catal. codd. hag. græcorum bibliotheca Vaticanæ*, Brussels, 1899, p. 132.

11 H. Delehaye, *Saint Cassiodore* in *Mélanges Paul Fabre*, Paris, 1902, p. 44.

the servant of St. Placidus;[1] and Enoch, the witness of the doings of St. Angelo.[2] The above list might be considerably augmented.

Another device was to place history under the patronage of some well-known name. Thus the Passion of SS. Menas, Hermogenes and Eugraphus[3] is supposed to have been written by St. Athanasius; the history of the image of Camuliana is attributed to St. Gregory of Nyssa,[4] and so on.

Hence it becomes useless to interrogate the hagiographers themselves; it is their writings we have to examine, and to try to distinguish the elements of which they are composed.

The classification of historical sources suggested by Droysen can be conveniently applied to hagiography. They may be grouped in two broad categories: tradition and antiquarian remains.

In the first category we recognise primarily *written tradition*, *i.e.*, narratives, annals, chronicles, memoirs, biographies, historical inscriptions and every other kind of writing. It seems superfluous to point out that all these classes of documents, according to circumstances, have been at the disposal of hagiographers. But it would be a mistake to conclude that lack of documents would usually restrain them from undertaking the task of historians or from writing the lives of saints. We must not necessarily conclude that they themselves were fully informed because they furnish the reader with a profusion of details. We shall see later by what means they supplemented inadequate sources.

1 *Acta SS.*, Oct., vol. iii., pp. 114-38.
2 *Ibid.*, May, vol. ii., pp. 803-30.
3 *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xviii., p. 405.
4 E. von Dobschütz, *Christusbilder*, p. 12.

Another error, very widely spread, is to assume that in the first centuries of the Christian era authentic accounts were in existence of all the martyrs who were honoured with public worship, and to infer that the documents which clearly belong to a later date were derived from original contemporary sources.

Thanks to special circumstances the Church in Africa was, in this respect, in a privileged position. Yet even here we must not exaggerate its resources. St. Augustine, speaking of St. Stephen, whose martyrdom is related in the Acts of the Apostles, made use of these significant words: "Cum aliorum martyrum vix gesta inveniamus quæ in solemnitatibus eorum recitare possimus, huius passio in canonico libro est".[1] It remains none the less true that the average value of hagiographic documents from Africa is very much higher than that of the materials bequeathed to us by most other Churches.

Unhappily the mistake has been made of assuming in regard to others what is in reality only true of this solitary instance. On the faith of a text which has since been appraised at its proper value, various scholars have asserted that, in the Roman Church during the years of persecution, there existed a body of notaries entrusted with the duty of collecting the acts of the martyrs, and of this supposed corporation unfair advantage has been taken to give to the narratives of the Roman Legendarium a historic authority to which they have no sort of claim.[2] It is certain that in the fourth

1 "While in the case of other martyrs we can scarcely find sufficient details about them to read in public on their festivals, this saint's martyrdom is set forth in a book of the canonical Scriptures." —*Sermo*, 315, n. 1, Migne, P. L., vol. xxxviii., p. 1426.
2 See Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis*, vol. i., pp. c.-ci.

century, when Damasus placed his famous inscriptions on the tombs of the martyrs, the people of Rome were ignorant of the history of the greater number of them.[1] When the necessity made itself felt of providing a circumstantial narrative, the hagiographers had to dispense with any appeal to written tradition, for such did not exist.

A second source of information is *oral tradition*: the reports of contemporaries or eye-witnesses, accounts of indirect witnesses and narratives circulating among the people, in a word every unwritten historical or legendary report that might be used by the editor of the life of a saint. No doubt it has happened at times that hagiographers have gathered precious information from the lips of witnesses who spoke from first-hand knowledge. But how far more often must they have been satisfied with a tradition which had suffered from its transmission through tortuous channels. We have seen in the previous chapter how an incident preserved in the popular memory may undergo unconscious distortion and with what strange accretions the history of a hero may sometimes be enriched. The hagiographer has constantly found himself confronted by legendary narratives, the only ones with which oral tradition could furnish him.

It is scarcely necessary to point out that it is not always easy to determine the precise origin of legendary data for which a hagiographer may make himself responsible. They are as likely to have been supplied him by literary as by oral tradition, and not infrequently he may have drawn from his own resources what we should at first be tempted to mistake for folk tales of spontaneous growth. After all, that which a whole people ends by saying must have been enunciated in the first place by an individual, and why should not the hagiographer who holds the pen have been the first to formulate some legendary detail? It is always with this mental reservation that we must accept oral tradition as met with in written documents.

1 *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xvi., p. 239; Dufourcq, *Les gesta des martyrs romains*, p. 24 ff.

Thirdly, *pictorial tradition* must not be neglected, for it plays an important part in hagiography. Artists, as a rule, seek their inspiration in written or oral tradition. But at the same time it may happen that both these sources enrich themselves from the creations of painters and sculptors who transform and give back to them the ideas they had previously borrowed. We know beyond a doubt that certain authors of legends were directly inspired by the frescoes or mosaics before their eyes, among others Prudentius in his description of the martyrdom of St. Hippolytus.[1] The panegyric of St. Euphemia by Asterius of Amasea is merely the description of a series of frescoes,[2] and in the panegyric of St. Theodore attributed to Gregory of Nyssa the orator draws the attention of his audience to the paintings of the basilica.[3] More than one legend, as we shall see, owes its origin to the fantasy of some artist, or to a mistaken interpretation of some iconographic detail.

Certain hagiographers have made a somewhat unexpected use of pictorial tradition. In the synaxaries of the Greek Church numbers of the biographies of illustrious saints conclude with a detailed portrait which in its precision would appear to reveal an eye-witness. When studied closely, however, it becomes obvious that these descriptions are simply borrowed from those

1 *Peristeph.*, xi.
2 Migne, P. G., vol. xl., p. 336.
3 *Ibid.*, vol. xlvi., p. 737.

manuals of painting from which Byzantine artists copied the features of the unchanging physiognomies of their saints.[1] For those who have not recognised their origin the portraits might possess a quite exaggerated importance.

This then is what tradition, in its various forms, can supply to the hagiographer: a more or less faithful picture of the past and certain traits of individual character. But the past has at times bequeathed to us something of itself, a building, an instrument, an authentic document. In the same way we often possess more of the saints than a mere memory; we may have their relics, their shrine, sometimes even their writings. From all these the historian draws inspiration; often indeed the hagiographer possesses no other documents than these *relics of the past*, a hallowed corpse, a tomb visited by pilgrims, a feast celebrated each year on the day of death. He knows this is insufficient to satisfy the eager curiosity of the people. If in spite of the lack of material he feels compelled to gratify popular taste we can guess what the result must be.

We have now enumerated the ordinary sources of information at the hagiographer's disposal. Let us suppose him well furnished with materials, and we will try to watch him at his work. The bent of his mind will betray itself in his choice of documents and items of information, in the interpretation he puts upon them, and in the way he wields them together.

In the first place, we must not expect a very judicious choice from our man of letters, who is forced to restrict himself and to give the preference to one authority rather than another. He has never learned how to

1 See *Synaxarium ecclesiæ Constantinopolitanæ*, *Propylæum ad Acta SS. Novembris*, p. lxvi.

weigh evidence, and all his sources appear to him of equal value. Hence he mingles the historic element indiscriminately with legendary lore, and it is not this last which goes to the wall when space forbids a lengthy narrative.

Two hagiographic collections which first saw the light, one at the dawn of the Middle Ages, the writings of Gregory of Tours on the martys and confessors, the other the Golden Legend, at its culminating point, allow us to observe, so to speak in the very act, the methods of pious writers compelled to restrict themselves in their narrative. In both cases they had copious materials at their disposal, and deliberately neglected the sources that would have interested us the most in order to devote all their attention to the more marvellous features which betray in a marked degree their legendary character.[1]

In this they merely followed popular taste, instinctively drawn as we have seen towards everything that is miraculous and tangible, and it is perhaps to this very tendency that we must attribute the loss of the acts of a large number of saints who had enjoyed a widespread popularity. Thus, without wishing to affirm that there have ever existed written accounts of the deaths of the celebrated martyrs Theodore and Menas, whose cultus can be accurately localised, it is quite natural that the extraordinary interest displayed by the people in the fabulous tales circulated concerning them, should have encour-

1 A similar preference betrays itself very clearly in the Greek life of St. Gregory the Great, which was composed, as we have attempted to show elsewhere, by means of selected extracts sent by the Greek monks of the Cœlian Hill to Constantinople, *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxiii., pp. 449-54. [Several additional sentences at this point in the 3d ed. speak of the difference in the materials available to Gregory and to Voragine, the author of the *Golden Legend*.]

aged the hagiographers to neglect more and more the more sober material furnished by their acts and even to eliminate it altogether. The study of manuscripts indeed has revealed the permanent fact that between a purely historical document and a touched-up version, adorned with fantastic developments and interlarded with fables, a mediæval public rarely hesitated. It almost always happens that it is the less simple version which is preserved in the greater number of manuscripts, while often enough the primitive composition is only to be found in a single copy.[1]

The historical value of a work does not depend solely on the choice of authorities, but also on the interpretation put upon them and the treatment to which they are subjected. We might relate here, did we not fear to wander too far from our subject, what hagiographers and their assistants have occasionally been capable of deducing even from such documents as it required no special aptitude to interpret. The clearest texts may sometimes be misunderstood, and give rise to the most unexpected inferences. We must, however, restrict ourselves to one or two examples.

It is known that the Scillitan martyrs suffered death on 17th July, 180, in the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Commodus. The wording of the Acts establishes it quite clearly from the first: *Præsente bis et Condiano consulibus XVI. kal. Augustas.* The first name was wrongly understood, and some one or other mistook it for a participle. This participle was ex-

1 This fact is easily verified by means of the catalogues of Latin and Greek hagiographic manuscripts published by the Bollandists, both separately and in nearly all the volumes of *Analecta Bollandiana* since 1882.

changed for an equivalent, or something that was considered such: *præsidente, prætante, exsistente.* At the same time Condianus became Claudianus, then Claudius, who in his turn was identified with the consul of that name in the year 200. Now in that year there were two emperors reigning side by side. The *imperator* mentioned in the text was easily corrected into *imperatores.* There was then nothing left to do save to add the names of the emperors Severus and Caracalla. This was done without, of course, any one suspecting what a revolution this apparently justifiable correction would introduce into the chronology of the Christian persecutions. We see from the result what comes of not being able to distinguish a name from a participle![1]

If the name Amphibalus has been conferred on the saintly confessor to whom St. Alban of Verulam gave shelter, it is merely because Geoffrey of Monmouth mistook a chasuble for a man.[2]

In the passion of St. Fructuosus and his companions may be read the following interesting dialogue between the judge Æmilianus and the martyr: *Episcopus es? Fructuosus episcopus dixit: Sum. Æmilianus dixit: Fuisti. Et jussit eos sua sententia vivos ardere.*[3] A copyist, failing to perceive the sarcasm of the judge, read *fustibus* in the place of *fuisti.* The word by itself having no meaning, our hagiographer supplied boldly, *Fustibus eos sternite,* thus adding a fresh

1 This series of alterations has been admirably exposed by M. P. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne,* vol. i., Paris, 1901, p. 62.

2 J. Loth, *Saint Amphibalus* in the *Revue Celtique,* vol. ii., 1890, pp. 348-49.

3 "Art thou a bishop?" Fructuosus, the bishop, said: "I am". AEmilianus replied: "Thou hast been". And he sentenced them to be burned alive.

torture to the martyr in order to justify an inaccurate reading.[1]

It was possibly also a very slight error of some copyist which transformed into a miracle a quite natural incident related in the Acts of St. Marciana. A lion, let loose in the arena, sprang furiously upon her, and stood over her with its paws on her chest; then having smelt her, turned away without doing her any injury: *martyris corpus odoratus eam ultra non contigit.*[2] The author of a hymn in honour of St. Marciana has been led to confuse *odorare* with *adorare;* unless indeed he himself wished to embellish the narrative of the hagiographer by writing:—

"Leo percurrit percitus
Adoraturus veniens
Non comesturus virginem."[3]

We must not omit to mention here a whole series of gross errors due to the carelessness of compilers of synaxaries or martyrologies who had summary methods of their own for dealing with any difficulties they might meet with in their editorial duties. Thus what could be more improbable than the feast of St. Babylas with the three children in competition with that other St. Babylas and his eighty-eight companions on the same date and with a more or less identical history? The origin of this duplication was an abbreviation in two letters which was mistaken for a number of two figures. A moment's reflection should have sufficed to correct the mistake. But our learned editors preferred

1 *Acta SS.*, Jan., vol. ii., p. 340.
2 *Ibid.*, Jan., vol. i., p. 569.
3 The lion bounds forward to adore, not to devour the virgin maid. *Ibid.*, p. 570. See E. Le Blant, *Les Actes des martyrs*, p. 30.

to lengthen out the list of the saints.[1] In the same spirit they invented the three groups of SS. Cosmas and Damian, without realising the absurdities they were gaily accumulating.[2] Compared with such enormities the duplication of St. Martin, thanks to a mere question of dates, appears a venial offence.[3] It is probable that a similar origin must be assigned to the double St. Theodore of the Greeks and the Latins.[4] The two feast-days have given rise to two legends, and in this instance the man of letters would seem to have been the guilty party. For the common people, as we have seen, have their own ways of simplifying matters. They are more likely to fuse two personages together, than to create two in the place of one.

We need not revert here to the curious explanations which popular imagination has occasionally invented concerning certain carved monuments of which the meaning was obscure.[5] The hagiographers accepted such explanations with zest and embodied them in their narratives. If it was the people who created the legend of the "cephalophorous" or head-bearing saints, it was propagated by the hagiographers who bestowed upon it that special authority which the uneducated always accord to the written word.[6]

1 *Les deux Saints Babylas* in *Analecta Bolland.*, vol. xix, pp. 5-8.
2 "It should be known," say the synaxaries gravely, "that there are three groups of martyrs of the names of Cosmas and Damian, those of Arabia who were decapitated under Diocletian, those of Rome who were stoned under Carinus, and the sons of Theodota who died peacefully," *Synaxarium eccesiæ Constantinopolitanæ*, 1st July, p. 791.
3 St. Martin, Bishop of Tours, 12th November; St. Martin, Bishop of France, 12th November; *Synaxarium*, pp. 211, 217.
4 The Greeks celebrate the feast of one St. Theodore (*stratelates*) on 8th February, and another (*tiro*) on the 17th. The Latins celebrate the two saints respectively on 7th February and 9th November.
5 See above, p. 45. [In the 3d ed. there is a slight expansion of this paragraph.]
[6 M. E.-A. Stückelberg, *Die Kephalophoren*, in *Anzeiger für Schweizerische Altertumskunde*, 1916, p. 78, has drawn up a long list of saints whom legend has made cephalophorous, and the list could easily be lengthened. 3d ed.]

It has been said with truth that in all probability the Passion of St. Eleutherius[1] was partially inspired by the paintings or mosaics that adorned his sanctuary. More especially the scene in which Eleutherius, seated on a hillock, preaches to the animals grouped around him, recalls the familiar representations of Orpheus. And here a noteworthy detail presents itself. The writer asserts that the animals who listened to the saint, not being able to praise God with their voices, all lifted up the right foot. Obviously he had seen in the mosaic representations of animals walking.[1]

Our chroniclers have frequently had to pronounce on more embarrassing problems than these, and we may well ask whether their learned solutions—learning in this matter is a very relative term—are invariably worth more than the interpretations of the ignorant public. But for ourselves, who wear out our brains in attempting, and often unsuccessfully, to re-establish, with the help of the best manuscripts, the primitive readings of the Hieronymian Martyrology, why should we express surprise at the little blunders committed by our ancestors, as when they turned the eighty-third mile of a Roman road, lxxxiii mil[iario], into eighty-three martyred soldiers, lxxxiii mil[ites]?[2] One may read without much trouble in the Hieronymian Martyrology under the date of 11th June: *Romae via Aurelia miliario V. Basilidis. Tripoli Magdaletis.*[3] These are two separate entries commemorating a Roman and a Phœnician martyr. In the Middle Ages it was transformed into a single group of three, *Basilidis, Tripodis et*

[1 Pio Franchi de' Cavalieri, *I martirii di S. Teodote e di S. Ariadne*, in *Studi e Testi*, 6, p. 145; the Passion, p. 149-61.]

2 *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xiii., p. 164.

[3 In the 3d ed. this is given under date of 12 June.]

Magdalis, and thus a new saint was created out of the slightly disfigured name of a town.[1]

Our predecessors were also, it must be admitted, very mediocre epigraphists. They were capable of translating the classical B[onæ] M[emoriæ] by B[eati] M[artyres].[2] Sometimes in the epitaph of a bishop they would come across the word *sanctus*, which in those days was simply a title of honour corresponding to "His Holiness," or, as we should say, "His Lordship," and no one was competent to explain to them that at the period in which these inscriptions were cut the word did not bear the significance they attributed to it and which it only acquired at a later date. Mistakes of this kind have procured the honours of an easy canonisation for more than one obscure personage.[3] But these are errors which would not always be avoided even in the age of the *Corpus inscriptionum*.

It has happened only too frequently that inscriptions

1 An account of the translation of the three martyrs quoted by the priest Leo in his prologue to the Passion of SS. Rufus and Respicius has been lost, A. Mai, *Spicilegium Romanum*, vol. iv., p. 292. An ancient author asserts that the three bodies were presented by Honorius III. to the basilica of Santa Maria Transpontina, A. Mastelloni, *La Traspontina*, Naples, 1717, p. 93.

2 See an example in G. Finazzi, *Delle iscrizioni cristiane anteriori al VII. secolo appartenenti alla chiesa di Bergamo*, Florence, 1873, pp. 16, 30, 41; A. Mazzi, *I martiri della chiesa di Bergamo*, Bergamo, 1883, p. 14. We have given other examples of a similar nature in the article on *St. Cassiodore* in *Mélanges Paul Fabre*, pp. 40-50. Some dozens of inscriptions bearing the abbreviation B. M. before the name of the deceased have supplied the learned writers of Sardinia with an equal number of martyrs. Thus, *Hic jacet B. M. Speratus* was read by them as *Hic jacet beatus martyr Speratus*, and so on. The interesting gallery of inscriptions compiled on these principles is to be seen in D. Bonfant, *Triumpho de los santos del regno de Cerdena*, En Caller, 1635, in fol.

3 We have treated this question in *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xviii., pp. 407-11. [and later in the volume *Sanctus*, Brussels, 1927. 3d ed.]

have provided traps for hagiographers that appear to us now of a very obvious kind, but into which none the less they have tumbled headlong.[1] We find, for instance, the epitaph of a virgin who is described as *digna et merita*, a memorial formula in vogue at one period. Now there existed a St. Emerita whose name was recognised in the second of the two epithets. The first became quite naturally the name of another saint, Digna, the companion of Emerita, and concerning these two noble sisters the hagiographers elaborated a highly dramatic and most circumstantial history.[2] From a mistranslation of an inscription by Pope Damasus, that in honour of SS. Felix and Adauctus, there sprang a hagiographic romance of unusual improbability which assumed the existence of two martyred brothers each bearing the name of Felix.[3] It was the erroneous interpretation of another Damasian[4] inscription which gave rise to the legend of the Orientals who came to Rome in order to carry off the relics of SS. Peter and Paul. *Discipulos oriens misit* wrote Damasus, intending simply to refer to the disciples of Jesus Christ who came from the East to bring the Gospel

1 It needed sometimes only a word, even less than a word, to give rise to the most extraordinary legends. In the inscription *C. Julius. L. F. Cæsar. Strabs. aed. cur. q. tr. mil. bis. X. vir agr. dand. adtr. iud. pontif.* (*C. I. L.*, vol. i., p. 278), the last two words were translated IVD(æorum) PONTIF(ex), and men referred this to the treaty of friendship between the Jews and the Romans *quod rescripserunt in tabulis æreis* (1 Mach. viii. 22). Hence the precise information contained in the *Mirabilia* (see Jordan, *Topographie der Stadt Rom.*, vol. ii., pp. 470-71); *In muro S. Basilii fuit magna tabula ænea, ubi fuit scripta amicitia in loco bono et notabili, quae fuit inter Romanos et Iudæos tempore Iudæ Machabæi.* It only remains to add that the inscription in question was not engraved on a bronze but on a marble slab.

2 *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xvi., pp. 30, 40.

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 19-29.

4 Ihm, *Damasi epigrammata*, n. 26.

to Rome. The inscription concerning St. Agnes,[1] and no doubt many others,[2] have equally been the means of revealing fresh details to the imagination of the hagiographer.[3]

An interesting example of a whole legend being suggested by the reading of an inscription is that of Abercius. His journeys were mentioned in the celebrated epitaph; the symbolic queen became the Empress Faustina, and the object of the journey the healing of a princess possessed by an evil spirit.[4] By means of various episodes which are little more than reminiscences of other legends, the hagiographer in the end put together a highly detailed narrative which met with the greatest success.[5] In spite of this no serious doubts should be entertained concerning the episcopacy of Abercius and the traditional cultus rendered to him in his native town.[6]

1 Ihm, *Damasi epigrammata*, n. 40.

2 Not long ago Father Bonavenia attempted to deduce from that of SS. Protus and Hyacinthus (Ihm, n. 49) proof that the Acts of St. Eugenia contain "un fondo di vero da atti piu antichi e sinceri". *Nuovo Bullettino di archeologia cristiana*, vol. iv., 1898, p. 80. Readers familiar with Damasian phraseology will not participate in his illusions.

3 See Pio Franchi de' Cavalieri, *S. Agnese nella tradizione e nella leggenda*, Rome, 1899, p. 35.

4 The deacon Cyriacus, in the Acts of St. Marcellus, is summoned to Rome for a similar purpose. It is a common occurrence which is to be found in the Acts of SS. Vitus, Tryphon and Potitus, and also in the lives of St. Mathurinus and of St. Naamatius, *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xvi., p. 76.

5 *Acta SS.*, Oct., vol. ix., pp. 485-93; L. Duchesne, *S. Abercius* in *Revue des Questions historiques*, vol. xxxiv., 1883, pp. 5-33; *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xvi., p. 76. A useful contribution to the criticism of the Acts of St. Abercius may be found in an article by F. C. Conybeare, *Talmudic Elements in the Acts of Abercius* in *The Academy*, 6th June, 1896, pp. 468-70.

6 *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xv., p. 333.

It must, alas, be confessed that the erroneous interpretation of inscriptions, of carved monuments and of other antiquities did not give rise to legends in the Middle Ages alone. Before the days of De Rossi the majority of scholars who worked in the Roman catacombs without any safe criteria by which to discern where cultus was really paid, imagined they had discovered bodies of saints in a number of tombs before which the pilgrims of ancient days never dreamt of making a halt.[1] These relics, doubtful at the best, were eagerly sought after, and the faithful frequently refused to be satisfied with the bare name inscribed on the marble. On the model of the ancient Passions many new legends were manufactured, which, while appearing reasonably probable, were eminently suited to satisfy the pious curiosity of the faithful. The best known example of this is the case of St. Philomena, whose insignificant epitaph has suggested the most ingenious combinations, and has furnished the elements of a detailed narrative including even the interrogatory of the martyr.[2]

The inaccurate identification of geographical names is responsible for another class of errors, of less consequence it is true, as they have not extended to creating new objects of veneration but merely to locating them. The reading *Caeae Antonina* in place of *Nicaeae* ap-

1 Concerning relics from the catacombs there exists a decree of His Holiness Leo XIII. dated 21st December, 1878. See Duchesne, *Les corps saints des Catacombes* in *Bulletin critique*, vol. ii., pp. 198-202.

2 *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xvii., p. 469. A recent discovery by Signor Marucchi, *Osservazioni archeologiche sulle iscrizione di S. Filomena*, Rome, 1904, forces one to conclude that the famous epithet *Pax tecum Filumena* was not that of the deceased woman (or perhaps man) found in the tomb at the time of the translation. See *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxiv., pp. 119-20.

peared to confer on the town of Cea in Spain the right to claim St. Antonina.[1] The inhabitants of Scilla in Calabria imagined that the Scillitan martyrs could only derive the name from their town. But the people of Squillace protested against this identification, and claimed the Scillitans as their own fellow-citizens. Indeed they championed these pretensions with so much assurance that in 1740 the Congregation of Rites authorised them to celebrate the Mass and Office of St. Speratus and his companions.[2] In other places great efforts have been made to prove that St. Paul visited the country, as may be seen from the title of a work by Giorgi: *D. Paulus apostolus in mari quod nunc Venetus Sinus dicitur naufragus et Militæ Dalmatensi insulæ post naufragium hospes, sive de genuino significatu duorum locorum in Actibus apostolorum.*[3] These examples, from the very fact that they are comparatively recent, make us realise all the better the methods of mediæval hagiographers, confronted with problems which were for them insoluble.

We have now seen the hagiographer face to face with his historical documents. He has made his selection and has realised how much he can draw from them. How has he employed his material?

This depends of course both on his particular aptitudes and his personal tastes. When it is a question of written documents we do not hesitate to give our preference to the hagiographer who copies them most slavishly and reproduces them with the greatest fidelity, omitting as little as possible and adding nothing beyond

1 *Acta SS.*, March, vol. i., p. 26.
2 Fiore, *Della Calabria Illustrata*, Naples, 1743, vol. ii., pp. 27-28.
3 Venetiis, 1730, in 4°.

what is strictly necessary. Cases may be quoted in which he has been satisfied with this modest *rôle*, and we have a curious example of it in the collection of Metaphrastes. The famous life of St. Theoctista, written by an eye-witness, was transcribed almost literally, and merely adorned with a new preface. But as the new editor—if indeed he is worthy of the title—contented himself with giving utterance in his prologue to a few high-sounding generalities, without taking the trouble to warn the reader of his method, he succeeded in adding a new complexity to one of the most important problems in literary history, that of Metaphrastes.[1] From the very fact that he presented himself as the author of a piece of writing filled with personal details, all these details were naturally attributed to him with the result of making him nearly half a century older than he really was. In our own day we apply an unflattering epithet to writers who freely appropriate the wares of others, but in the Middle Ages no one resented being regarded as a plagiarist.

In most cases, as we know, the hagiographer submitted his material to a process of preparation and adaptation which conferred on it in some measure the stamp of his personality. He would put his documents in order and dress them up in his best style, and without caring whether or not he robbed them of their documentary character, would amplify them, combine them in various ways and create a work which, if not original, was such that he was justified in passing it off under his own name.

It will be admitted that it is difficult to formulate any

1 We have referred to the matter in *La vie de St. Paul le jeune et la chronologie de Métaphraste* in the *Revue des Questions historiques*, July, 1893. [See also the bibliography cited in *Bibliotheca hagiographica graeca*, 2d ed., p. 269. The texts of the Life of St. Theoctista have now appeared in *Act. SS.*, Nov., vol. iii. p. 224-33. 3d ed.]

general precepts concerning a literature at once so vast and so varied. The use of historical sources and the methods of composition may be studied in an author or in a series of documents that are closely related,[1] but not in a collection of narratives scattered over the wide field covered by hagiographers of every nation and all periods. Nevertheless, without prejudice to them it may be said that they not infrequently embarked on that perilous course which leads to the embellishment of a tale in order that it may impress the reader more vividly. Even classical historians occasionally gave way to a mania which one would like to describe as innocent,[2] and that writers in the Middle Ages succumbed frequently to the temptation may be proved from certain cases where a comparison of texts establishes the fact beyond dispute. The following two examples are selected from comparatively recent lives of saints.[3] It is easy to imagine the degree of licence writers permitted themselves in ages of lesser culture.

When St. Bernard came to preach the Crusade in the diocese of Constance, an archer in the bodyguard of the Duke of Zähringen scoffed both at the preaching and the preacher by declaring: "He can no more work

1 The reader must be referred here to an excellent study by M. F. Lanzoni, *La Passio Sabini o Savini* in the *Römische Quartalschrift*, vol. xvii., 1903, pp. 1-26, in which the intimate relations between a whole series of Passions are brought to light: Passio Laurentii, Stephani P.; Restituti, Marii et soc.; Serapiæ et Sabinæ, Eusebii et Pontiani, Processi et Martiniani, Susannæ, Callisti, Gordiani et Epimachi, Primi et Feliciani, Viti et Crescentiæ, Marcelli P.; Petri et Marcellini, Sabini.

2 H. Peter, *Die geschichtliche Litteratur über die Römische Kaiserzeit bis Theodosius I.*, vol. ii., Leipsic, 1897, p. 292.

3 Recorded by Father E. Michael, *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes vom dreizehnten Jahrhundert bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters*, vol. iii., Freiburg im Breisgau, 1903, pp. 392-93.

miracles than I can". When the saint came forward to lay his hands on the sick, the scoffer perceived him and fell senseless to the ground, remaining unconscious for some time. Alexander of Cologne adds: "I was quite close to him when this occurred. . . . We called the Abbot, and the poor man was unable to rise until Bernard came to us, offered up a prayer and helped him to his feet." Not one of the eye-witnesses says a word which would suggest a resurrection from death. And yet, a century later, Herbert, the author of a collection of St. Bernard's miracles, Conrad, author of the *Exordium*, and Cæsarius of Heisterbach all affirm that the archer fell dead and that the saint restored him to life.[1]

Every one is familiar with the beautiful incident in the life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary when, in the very bed she shared with her husband, she laid a miserable leper who inspired disgust in every one, and whom no one would tend any longer. The indignant duke rushed into the room and dragged off the bed-clothes. "But," in the noble words of the historian, "at that instant God Almighty opened the eyes of his soul, and instead of a leper he saw the figure of Christ crucified stretched upon the bed."[2] This admirable account by Thierry d'Appoldia was considered too simple by later biographers, who consequently transformed the sublime vision of faith into a material apparition. *Tunc aperuit Deus interiores principis oculos* wrote the historian.[3] On the spot where the leper had slept, say the modern

1 See G. Huffer, *Der heilige Bernard von Clairvaux*, vol. i., Münster, 1886, pp. 92, 182.
2 *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina*, n. 2497.
3 J. B. Menckenius, *Scriptores rerum germanicarum*, vol. ii., p. 1990.

hagiographers, "there lay a bleeding crucifix with outstretched arms".

III.

Dearth of material and methods of supplementing it—Amplification by means of stock incidents—Acts of St. Clement of Ancyra—Compilation and adaptation—Life of St. Vincent Madelgarus—Antiquity of the process—Forgeries.

Hitherto we have almost exclusively treated of cases in which the editor of the life of a saint follows the lines traced for him by the materials at his disposal. It often happens that his task is less clearly marked out. He may know the name of the saint, sometimes even his qualification as martyr, confessor or bishop, and the shrine dedicated to his memory. But popular tradition may have retained nothing further, and yet in spite of this it becomes a question of satisfying the devout curiosity of pilgrims and pious persons, and of supplying, from such meagre records, matter for edifying reading. Even when writing somewhat lengthily concerning the saints Emeterius and Chelidonius, Prudentius warns us that the necessary documents are lacking;[1] while the author of the passion of St. Vincent plunges into his subject with the announcement: *Probabile satis est ad gloriam Vincentii martyris quod de scriptis passionis ipsius gestis titulum invidit inimicus.*[2] This dearth of material, which does not appear to have checked in any degree the fertility of his pen, is the common lot of a large number of

1 *Peristeph.*, i., 73-78.
2 "It is more than probable that the enemy of our race, jealous of the glory of Vincent the Martyr, has robbed us of the title to fame which might be found in the written record of his passion." —*Acta SS.*, Jan., vol. ii., p. 394.

hagiographers, who, for that matter, have been equally little inconvenienced by it. As they were compelled to write, and frequently, so they themselves say, by order of their superiors, they boldly took the only course open to them, and either made a generous use of the method of development as practised in the schools, or else had recourse to borrowing.

The former method is the simplest, and has produced an abundance of colourless and insipid narratives. Endowed with more or less imagination and fluency, innumerable hagiographers have resigned themselves to the necessity of supplementing the scarcity of documents by narratives founded on probability: *omnia quæ in re præsenti accidisse credibile est*, as Quintilian says (vi. 2). Take, for example, a martyrdom. The setting of the narrative is clearly outlined. First there must come a more or less detailed account of the persecution. The Christians are being hunted out everywhere; large numbers fall into the hands of the soldiers, and amongst them the hero of the tale; he is arrested and thrown into prison. Brought before the judge he confesses his faith and suffers horrible tortures. He dies and his tomb becomes the scene of innumerable miracles.[1]

Such, more or less, is the scheme on which every editor has to work. Each part is capable of develop-

1 The process of development "in accordance with probability" has not been abandoned by hagiographers even in our own day. A saint, St. Expeditus, whose name is inscribed on the Hieronymian martyrology for the 18th or 19th of April under the rubric *Melitinæ in Armenia*, has become in accordance with this method "the valiant leader of the Thundering Legion". See Dom Bérengier, *Saint Expédit martyr en Arménie et patron des causes urgentes* in *Missions catholiques*, vol. xxviii., 1896, pp. 128-31. See also *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xviii., p. 425; vol. xxv., pp. 90-98.

ment on lines clearly suggested by historians who have related similar incidents, by other legends which serve as models and even by the analysis of the situations, while for the most part the amplifications are full of those exaggerations which are the prerogative of orators anxious to make the most of what they have to say. Thus the picture of the persecution is always painted as black as possible;[1] the emperor or judge usually figures as a monster in human shape, thirsting for blood, having no other aim than the destruction of the new faith throughout the world. Here, then, we have the first of our stock subjects.[2]

Readers must not let themselves be deceived even when they think they recognise the authentic phraseology of an edict. Nothing is more easy to imitate than the forms of an edict, just as in our own day one might reproduce the terms of an Act of Parliament or of a ministerial decree, and all the more easily when the document is intended for a public the reverse of exacting in matters of phraseology.[3]

The interrogatory of the martyr is another of the favourite themes of the hagiographer, and he depends more especially on this portion of his narrative to assist him in attaining the normal length of the composition. He might, one would fancy, at least use such dialogue to

1 The oratorical description of the persecution by St. Basil in the panegyric on St. Gordius may serve as a model, Garnier, vol. ii., pp. 143-44.

[2 On all that follows see *Les Passion des martyrs et les genres littéraires*, p. 236-315. 3d ed.]

3 Edicts are frequent in hagiographic romances, and scholars have sometimes been to the trouble of investigating them. See, for example, the edict in the *Passio S. Procopii* to which Mr. Goodspeed has devoted several pages in the *American Journal of Philology*, vol. xxiii., 1902, p. 68 ff. See also *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxii., p. 409. Signor P. Franchi de' Cavalieri, *I martirii di S. Teodoto e di S. Ariadne*, p. 105, quotes several other examples. It should be observed that the *Passio S. Ephysii* is copied from that of St. Procopius.

bring into bolder relief the generous sentiments or the noble qualities of the martyr, as was done by the writers of antiquity, who scattered conventional discourses through their historical works just as modern writers scatter portraits. But it is very rare that from among the questions and answers one can seize any personal and characteristic trait. We find only dissertations on the absurdity of paganism and the beauty of the Christian faith, speeches of an inconceivable improbability which would be more appropriate on the lips of a pulpit orator than on those of a prisoner before a court of justice in the course of a rapid criminal procedure. The triumphant eloquence of the martyr is usually set off against the ignorance and vulgarity of the judge, unless indeed the latter displays sufficient knowledge of the Scriptures and the Christian religion to provoke some learned reply from the accused.

In many instances the hagiographer has not even taken the trouble to compose the harangue which he puts in the mouth of his hero; he has found it more convenient to transcribe a chapter or extracts from some suitable treatise,[1] a proceeding thanks to which the apology of Aristides has been preserved to us in the history of SS. Barlaam and Joasaph. To any one who has studied the authentic Acts of the martyrs it

1 There is no general work in existence bearing on this subject. There are, however, two useful works of recent date: G. Mercati, *Note di letteratura biblica e cristiana antica* in *Studi e testi*, vol. v., Rome, 1901, pp. 218-26; Bidez, *Sur diverses citations et notamment sur trois passages de Malalas retrouvés dans un texte hagiographique* in the *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, xi., 1902, pp. 388-94. J. Fuehrer in the *Mittheilungen des k. d. archæologischen Instituts*, Roem. Abth., vol. vii., 1892, p. 159, has noted some borrowings from Clement of Alexandria by the author of the Passion of St. Philip of Heraclea (*Bibl. hag. lat.*, n. 6834). [See also E. Klostermann and E. Seeberg, *Die Apologie der hl. Katharina*, Königsberg, 1926. Cf. *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xlv, p. 151. 3d ed.]

is superfluous to point out how falsely such rhetoric rings, and what a difference there is between the short and touching answers of the martyrs inspired by the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, and these studied declamations which at their best recall some school display.

After the interrogatory the torture of the martyr is the subject that lends itself best to amplification. The simplicity of the final act of the tragedy in authentic chronicles, as, for example, in the martyrdom of St. Cyprian, would scarcely please our pious rhetoricians, who can conceive of no other way of establishing the heroism of the martyr than by making him undergo lengthy and refined torments. They multiply his sufferings without having to trouble themselves as to the limits of human endurance, for Divine Providence is made to intervene to prevent the saint from succumbing beneath the agony inflicted, and to allow the hagiographer to exhaust all the torments that his imagination or reminiscences from his studies may suggest.

Undoubtedly the masterpiece in this line of composition is the Passion of SS. Clement of Ancyra and Agathangelus. The scene of their torments is moved successively from a nameless town in Galicia to Rome, hence to Nicomedia, to Ancyra, to Amisos, to Tarsus, and finally back again to Ancyra. This perambulating martyrdom, diversified by the most extraordinary miracles, is prolonged for no less than twenty-eight years, during which time the following tortures are inflicted both on Clement and on his companion Agathangelus by persecutors who include in their number the Emperors Diocletian and Maximianus, and the Prefects Domitianus, Agrippinus, Curicius, Domitius, Sacerdon, Maximus, Aphrodisius, Lucius and Alexander.

To start with, Clement is hung up, his flesh torn with iron hooks, his mouth and cheeks bruised with stones; he is bound to the wheel, beaten with sticks and horribly mutilated with knives; his face is stabbed with stilettos, his jaws are broken and his teeth drawn while his feet are crushed in iron fetters. Then the two martyrs together are whipped with ox thongs and suspended from a beam; their bodies are scorched with flaring torches and they are flung to the wild beasts. Red-hot needles are run into their fingers under their nails and they are burned in quicklime and left there two whole days, after which strips of skin are torn from them and they are once more beaten with rods. They are stretched on iron bedsteads brought to a state of white heat, then thrown into a burning furnace; this last torment lasts a day and a night. After that they are again beaten with iron hooks, and a kind of harrow covered with iron points is set up and the martyrs are flung against it. For his part Agathangelus undergoes in addition the torture of having molten lead poured upon his head; he is dragged through the town with a mill-stone round his neck and stoned. Clement alone has his ears pierced with red-hot needles, he is burnt with torches and he receives more blows from a stick on his mouth and head. At last after having endured fifty strokes of the rod on several days in succession he has his head cut off at the same time as Agathangelus.[1]

It is very rare that hagiographers carry their naïveté, or perhaps we should rather say their audacity, to so high a pitch, and the accounts of the sufferings of the martyrs do not usually reach this degree of improbability. Nevertheless, taken separately, the various

1 *Acta SS.*, Jan., vol. ii., pp. 459-60.

chapters in the Passion of St. Clement of Ancyra represent accurately enough the style of composition indulged in, and it is only when they are at the end of their own resources that the writers allow their heroes to die. After undergoing such amazing torments St. Clement simply has his head cut off, and this is such an ordinary conclusion to the most marvellous and terrible tortures, that some learned writers have seriously asked themselves how it happens that the axe and the sword have proved efficacious instruments of martyrdom when so many other methods have been of no avail. "It has been suggested that the sword being the outward sign of power in society, it is the will of God that it should not be frustrated by His providence which desires the maintenance of public order as the guarantee of a hundred other interests. But might we not also say that this happened as a Divine reprobation of the barbarous inventions to which tyrants had recourse because their hatred was not satisfied by the simple death of the Christians?"[1] While bearing in mind the relative mildness of the Roman code one cannot deny the cruelty of certain persecutors. But has the writer quoted above stated the problem fairly, and ought the question not rather to be addressed to the hagiographers, compelled in spite of everything to put a term to their rigmaroles and kill off their heroes? The natural conclusion of the drama was after all the classical punishment, death by the sword.

The composition of the life of a saint who is not a martyr is regulated by similar laws in all cases in which the author adopts the method of amplification. The narrative is necessarily less dramatic and less interesting, but it more easily admits of developments. Where

1 Cahier, *Caractéristiques des Saints*, vol. i., p. 307.

a complete biography of a saint is desired the life divides itself into three parts. Before his birth: his nationality, his parents, his future greatness miraculously prophesied; his life: childhood, youth, the most important events in his career, his virtues, his miracles; lastly his cultus and miracles after death. In innumerable lives of saints at least one of the points in the above programme is supplied by commonplaces, and sometimes the whole biography is a mere string of them. The profession or quality of the saint is also subjected to analysis. A bishop has not the same duties as a monk, neither does an abbot practise the same virtues as a nun. Hence a diversity of episodes. In the life of a holy bishop, for instance, it is essential that he should only accept consecration under protest; for if he does not resist, it is obvious that he thinks himself worthy of the episcopal throne, and if his own opinion of himself is so indulgent, can he rightly be held up as a model of humility? If the subject of the biography is a holy monk, then clearly he must be exemplary in all the duties appertaining to his calling, and without risk of blundering one may describe his fasts and vigils and his assiduity at prayer and spiritual reading. And as it is mainly through miracles that God is pleased to make manifest the merits of His servants, one may take it for granted that the saint, whatever his condition, was in the habit of healing the blind, causing the paralytic to walk, driving out evil spirits and the like.

The methods we have just described, simple and natural as they appear, have not been wholly restricted to hagiographers anxious to fill in the gaps left by tradition. We have seen how the popular voice gladly attributes to its favourite hero the glories and virtues

of others, while many a noble deed and striking incident has become the common property of very diverse individuals. The pious writers of the Middle Ages have often, in their need, imitated the importations so common in legends, and have unscrupulously allowed themselves, in the interest of their saint, to pilfer narratives that have no sort of connection with him. I am not referring to those frequent cases in which a similarity of names is responsible for introducing wholly extraneous matter into a biography, as, for example, when we find in the legend of St. Fronto of Perigueux an episode of markedly exotic hue taken from an Egyptian legend concerning a namesake.[1] I am speaking here of importations to be accounted for neither by misconceptions nor yet by carelessness. Sometimes it is merely a case of commonplaces on the Christian virtues which have been copied out word for word; sometimes we have incidents which at a stretch might have occurred and have been related in identical terms, but sometimes also we meet with examples of wholly characteristic episodes which without any sort of apology have been imported in their entirety from another biography.

I fully admit that one must beware of raising a cry of plagiarism on the strength of a mere resemblance. The most disconcerting coincidences do occasionally occur, and I am willing to quote a noteworthy example. If one were to read that on the same day the Church celebrates two saints, who both died in Italy, whose conversion in both cases was effected through the reading of the "Lives of the Saints"; that each founded a religious order under one and the same title, and that both these orders were suppressed by two popes

1 See Duchesne, *Fastes épiscopaux de l'ancienne Gaule*, vol. ii., pp. 132-33.

bearing the same name, one might well feel justified in declaring on the strength of these characteristic features that a single individual had been multiplied into two, and that he must have been inscribed twice over in the martyrology under different names. And yet there exist two saints, strictly historical and even comparatively modern, of whom all these particulars are true. St. John Colombini, who died at Siena, 31st July, 1367, was brought back to the practice of the Christian virtues by reading the "Lives of the Saints," and founded the order of the Jesuati which was suppressed by Clement IX. St. Ignatius of Loyola who died in Rome, 31st July, 1556, was touched by grace while reading the "Lives of the Saints," which had been supplied to him in order to enliven the tedium of convalescence; he founded the order of the Jesuits, suppressed, as every one knows, by a later Clement. If I recall the fact it is not because such coincidences can be frequent, far from it, for it would be difficult to find an analogous example to the above, which has been quoted here merely as a curiosity.[1]

The naïve hagiographers of the Middle Ages, compelled to supplement the paucity of primitive sources by more or less legitimate means, do not introduce us to any very embarrassing dilemmas. As a rule their methods are simple, and their secrets are easily surprised.

The following, for example, shows the process by which the biographer of St. Vincent Madelgarus honoured his patron with a literary composition of adequate dimensions.[2]

In the preface he begins by transcribing the prologue from the life of St. Erminus, to which he adds a phrase from Sulpicius Severus; there follows a second introduction which reproduces, word for word, St. Gregory of Tours' preface to the life of St. Patroclus. In order to describe the birth and early years of the saint, he accumulates reminiscences from the life of St. Erminus, without speaking of others from members of St. Vincent's own family, St. Waldetrudis and St. Aldegond, while the history of his marriage is extracted literally from the *Vita Leobardi* by Gregory of Tours. Vincent's son Landric embraces the ecclesiastical state: this is taken from the life of St. Gallus by Gregory of Tours. The same author furnishes him with the greater part of a vision, which fills one of the chapters in the life of St. Leobardus. St. Vincent enters on the religious life and trains his followers: taken from the lives of SS. Martius and Quintianus by Gregory of Tours. He gives himself up to prayer and penance and practises all the religious virtues: taken from the life of St. Bavon. Knowing himself to be on the point of death he confides his spiritual children to his son Landric: taken from the life of St. Ursmar. He is buried within his monastery where he exercises his power on behalf of the faithful who invoke him: taken from the life of St. Bavon. A blind cleric recovers his sight on his tomb: this miracle is appropriated in its entirety from Gregory of Tours, who relates it of St. Martin. We must add, moreover, to our plagiarist's account six chapters from the life of St. Waldetrudis, which, it is true, served him as a historic source, but which he transcribes word for word, besides numerous other reminiscences which it would take too long to enumerate.

The lives of saints filled with extracts from other

[1] *Acta SS.*, July, vol. vii., pp. 333-54.

[2] This life has been the object of a detailed study by Père A. Poncelet in the *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xii., pp. 422-40.

lives of saints are exceedingly numerous, and some are nothing more than a mere hagiographic anthology. One can imagine the perplexity of the critic on finding the same facts related in the same words of two different saints. He may well ask himself what faith can be placed in the lives of St. Hubert, St. Arnold of Metz and St. Lambert of which several portions are shared in common.[1] One can guess what degree of importance he will attach to a biography such as that of St. Remaclus, which is servilely imitated from the life of St. Lambert.[2]

Indeed, such has been the destitution of some editors that, not satisfied with appropriating wholesale certain phrases of general application, or even interesting episodes which seemed likely to prove effective in their pages, they have been reduced to seizing whole compositions, and adapting them as best they could to their saint, often by merely exchanging one name for another. Thus, for example, the passion of St. Martina is literally identical with that of St. Tatiana ; St. Castissima owns the same acts as St. Euphrosyne, while those of St. Caprasius are the same as those of St. Symphorian ; the group of Florentius and Julianus possesses an identical history to that of Secundianus, Marcellianus and Veranus, and so on, for the list of these strange duplications is far longer than one would be tempted to suppose. We hope some day to draw up a complete catalogue of them.[3]

1 *Acta SS.*, Nov., vol. i., pp. 760-63.

2 G. Kurth, *Notice sur la plus ancienne biographie de saint Remacle* in *Bulletins de la Commission royale d'histoire*, 4th series, vol. iii., Brussels, 1876, pp. 355-68.

3 It must suffice for the moment to refer the reader to some provisional lists: *Histoire littéraire de la France*, vol. vii., p. 193; *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xvi., p. 496.

Another variety of the species of composition we have been characterising is that of the narratives in which the author has contented himself with introducing a new personage while still retaining the original hero and all the story belonging to him. I might recall the example of St. Florian, honoured at Bologna, who, in order that he might be provided with a history, has been introduced into the Passion of the sixty martyrs of Eleutheropolis,[1] and also that of St. Florentius of Mont Glonne, whom one is surprised to meet in the company of St. Florian of Lorsch.[2]

If Latin hagiographers have had frequent recourse to the convenient process of adaptation, the Greeks have not deprived themselves of the same resource, as may be proved by comparing the history of St. Barbara with that of Irene and Cyriæna,[3] and the life of St. Onesimus with that of St. Alexis.[4] Not long ago further parallel cases were unearthed in Syrian hagiography: the life of Mar Mikha scarcely differs from that of Mar Benjamin,[5] while the history of St. Azazaïl is a mere adaptation of that of St. Pancratius of Rome.[6]

1 *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxiii., pp. 292-95.

2 *Acta SS.*, Sept., vol. vi., pp. 428-30. See also Krusch, in *M. G., Script. rer. merov.*, vol. iii., p. 67.

3 *Acta SS.*, Nov., vol. i., p. 210.

4 *Synaxarium ecclesiæ Constantinopolitanæ*, p. 820.

5 The life of Mar Mikha was published by Bedjan, *Acta martyrum et sanctorum*, vol. iii., pp. 513-32; that of Mar Benjamin by V. Scheil, *La vie de Mar Benjamin* in the *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, vol. xii., 1897, pp. 62-96. It was M. C. Brockelmann, *Zum Leben des Mar Benjamin, ibid.*, pp. 270-71, who pointed out this interesting example of a monk who appropriates the legend of a neighbouring monastery and does not hesitate to dedicate his plagiarism to the Patriarch Symeon.

6 F. Macler, *Histoire de Saint Azazaïl* in the *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Hautes Études*, fasc. 141. See also *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xxiii., pp. 93-95.

The process appears so puerile and summary that one is tempted to assume that it can only have been carried out in the darkest epochs of the Middle Ages, and one can scarcely resist the temptation to locate this wretched plagiarism among barbarous surroundings in which literary culture was practically unknown. Unhappily we must remember that as early as the fourth century in Italy, and indeed in Rome, we come across deliberate adaptations of foreign legends to fit national saints. The passion of St. Lawrence, even in its minor details, is borrowed from that of the martyrs of Phrygia as related by Socrates and Sozomen, while the martyrdom of St. Cassian scarcely differs from that of St. Mark of Arethusa.[1] The martyrdom of St. Eutychius as related by Pope Damasus[2] is simply a reproduction of that of St. Lucian,[3] and the Damasian version of the death of St. Agnes possesses undeniable resemblances to that of St. Eulalia.[4] It is not as yet plagiarism in its crudest form, not the almost word for word transcription of the original. But already legend has come to be regarded as no-man's land. It belongs, in a quite unexpected sense, to the "common of saints," and transfers are effected on a somewhat liberal scale.

It is not solely in hagiographic literature that editors of saints' lives have sought the material for their compilations. Thus the legend of St. Vidian, a local martyr

1 See *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. xix., pp. 452-53. The torture of St. Mark of Arethusa is testified to by St. Gregory Nazianzen, *In Julian*, i., as M. Pio Franchi has pointed out, *Nuove Note agiografiche* in *Studi e Testi*, vol. ix., p. 68. We may observe by the way that after St. Cassian, St. Artemas of Pozzuoli inherited the Passion of St. Mark of Arethusa, *Acta SS.*, Jan., vol. ii., p. 617. [This sentence is modified in the 3d ed., and that revision is included as a special note at the end of this chapter, on. p. 106.]

2 Ihm, *Damasi epigrammata*, n. 27.

3 P. Franchi, as above, p. 58, n. 2.

4 *Id.*, *Santa Agnese nella tradizione e nella leggenda*, Rome, 1899, p. 20.

honoured at Martres-Tolosanes might easily be confounded with the epic legend of Vivian, nephew to William of Orange, which is related in two metrical romances, the *Enfances Vivien* and *Aliscans*;[1] the legend of St. Dymphna is an adaptation of a popular tale,[2] as is that of St. Olive which has been popularised in Italy, not by the Church, but by the stage.[3]

The writings we have been describing undoubtedly constitute literary frauds which one feels inclined to condemn with great severity. I should not, however, venture, at least as a general rule, to class them as forgeries, or to regard the authors of these substitutions as more guilty than those who naïvely believed themselves entitled to supplement the silence of tradition by narratives mainly supplied by their own imaginations. They were reduced to the extremity of imitating the sculptors who changed the statue of a consul into that of a saint by supplying a new head, or by placing in his hand a cross, a key, a lily or some other symbolical object.

We must freely confess, however, that hagiographic literature has been disgraced by a certain number of forgers whose naïveté can scarce avail as their excuse. There have been audacious fabrications, the product of falsehood and ambition which for long misled credulous minds and unsuspecting critics; among these we

1 A. Thomas, *Viviens d'Aliscans et la légende de saint Vidian* in the *Études romanes dédiées a Gaston Paris*, Paris, 1891, pp. 121-35; L. Saltet, *Saint Vidian de Martres-Tolosanes et la légende de Vivien des chansons de geste* in the *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique*, Feb. 1902, pp. 44-56. Dom Lobineau, *Les vies des saints de Bretagne*, Rennes, 1725, p. 25, is of opinion that the author of the life of St. Colledoc had no "other materials to work with than the romance of Lancelot du Lac and a bold and fertile imagination".

2 See above, p. 9.

3 Al. d'Ancona, *Origini del teatro italiano*, 2nd edition, Turin, 1891, vol. i., pp. 436-37.

may quote the Cypriot legend concerning St. Barnabas,[1] the notorious translation of St. Denis to Ratisbonne,[2] the life of St. Maurus by the so-called Faustus, who was no other than Odo of Glanfeuil,[3] and the Passion of St. Placidus by Peter the Deacon, under the name of Gordian.[4] The monk of Glastonbury, who recast the legend of St. Joseph of Arimathea[5] and the first authors of the apostolic legends of France can scarcely plead their good faith before the tribunal of history. One can only turn contemptuously away, even while marvelling at the simplicity of their dupes.

1 *Acta SS.*, June, vol. ii., pp. 431-52. See also Duchesne, *St. Barnabé* in *Mélanges G. B. de Rossi*, pp. 45-49.

2 *Neues Archiv für aeltere Deutsche Geschichtskunde*, vol. xv., pp. 340-58.

3 *Acta SS.*, Jan., vol. i., pp. 1039-50, 1051-52.

4 *Ibid.*, Oct., vol. iii., pp. 114-38.

5 P. Paris, *De l'origine et du développement des romans de la Table ronde* in *Romania*, vol. i., 1872, pp. 457-82.

[The following appears in the 3d edition on page 104, at the place noted]

The Passion of St. Lawrence in that which concerns the torture of the *gril*, which it does not seem possible to bring into accord with the second edict of Valerian,[1] allows a strange inspiration to be seen. In the Orient another legend on other martyrs occurs which is too similar to allow for simple coincidence.[2] In the curious history of St. Cassian of Imola one recognizes more than one reminiscence[3]: that of the schoolmaster punished by Furius Camillus[4] and the feature (that of the stilettos) of the passion of St. Mark of Arethusa.[5]

CHAPTER IV.

THE CLASSIFICATION OF HAGIOGRAPHIC TEXTS.

Defective System—Classification according to Subjects—According to Categories of Saints—System Adopted. Historical Point of View—Division into six classes—Application of System to Ruinart's *Acta sincera*—The "Supplements" of Le Blant.

IT may be useful at this stage to summarise the preceding pages while attempting to draw up a system of classification by means of which it will be possible to arrange in groups the majority of what may be called hagiographic documents.

We may leave out of account purely external divisions founded on the subject of the narrative such as Passions, Biographies, Translations, Miracles, or even on the literary form, as Metrical, or Rhymed Lives and so on. This mechanical kind of classification scarcely affords any indication of the historical value of the documents. Thus it would be a mistake to conclude from the circumstance of a hagiographer writing in verse, that he has necessarily profited by the licence that we are agreed in according to poets. Mediæval poets are often as ingenious in turning their original text into hexameters as they are lacking in inspiration and poetic invention.[1]

1 A curious example of this may be seen in the *Versus domni Bertharii abbatis de miraculis almi Patris Benedicti* (M.G., *Poet. Lat. aevi carol.*, vol. iii., pp. 394-98), in which book ii. of the Dialogues of St. Gregory is turned into verse, chapter by chapter.

THE LEGENDS OF THE SAINT

AN INTRODUCTION TO HAGIOGRAPHY

FROM THE FRENCH OF
PÈRE H. DELEHAYE, S.J.
BOLLANDIST

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
RICHARD J. SCHOECK

*

TRANSLATED BY
V. M. CRAWFORD

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME PRESS • 1961