

THOMAS À KEMPIS

THE CHRONICLE OF THE
CANONS REGULAR OF
MOUNT ST. AGNES

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Regular of Mount St. Agnes**

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The Chronicle of the Canons Regular of Mount St. Agnes

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The Chronicle of Mount St. Agnes is the only work of Thomas à Kempis of which no English translation has yet appeared, and even in its original form the book is not readily accessible to readers, since the only text is that published by Peter and John Beller of Antwerp in 1621. The ordinary collections of the works of à Kempis do not contain the Chronicle, although there is no doubt as to the authenticity of the book, which is of considerable importance to students of the movement known as "The New Devotion," and to those who are interested in the Brotherhood of the Common Life.

The last nine pages of the Latin text have been added by an anonymous writer, and carry on the chronicle from the year 1471, in which à Kempis died, to 1477, but since this portion of the book is included in the first printed edition, and contains a notice of the author written by a contemporary member of the community, I have included the addition in the present translation of the Chronicle.

The Mother House of the Chapter to which the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes belonged, was the Monastery at Windesheim, of which we have a full account from the pen of John Buschius, a younger contemporary of à Kempis. This work is too long to be included in the present volume, although the Antwerp edition before mentioned puts the two Chronicles together; Busch's "Chronicon Windesemense" will therefore appear separately; but as the account of the foundation of the Mother House, written by William Voern, or Vorniken, supplements the information given by à Kempis, a translation of it is annexed to this book. The writer was Prior of Mount St. Agnes before his promotion to the same office in the Superior House, and it was under his rule that à Kempis spent the early years of his priesthood, those years in which he composed the first part at least of the great work with which his name is associated. William Vorniken also tells in outline the story of the conversion of the Low Countries to Christianity by Anglo-Saxon missionaries, and for all these reasons it has been thought that his "letter" may be of interest to English readers.

It will be seen that the spelling of proper names is both peculiar and variable, but the principle observed in this translation has been to adopt the spelling given in the text, except in cases where variation is evidently the result of a printer's error, and in those instances in which the writer *translated* names, *e.g.*, Hertzogenbosch appears in the Chronicle as Buscoducis, and Gerard is called sometimes Groote, Groot, or Groet, and sometimes Magnus.

Further accounts of the lives of some of the Brothers who are mentioned in this Chronicle may be found in a translation of another work of à Kempis published last year, and entitled "The founders of the New Devotion," Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.; and the history of the other houses of the Chapter to which the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes belonged, has been treated exhaustively by Dr. J. G. R. Acquoy, "Het Klooster te Windesheim." Utrecht, 1880.

For the English reader the best accounts of the Brotherhood and of à Kempis himself, are the works of Rev. S. Kettlewell and Sir F. R. Cruise. The former, however, is quite unreliable as a translator, and draws untenable deductions from extracts whose purport he has misunderstood; but the latter is both accurate and interesting, being in fact the leading English authority on the subject which he has made his own.

PREFACE

The pious desire of certain of our Brothers hath constrained me to put together a short chronicle concerning the beginning of our House, and the first foundation of our Monastery on Mount St. Agnes, that the said chronicle may be a comfort to them that are now alive, and a memorial for them that come after. Wherefore humbly assenting to their pious desires, I have gathered together a few things out of many, and these I have seen with mine own eyes, or have heard from the Elders of our House, or else have gathered from the writings of others.

Some of the Elders who first dwelt in this House have told us that or ever there was a monastery builded in this place, and before any man had yet come hither to serve God, there did often appear to the shepherds and to them that dwelt near, visions of men in white raiment who seemed to go in procession round the mount: and the signification and meaning hereby portended became clear enough afterward as time went by, when the monastery by God's grace begun in this place by a few Brothers and afterward finished with much toil came into being and a great company of Brothers dwelt therein—for then it was seen how the Devout Congregation of Canons Regular being clad in white raiment did serve God with devotion, singing hymns and psalms and celebrating Mass; also reciting the proper Canonical Hours to His praise every day, and praying for our benefactors, both living and dead, especially for them that are buried in this Monastery.

THE CHRONICLE OF THE CANONS REGULAR OF MOUNT ST. AGNES

CHAPTER I

Of the first founders of the Monastery at Mount St. Agnes, and how Master Gerard Groote first pointed out this place to them

The House of Mount St. Agnes, which lieth outside the walls of the town of Zwolle, and on the eastern side thereof, had its origin and completion in this way.

The place used to be called in the vulgar tongue Mount Nemel and lieth not far from Zwolle, but one may traverse the distance in the space of an hour. Now there were in the State of Zwolle certain faithful men who had been turned wholly to God by Master Gerard Groote. These men had builded them an house, in a suburb belonging to the city, near an ancient Convent of Béguines, and here they served God humbly and with devotion. Amongst these the chief was John of Ummen, a man dedicated to God, and greatly beloved by Gerard; and with him there abode likewise Wychmann Rurinch, Reyner, son of Leo of Renen, and two or three others that were well disposed. Moreover, a certain Clerk that dwelt in those parts named Wittecoep, had joined himself to them and lived among them devoutly. There was also the mother of John of Ummen, named Regeland, a widow of ripe age, who ministered to the necessities of these servants of God, giving good heed to the care of the house as a faithful Martha. Most gladly would she listen to the Word of God, and, like Mary, was never sated with the sweetness of the Holy Scriptures that were read.

When any one at meal-time read somewhat incorrectly and stammered over the words, this venerable woman said to him “Read no more and do not defile the Word of God lest harm come to holy things and they that hear be offended in thee. Let another read that hath better skill thereto, that we may all understand and be edified.”

After no long time this good woman came to the end of her life on the Thursday in Holy Week after Mass was ended, and she was buried at Zwolle by her friends and the Brothers. From that hour and day, for three whole days, her son John Ummen fasted from every kind of food to promote his mother’s salvation, and he neither ate nor drank aught until the dawning of the day of the Lord’s Passover, and yet was he as whole in body and in strength as if he had been well fed every day.

And as these servants of God lived in poverty and at the common charge it came to pass that many men that were in the world, considering their holy life, came together to them, being eager to serve God and to leave the world, in the hope of an eternal gain. Meanwhile it happened that the venerable Master Gerard Groote came to Zwolle about the beginning of Lent, and of necessity abode there certain days, since he was anxious to comfort his poor children, for it was his desire to refresh with the word of consolation those whom he had drawn to leave the world. So a very great company of people came together to his preaching, and many devoutly submitted themselves to his counsel, for sometimes he would preach two sermons in one day so as to water the chosen vineyard of the Lord. And if he had determined to preach after the midday meal, he would remain praying in the Church or walking in meditation in the churchyard, taking no food himself, while he awaited the return of the people. For this reason they that loved his holy discourse were unwilling to stay away too long, but would sit them down in the churchyard or in the Church, and take beforehand places that were convenient and near the pulpit, so that at the proper hour they might the more readily hear and understand the Word of God. And when Gerard had done his faithful preaching, each would return to his own concerns rejoicing with eager heart, and praising God for all the things he had heard. And they marvelled above measure at the humble bearing of the Master, and were edified thereby, that

he, a man of so great fame and knowledge, one that had friends great and famous, should go about the streets with so meek an aspect, and showing little care for his attire; for he cared not at all about worldly things, and sought only to gain a great usury of souls for God. He was well favoured, kindly in word, and courteous to all, so that any man whatever, whether a stranger or born in the land, even though poor and unknown, might speak to him and receive from him some discourse upon the things of God. The good saw this and rejoiced thereat, but the froward gnashed with their teeth and spake evil of Gerard. A certain man, therefore, one of the great ones of the State, came near to him, and rebuked his words and deeds, for the man himself took more pleasure at that time in worldliness than in the things of God. “Why,” said he, “dost thou disquiet us, and bring in new customs? Cease from this preaching, and do not disturb or frighten men.” But Gerard made answer with wisdom and constancy: “I would not willingly suffer you to go to Hell,” and the man said again with indignation: “Let us go thither in peace,” but the kindly and good Master replied: “I will not do so; if thou wilt not hear, there will be some who will gladly give ear”—but we must return to our history.

When the most beloved Master was sojourning in Zwolle for the purpose of preaching the Word, some of his disciples aforementioned who dwelt together there came to him secretly and confessed that they desired to live a life further removed from that of the world, for they could not bear to mingle with worldlings without suffering hurt to their spiritual life; and they said that they would choose to dwell without the City if he should agree thereto. They begged him therefore, as loving sons speaking to their father, to condescend to go with them some little space outside the City to look for a place convenient wherein to live quietly. Then Gerard assented to their pious prayers, and when the next day dawned he prepared for the journey and taking with him the brothers Wychmann, Reyner, Henry and James Wittecoep, he went with them towards the mountains of Nemel to a place that was foreordained of God, and separated from the multitude; for men were seldom seen to come thither or to pass by, and patches of thorns and nettles grew here and there upon the hills and valleys.

So as they went forth the wind beat against them, but neither rain nor wind could stay the Master from the straight course, and he went on rejoicing and said pleasantly to his companions: “I will go before you and shield you from the wind with my cloak.” But as they drew near to the place, they went up to the top of an hill, and having made a circuit round the mountains for some little space, they at last beheld a valley, that was narrow and deep, upon the northern side of the mountain, and Gerard’s disciples asked him a question, saying: “See! most beloved Master, how good is this place, and how private; here we may hide for the love of Christ, as of old the holy Eremites did hide in the mountains and in caves in the earth.” But this they said in simplicity of heart out of the fervent zeal of their devotion, and their desire for a life more remote from the world, for they thought there they could be hid, screened by the thickets of brushwood. But the Master being most discreet and wise in counsel soon dissuaded them from this purpose, for a place that lieth low doth never suit the human complexion, nor would a place so narrow avail in future for many men to dwell in. So they withdrew their feet prudently therefrom and visited another mountain that was near; and their wise leader saw that on the south side thereof was a level place fit for crops, and he said to them that stood by: “Place your tabernacle at the foot of this mountain—then shall ye be able to make a little garden for your herbs and fruits on the level place toward the south. If the Lord grant me life I will be here often with you.” Having visited this place and walked about it through God’s inspiration, they returned again to the City together, leaving the issue of the matter to the pleasure of the Almighty. But in the same year the beloved Master Gerard, that light and lamp of devotion that shone upon his country of Utrecht, was taken away from this world to receive the reward of his labours, and he went up from the vale of our lamentations to the mount of everlasting bliss.

CHAPTER II

Of the building of the first House on Mount St. Agnes.

But after the passing of the Master, who must ever be held in remembrance, the new branch of his planting ceased not to bear fruit; moreover the heaven shed dew upon it from above, as Gerard at the end of his life had promised, so that our land yielded increase in her season; and the men above named continued to carry into effect the intention which they had formed in their minds. The chief mover in this holy work was James Wittecoop, the son of one Thomas Coep, a man who had been a magistrate in the town of Zwolle; and he did all that in him lay to promote the foundation of an house on the mountain for the servants of God. Goswin Tyasen, who afterward became a Canon Regular at Windesheim, assisted him in this business, for he, relying upon the goodness of God, and having the ear of his fellows, was eagerly desirous to move them to choose this place. There were others also of like purpose, but these two were the chief men amongst them, and they all relied upon the help of their friends, but especially upon the co-operation of the mercy of God by Whose nod all things are determined. Therefore they besought the heritors of Bercem and Nemel, joint owners of the farm, to grant them a portion of the land, and the site where now the Monastery is builded, and the owners thereof did freely grant their request and gave them the land for the Brothers to dwell in. When they had obtained the power to build upon the spot pointed out to them aforetime by Master Gerard, they set in order a small house, at the bottom of the mountain, that had been given to them by a certain matron, and some labourers assisted them in this work. This house was builded of logs and earth, but was only roofed in above with common thatch. But when this poor little habitation, on an humble site on the lower part of the mountain was builded, no man dwelt there, because it lacked household stuff; yet certain of the Brothers whose hearts were set on the completion of the work would visit it, and sometimes one or two would sleep upon the straw there, in their clothes, but for their food they either brought somewhat with them or returned to their friends in the town.

Scarce have I known of any place or house that was begun in so great poverty, and yet came, in despite of divers hindrances, to so great an increase of prosperity; but Jesus our Saviour Himself began in the deepest poverty, and His lack did make rich Holy Church. This house therefore, poor at first, unknown and hidden, did deserve in process of time to be more widely increased through the blessing of our Father in Heaven, Who doth ever turn His Face toward lowly things, but doth look from afar upon the lofty. For as wealthier persons came and brought their goods into the common stock, the place whose beginning was so poor, and its outward appearance so lowly, grew to be a yet fairer vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth. For the tillers of the farm and the country folk of the land of Bercem and Nemel, seeing that an house was now builded on the mountain and that devout men had come together there to serve God in humility and simplicity, gave and assigned to them and their successors the aforesaid place in honour of Holy Religion, and that prayers might be offered for them and their friends; which grant they did also confirm in writing to any others whom God Almighty should see fit to associate with them. In regard to this holy gift and this pious request made by consent of the owners of the place, there was but one deed executed relating to the first and original foundation. This is attested by the seals of many honest men, and in it is given a short description of the manner of the Common Life and of the wholesome rule so far as this same was applicable to the conditions of the Brotherhood in the early days. These things were done and finished in the year of the Lord 1386 on the Friday before Palm Sunday, and a year and a half after the death of the aforesaid Master Gerard.

CHAPTER III

Concerning the names of the first Brothers and their labours.

These are the names of those first Brothers, the devout men who began to build the House of Mount St. Agnes and to dwell there. First James Wittecoep, the chief promoter of our House and the earnest keeper thereof in all things. He afterward became a Priest in Zwolle and served the Altar in the Hospice there, where he died after making a good confession. Secondly, there was John Ummen, son of Assetrin, whose mother was called Regeland. He, though blind and unlettered, was yet the familiar friend and devout disciple of Master Gerard, and he became the first Rector of the House, being a good man and a comfortable. Thirdly, there was Wychmann Roerinck van Hellender, a pattern of poverty and patience; he, putting aside his friends, who were many, became an humble hearer of Gerard, and was Procurator to this poor little congregation.

Other upright men also were joined to these chief Brothers, being drawn to give up the world by the sweet savour of the reputation of this new and holy congregation. Their names are worthy of the fame of a good memorial, for they were shining lights of holy poverty, obedience, continence, and daily toil. The first was Reyner, son of Leo of Renen of the diocese of Utrecht, who often made pilgrimages out of his devotion; but afterward became converted by Gerard's preaching and gave up the world. The second was Reyner the younger, a man without reproach, poor and accustomed to toil. He, too, came from Renen which is in the diocese of Münster. The third was called Gerard the cook, for he at the first was cook to the House, but afterward became the porter, a man fervent in deed, and devout in prayer, who was born at Deventer. All these knew Gerard Groote in the flesh, and often heard him preach the Word of God among the people. By these humble, simple-hearted, and devout little servants of Christ—these who did verily despise the world—was our House on mount Nemel begun, which House after that it became a Monastery was called Mount St. Agnes. Moreover by little and little several devout clerks and lay folk from the neighbouring towns and from far off districts came to join these men, and they earned their daily bread by the labour of their hands. For none was allowed to avoid his task, none might go about idly, neither did any dare to talk of worldly matters, but all were taught to labour for the common good, and to call often upon God in prayer at the appointed hours after the manner of the holy Fathers in Egypt: for these, too, did labour with their hands, but during the hours of toil they never ceased from prayer. Likewise they had received this rule from Master Gerard, that none ought to be accepted save such as were willing to labour with their hands and take part in the Common Life. Wherefore the clerks were diligent in writing the books of Holy Scriptures, and the lay folk busied them with bodily labour and tillage. Some also followed the tailor's craft, others wove wool and flax; others again made baskets and mats, or did divers tasks for the good of the community at the bidding of their Superior. Outwardly indeed they led a life of poverty and toil for Christ's sake, but the love of the heavenly life made sweet the present indigence. If one went forth on any business, he would first utter some short word concerning the things of God, or would speak the Name of Jesus, and some other would reply with "Christ" or "Mary" as his devotion impelled him. For a great while they lived together in this companionship, and until the time of the foundation of the Monastery, all alike, both Clerks and Lay folk obeyed their first Rector, John of Ummen, a zealous man and well skilled in spiritual things. With such diligence did they follow the virtue of obedience that none dared even to drive in a nail, or do any little thing without the knowledge of the Rector or Procurator, for they received fraternal correction by way of warning for the least neglect, nor was there given any place for excuse, but every man did humbly acknowledge his fault, and was forward to promise amendment. But if any were not ready to obey, or should cling stubbornly to what was good in his own eyes Father John would chide him more sternly as the manner of the fault and the quality of the person did demand. Sometimes fired with yet greater zeal for discipline and in order to affright the other Brothers he would say to some that

were ill content, or slow to take his Orders: “Lo! the door standeth open. If any will go forth, let him go: I would rather have one that is obedient than many that are disobedient. By the favour of God I may readily find others who will cheerfully do what ye refuse.” Thus by the voice of his authority he would curb the ill-contentment of some. Also he used to say that unwilling and sluggish Brothers were false prophets who thought that naught was profitable save what was good in their own eyes.

Once it happened that the elder Reyner was sent out with some other Brothers to guard the reeds, lest the cattle that passed by might chew and injure them. But when the time for the midday meal came all the rest went in, and Reyner alone remained on watch in the fields, and afterwards he, too, went in to take his sustenance. Then he was asked wherefore he had not come in with the others at the appointed hour, and he answered that he had remained outside thinking to do the more good thereby, and prevent danger to their stuff. But Father John replied, “Would that the beasts had despoiled all our goods so that thou hadst come in with the rest as in duty bound. This would have pleased me better.” Then was Reyner deeply penitent, and groaning he prostrated himself humbly on the ground asking for pardon, and saying that he would never do the like again. But yet John was full of comfort and kindness to those that were tempted or oppressed with any weighty matter, for he had the gracious power of consoling all, whatever might be the cause for which they came to him.

Master Gerard himself often sent divers persons to be instructed by him in the way of God, saying to them, “Go to blind John of Ummen, that devout and upright man, and whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” He also bore this witness about John, saying “That blind man hath better sight than all that are in Zwolle,” meaning that though he lacked natural sight, yet was he illumined inwardly by the radiance of truth, and showed the way of eternal salvation to many that resorted to him, and gave them the guidance of the true light.

Among these early Brothers so great was the zeal of their love that each strove to surpass the other in doing work that was humble; and they were eager in lowly service one to the other. So while one was asleep another would rise up earlier than was customary and finish his work; but if any were somewhat slower in going forth to his labour, some other that was quicker would take his place, and it was often found that some task was finished though none knew who had done it. By this means was charity shown in deed, and humility of heart was preserved, according to the saying, “Love to be unknown.”

All that dwelt in the House were stirred up by a like devotion to do menial tasks and fulfil humble offices. Wherefore the clerks and weavers would not avoid the work in the fields, but when called thereto at harvest time they would go forth with the rest to gather in the sheaves of corn.

Following the rule of obedience, and acting for the common good, they made the hay, or dug the ground, or planted herbs, whenever such work must needs be done. So, too, holy David doth praise them that fear God, and doth minister sweet words of consolation to them that labour well, saying: “Thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands, well is thee and happy shalt thou be.”

CHAPTER IV

Of the scanty food and raiment of the Brothers, and how wondrously God did provide for them.

Who can tell how poor was their food while they laboured at their daily toil? Their victual was coarse, their drink ungenerous, their raiment simple and rude, so that naught did minister to the lusts of the flesh, but the needs of the body were satisfied soberly enough. They were often compelled to eat food that was of evil savour through lack of better victual; but constant toil and hunger made herbs and pulse to be pleasant to the taste. Fish was given to the community seldom, and eggs more rarely still, but yet of their goodwill the Brothers would give these to the sick, or to strangers, if by any means they could get such things. Wherefore one hath said, “When the reign of poverty is long, pleasure doth endure but a little space.”

On certain days the rule allowed them to eat flesh meats, but if at such times a larger mess was set before them, yet was it not more daintily cooked. Furthermore, certain amongst them, who while they dwelt in the world had been taught to love a very different fare, were now content with scanty and coarse food, doing great violence to their lusts thereby; but yet they bore all these things patiently after that saying of Christ, “The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” Sometimes when supper was ended scarce aught did remain to be divided amongst them on the day following; at other times there was lack of utensils or cooking pots, or suitable food would fail; but God the Maker of all things, who of old did feed the people in the wilderness, did not desert the Brothers on the Mount. So it once came about that when they had consumed almost all their food, Gerard the cook being anxious for the morrow, made his lack known to Father John, saying sadly “What shall I set before them to-morrow?” But John consoled his sadness with kindly words, and exhorted him to have faith in the Lord, who doth not fail them that hope in Him. And when that day had drawn on to evening, Everard of Eza, Curate of Almelo, came unexpectedly in his chariot as if sent by God to comfort the poor. He was received by the Brothers eagerly and reverently, and they brought him in as if the Hospice was his own, for he loved the House and all that dwelt therein by reason of their utter poverty and their simple manner of life, and because their desire was to hinder none, but to profit all men; moreover he was united to Father John by a special bond of love. Wherefore, when he had determined to travel to Windesem, or had business at Zwolle, he delighted to come first to the Brothers on the Mount; and being a mighty shepherd of souls as well as a most skilful physician, he alighted from his carriage and fed souls that were in want thereof with the fodder of the Holy Word, and likewise cheered the faint of heart by giving them the food they lacked. He had brought with him fine meal, and flesh, and he gave the same to the Brothers for their common use; and they receiving the gifts he offered were all comforted by their better fortune, and gave thanks to God and to Everard that of his bounty he had provided for them and succoured them in their so great need. At another time, also, divers poor Clerks had been called from Zwolle to help them in some work, wherefore certain of the Brothers went down to fish in the brook Vecht, whose course is near to the mountain. So they let down their nets in the name of Jesus, and by the grace of God, who made all waters, there were taken of the fish called bream a number equal to the number of their guests.

At that time Gerard Bronchorst, a Canon of Utrecht, and a great friend to the devout, was in authority at Deventer, and he gave two cows to our Brothers on the Mount, but forasmuch as God would prove their patience and increase their faith, one of the cows died, though the other one remained whole. And the wondrous goodness of God provided that the one should give so large a yield of milk as to suffice for all the Brothers, though they would have thought that they would scarce get enough from two. Then was seen the fulfilment of the word of the prophet Esaias, who saith: “It shall come to pass in that day that a man shall nourish a young cow, and for the abundance of the milk he shall eat butter.”

At the beginning of their common life the Brothers were despised by worldlings, and they bore patiently the derision of them that passed by; also they were called by vile names in scorn, and suffered much evil speaking and many injuries from the envious; but the patience of the good overcame the malice of the froward, and the freedom of their good conscience gave them the greater joy because of the scorn that was cast upon them. For although men that were ill-disposed would insult these poor little ones of Christ, and blushed not to speak evil of the innocent, yet many that feared God would praise their holy conversation; such men assisted them with kindly deeds and help, being moved thereto by pious reasons.

One of the community, a Lay Donat and an upright man, was employed in feeding the cattle, and as he was driving an herd of swine in the field he met an ancient crone, who began to abuse him and to hurl unseemly words at him. And the devout Brother answered her gently, saying, “Good dame, tell me my faults freely, and chide me sternly, for I greatly lack such chastisement,” but the woman hearing this was smitten with inward remorse, and said in a changed voice: “What should it profit me to help you to the kingdom of heaven, but myself to hell!” for she perceived that by her chiding the Brother earned fresh merit, but she punishment for her frowardness.

It came to pass that as two of the Brothers were at work together out of doors, one by mischance did unwittingly hurt the other somewhat, and he who had done the injury prayed the other to pardon him for God’s sake. But the Brother who was hurt in body was whole in heart, and said: “Even if thou hadst slain my father I would freely pardon thee,” and those that stood by and heard his saying were edified, and glorified God for the gracious words that proceeded from the sufferer’s mouth. May these few things that I have told of the early deeds of our elders be pleasing to the reader.

CHAPTER V

Of the consecration of the first chapel and altar at Mount St. Agnes.

On the Vigil of the Feast of St. John the Baptist, and in the year of our Lord 1395, was consecrated the first chapel on the Mount of St. Agnes the Virgin, and the first altar therein was dedicated in honour of that saint, and of the most blessed Mary Magdalene, by Hubert, the Suffragan and Vicar-General for Pontifical Acts to our most Reverend Father and Lord, Frederic, Bishop of Utrecht.

And after the rite of Consecration, when the Dedication Festival was at hand, being the Sunday after the Nativity of St. John, Reyner, the Curate of Zwolle, came and was the first to sing a Solemn Mass in the chapel, wherein he offered the sacrifice of perpetual praise to God, for he was friendly disposed to the Brothers, and at unity with them. So from that day forward the Holy Mysteries of our Redemption were celebrated there by Priests and Clerks, and on festivals, hymns to the praise of God were sung to stir up devotion of heart.

Having made this holy beginning, the lowly band of Brothers was kindled to a still greater love of the worship of God, but in after time, when the new and larger church in the monastery was builded and consecrated, the dedication of this former chapel was transferred to the latter by licence of the Bishop, but as was more seemly, it was dedicated first to St. Mary and afterward to St. Agnes.

After this, when nearly three years had gone by, the desire of the Brothers to build a monastery burned fiercely within them, and the elder amongst them especially, with their Rector, were eager to do this work and carry it forward with all speed, for certain urgent reasons did compel them. They saw that without monastic discipline the way of life in the House could not continue to be ordered duly, and therefore they determined that the habit of an holy order must be their refuge, for they were instant to make prudent provision for themselves and those that should come after, and to stop the mouths of them that spoke evil, because such men did strive with the cunning of this world to disturb the lowly and simple lives of the Brothers. Moreover, though they were still poor and had not things suitable to their need—either proper buildings or service books—yet did they try to begin the work, trusting in the mercy of God and heartened by the help of good men. And one spake of them and marvelled that men so poor should wish to build a monastery and to take religious vows, though they had no hope of increase, but Father John of Ummen, ever a lover of poverty, answered him, saying: “I have always heard from holy men that poverty is good, being both the cause of all good and the means of increasing the same.”

CHAPTER VI

Of the year and place in which the first four Brothers were invested.

In the year of the Lord 1398, on the 18th day of January, being the Feast of St. Prisca, Virgin and Martyr, our Right Reverend Lord Frederic of Blanckenhem, the renowned Bishop of Utrecht, issued his license to the devout priests, Egbert van Lingen, and Wolfard, the son of Matthias, and to the other Clerks and Lay Brothers that dwelt on Mount St. Agnes, in Nemel, near Zwolle, for it was his desire to increase the glory of God, and to promote the cause of Holy Religion. By the full authority vested in him he gave them leave to build a monastery for the Order of Canons Regular in any fit and proper place in his diocese, so that they might worthily and devoutly serve as the soldiers of Almighty God in the Regular Order, following the rule of the blessed Augustine. So having obtained this licence in their favour, they chose a place in the freehold land that is called Westerhof, in the district of Gherner and the parish of Dalvessen, the curate of which parish, who was an honourable man named Frederic Denter, giving his assent to their purpose. They determined to set their monastery here because they had found no other site that was fitting, although they sought anxiously elsewhere a place of habitation. At this time the men of Zwolle would not suffer a monastery to be builded upon the Mount at Nemel, though this was done in after days by the favour of God, but Egbert Mulart had given them this land at Westerhof. He was a most upright man, and one in authority, being of gentle lineage in Hasselt, and he was a trusty friend and a special patron of the devout. Here then they builded for their first need a small chapel, which they let consecrate in honour of Mary, the most Blessed Mother of God, and also other buildings of moderate size, and they reverently called the place “The Garden of the Blessed Mary,” in honour of Christ’s gentle Mother. When these things were done, the day drew nigh on which the Brothers of this House should be invested there. Now on the day of the Lord’s Annunciation, which is the solemn Feast of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Mother Church doth celebrate throughout all the world the first act of our Redemption. So that when that holy day had dawned with fair sunshine there came the Reverend Lord Hubert, Bishop of Yppuse, and Suffragan to our Lord Bishop of Utrecht, for he had been summoned thither upon that day. And when the waxen tapers and crosses and the other ornaments were ready, he there consecrated the burial ground, and the three altars, and then at the High Altar, which he had dedicated, he sung Mass with solemn music.

Afterward, in his reverend presence, and in the face of a large company of other religious, both Clerks and Lay, Brothers who had come together from every quarter to keep this Festival, the first four Brothers of our House were invested by that reverend and devout man, John Wale, Prior of the Regulars in the state of Zwolle, for he had been summoned for this very purpose. This number four did mystically signify the number of the four Evangelists, and the names of these Brothers, which are worthy to be cherished by them that come after, are here set down. The first was Brother Egbert of Lingen, who had been chosen for the priesthood by the Brothers on the Mount three years before this time.

The second was Brother Wolfard, son of Matthias of Medenblike, a priest of great age.

The third was John Ummen, a Clerk who came from Campen, a kinsman of John of Ummen, our first founder. The fourth was Dirk of Kleef, a Clerk who came from that state. These four made their profession on the same day, and when the Divine Mysteries had been celebrated, and their bodies had been refreshed, they spent the day in spiritual rejoicing and brotherly love. Brother Egbert was the Senior in standing and took the place of Rector of the House until a new Rector appointed by the Chapter should come; then he gave place to Brother Wolfard and stood humbly behind him. The Clerks who were not yet invested with the habit of the Order were these:—Wichbold, son of John of Deventer, Henry Huetinc of Deventer, John of Kempen, of the diocese of Cologne, Hermann of Kempen, of the same diocese.

After Easter, when a general Chapter was held by the Fathers at Windesem, these were received into the Order, and their names were set down and written as members of the Fellowship of Houses belonging to us: the Fathers also provided them a suitable Rector, and after a little space that religious and devout Brother, Egbert Lingen, was sent to them. He had been a member of the Monastery of St. Saviour, at Emsten, and for about a year, that is, until the coming of the new Prior, he ruled over the House, as will be shown hereafter. Throughout the summer of this same year the Pestilence was heavy at Deventer, Zwolle, Campen, and the neighbouring towns and districts, so that it often happened that twenty or thirty men were buried in one day in the divers parishes of these towns.

About this time and on the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, died Reyner, Curate of Zwolle, and two priests that were his chaplains. He was a good man and pitiful to the poor, and ever cherished a special devotion to St. John the Baptist. At this time also died many devout persons, both men and women.

CHAPTER VII

How the monastery was removed from Westerhof to Mount St. Agnes.

In the same year of the Lord 1398, on the 26th day of the month of August, two days before the Festival of our Holy Father Augustine, did that most kindly Lord Frederic, by the grace of God, Bishop of Utrecht, issue a further licence. He did ever most faithfully promote the interests of our House, and was our special patron, and he had compassion upon the Brothers who were invested a short time before at Westerhof, in that they were ill-content with the place, and ill-provided for there, by reason of divers hindrances and impediments that were not agreeable to the religious life.

The Bishop therefore, hearing of these hindrances and the true causes thereof, gave them licence to transfer themselves and all their goods from the aforesaid place to Mount St. Agnes, so soon as might be convenient, and to retain the same rights and privileges as he had before conferred upon them.

Thus for the second time they obtained his full and gracious consent to their desires, and Conrad Hengel, then Vice-Curate of Zwolle, likewise assented to their pious wishes.

Therefore on the eve of the day of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross they returned to the place that they had long possessed and where the greater number of their friends still continued to dwell, with blind John of Ummen; they left, however, some few Lay Brothers at Westerhof to arrange their affairs.

Moreover the Bishop of Utrecht had given them a licence for the consecration of a burial-ground for the use of the monastery that they should found on Mount St. Agnes. But when Hubert, the Bishop Suffragan, came for this purpose and entered into Zwolle, he was not allowed to continue his journey to the Mount until the Magistrates had first spoken with the Lord Bishop of Utrecht, for they thought to dissuade him from his opinion. From this cause the consecration of the burial-ground was delayed for the space of a year, until the return of the Bishop of Utrecht, for the said Bishop during the year had gone to the Curia at Rome, and he ordered that the cause of both parties should be put off and await his coming and presence on his return. But when he had come back from Rome and entered his own country in safety, certain of our Brothers came to him and asked him once more to give permission for the consecration of the burial-ground, and he, yielding to the importunity of his friends, did freely grant their petition. So he issued his commands again and ordered the consecration of this place, for he loved it and paid no heed to the complaints of the adversaries, since he preferred the honour of God and the progress of religion rather than the unjust words of worldlings, who, as is well-known, do often oppose the desires of good folk. From that time forward he showed special love to the House on the Mount, and extended to it yet fuller patronage, so that one day when he was riding round the mountain on his way to Zwolle, he asked one of his companions, saying: "What is this place, and what manner of men dwell here?" and his Vicar answered him: "Beloved Lord, dost thou not yet know that place? This is thy monastery, this is Mount St. Agnes, and the Brothers of the Mount dwell there." And the Bishop made answer: "It is well—may God preserve them."

It came to pass in this same year, 1398, in the month of September, when the Plague was still amongst us that a well-disposed Lay Brother named John, son of Faber, who was smitten with the pestilence, came from Zwolle to the mountain, and sought hospitality in the name of God. And being received in charity, his disease grew heavy upon him, and he died on the Feast Day of St. Maurice the Martyr. But after his death certain of the Clerks and Lay folk, being infected with the Plague, were taken from this life after a little while, but several others grew whole of their sickness, for the Lord had mercy upon them.

Lastly, on the day after the Feast of St. Francis the Confessor died John, son of Nicolas of Campen, a Lay Brother of great age, who had been the gardener.

On the day of the translation of our holy Father, Augustine Gerard Bou left this bodily life. He was a man of great strength, who had been a farmer, and his native land was Holland.

On the Feast of St. Calixtus, Pope and Martyr, died Hermann Restikey, a Clerk of the diocese of Cologne; he was born in the town of Kempen, and was well learned and skilled in singing and in binding books. When he drew near to death he asked that a taper might be lighted quickly and given into his hands, and holding this above his breast he began to say devoutly and often to repeat: “Mary, Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy, do thou protect us from the enemy and receive us in the hour of death,” and having said this, he breathed forth his soul.

On the day after the Feast of the Eleven Thousand Holy Virgins, John of Kempen fell asleep in the Lord; he was a devout Clerk of the diocese of Cologne who had just been received into the Religious Order, but he died or ever he could take the habit, for death was beforehand with him.

He was kinsman to the aforesaid Hermann, whom he had persuaded to withdraw from the life of the world when he was Sublector in the town of Campen. These greatly loved one another in life and death, they came from one city and province, they were of one heart in their good purpose, and alike steadfast therein. This John, who continued a longer space in the service of God, was a man of great kindness and sobriety, and was well skilled in the work of husbandry. For at harvest time when all must labour more than usual he was diligent in helping therein. And sometimes at night he would gather in the crops of the poor, and often wearied himself by this work of piety; but in this year the weather was very rainy, and the crops were in such danger that he gathered in those that grew in the watery places, and binding them into sheaves carried them on his own shoulders out of reach of the waters.

On the Feast Day of the Saints Crispin and Crispian died Wichbold, son of John of Deventer, a man of good lineage. For a long time he lived a devout life in Zwolle, but afterward finished his days yet more devoutly on the Mount. Being an eager lover of the Scriptures he edified many by his holy discourse. On the Feast Day of St. Martin the Confessor, Henry of Deventer fell asleep in Christ; he was a Clerk and the companion and fellow citizen of Wichbold, and likewise a very humble and gentle man. One day he was plastering the inner walls of the cells in the dormitory of the Brotherhood with soft mortar in company with another Clerk. But it happened that as the mortar was somewhat violently dashed on to the wall some did come through the cracks of the battens into Henry’s face (for he was standing on the other side of the wall) and befouled him greatly. But he who had done the deed, looking to see who had been bespattered by the mortar, and seeing the Brother who was so greatly loved with his face befouled, implored his pardon in dolorous wise. But Henry was rather merry than vexed, and answered: “There is no hurt done, be not disturbed. I care not for it.” So gentle was he that none ever saw him angered or heard him complain.

The day after the Feast of Brixius, Confessor and Bishop, died Hermann of Laer, a man of great age who came from Campen.

On the Vigil of St. Thomas the Apostle, died Gerlac ten Water, a Clerk of the town of Kampen. He had a deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and was still in the flower of his youth, but in this same year he left the world and his parents and entered the monastery with joy, and he made a good end to his life when came the time appointed for him to die. These were buried in the Chapel of St. Agnes, which afterward became the Chapter House, because there was no other consecrated ground in the which they could be buried. But as the space was very narrow, some were buried in a neighbouring spot, because it was hoped that a burial-ground would soon be consecrated there.

But in the year 1407, in the time of William Vorniken, the second Prior, and after the consecration of the new chapel, the bones of some of these Brothers were taken up and buried again in the other burial-ground on the western side of the chapel, where now several Lay Brothers who knew them lie buried also.

In the same year, on the Feast day of St. Martin, the Bishop, Brother Egbert Linghen, the first Rector, invested two converts; their names being Brother John, son of James of Hasselt, and Brother John Eme of Zwolle.

In the year 1399, on the Feast of St. Gregory the Pope, Brother Godefried of Kempen, who was born in the diocese of Cologne, was invested by the first Rector. He was a skilful writer and singer, and he wrote one missal for the High Altar, and three Antiphonaries, and likewise illuminated several books. Also he painted and adorned the altars of the church most beautifully with the figures of saints.

CHAPTER VIII

How John Kempen was chosen as the first Prior of Mount St. Agnes.

In the year 1399, after Easter, John of Kempen, one of the community at Windesem, was chosen to be Prior of the House of Mount St. Agnes.

By the help of God, he, the first Prior, did govern the affairs of the House, with the many poor inmates, zealously and devoutly for nine years. Also he added to the possessions of the monastery in laudable wise, providing buildings and books and other things needful. He it was that ordered the building of the chief part of the church walls, and he made ready much timber for the finishing of the roof. He began to plant an orchard on the south side of the cloister, and he set forest trees round it on every side. This is that very garden that Gerard Groote, long before, pointed out to the Brothers that they should grow their herbs therein. For a long time wheat was grown, but a great while after herbs were planted.

In the days of the Prior, mountains and hills were made low, and hollow valleys were filled up: then was fulfilled to the letter that which is written in Esaias, a text oft spoken of by the Brothers in the midst of their toil: “Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways plain” . . .

It is no easy task to tell with what toil and sweat this mountainous place was turned into a level plane, and this sandy soil made abundantly fruitful. Very heavy and long was the labour of preparing a site for the burial-ground and church, for here the slope was steeper than in other places, and extended over the whole face of the ground. Yet by little and little and by labour done at divers times this hill was taken away and the matter thereof thrown outside the boundary wall into a deep valley toward the north: so that to the wonder of many scarce a trace of the said hill could be seen.

And the Brothers who worked by turns there would say to one another: “True is the word of the Lord which He spake: ‘If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say to this mountain, be thou removed from hence hither and it shall be done!’ But since faith without works is dead, we do firmly believe that if we put our hand to this work in the name of the Lord, we shall quickly remove this mountain.” So it was done, not to this mountain only but also to others that stood round about the monastery when the boundaries thereof began to be enlarged and to be surrounded by a wall of stone. Besides this Prior John set up the following needful buildings: namely, a Refectory for the Brothers and another for the Lay Folk, a kitchen and cellar, and cells for guests, also a sacristy for Divine service between the choir and the Chapter House. And he himself was the first among them that laboured, and would carry the hod of mortar, and dig with the spade and throw the earth into the cart. When he had leisure he was instant in reading holy books, and often worked at writing or illuminating. He caused several books to be written for the choir and the library, and because they were poor he appointed certain Brothers to write for sale, as was the custom from old time. This many of the Brothers were zealous to do, but others set themselves manfully to the tasks without.

In the year 1399, Indulgences were granted to the people of Zwolle by the Apostolic See, and Pope Boniface the Ninth granted these to be gained by all that were truly penitent at the Church of St. Michael on the Feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, and on the Feast of St. Michael.

In this same year, I, Thomas of Kempen, a scholar at Deventer and a native of the diocese of Cologne, came to Zwolle to gain indulgences. Then I went on, glad at heart, to Mount St. Agnes, and was instant to be allowed there to abide, and I was received with mercy. Afterward, on the day before the Feast of St. Barbara the Virgin, came William, son of Henry of Amsterdam, who also, at that time, lived at Deventer with the devout Clerks.

CHAPTER IX

How the Burial-ground at Mount St. Agnes was consecrated.

In the same year, 1399, after the Feast of St. Remigius, the Prior and Brothers of our House took counsel and aid from their friends, and busied themselves about the consecration of the burial-ground, which ceremony had been delayed for a long while because of the hindrances above named.

But when they knew that our Lord of Utrecht had returned from the Curia at Rome they came to him in Wollenhoven, where he then lived, and readily obtained their petition through the mediation of their most trusty friends, the noble Sweder of Rechteren and the priest Henry de Ligno.

So that Bishop Frederic, our most kindly lord, delayed not to send to his Suffragan bidding him to come with all speed and consecrate the burial-ground on the Mount, and the Suffragan also when he had read the letter of his Superior was found eager to perform this pious act; and he came without delay with the messengers who had been sent to him, and on the day after the Feast of the Eleven Thousand Virgins, and at about the hour of Vespers, he consecrated the burial-ground that lieth within the cloister of the monastery, the Prior, Brothers, Clerks, and servants of our House being present at the ceremony. When the rite had been performed duly, a gentle rain fell and watered the consecrated ground with the dew of heaven, and all that dwelt thereabout rejoiced with great joy, for that the place had been consecrated by the Bishop, and that the mouths of the adversaries who strove to hinder the foundation and progress of the monastery were evidently stopped.

So when the rite of consecration had been performed by the authority of the Bishop, he went himself on another day to Windesem and there consecrated the new choir and the four altars.

CHAPTER X

Of the Brothers who were invested by John of Kempen, the first Prior.

In the days of this venerable man our first Prior and Father, seven Clerks and three Converts were invested, and the day and year of their investiture are written below. Likewise he received the profession of Brother Godefried of Kempen who was then about twenty years of age.

In the year of the Lord 1401, on the day after the Dispersion of the Apostles, was invested Brother John Drick of the city of Steenwyck in the diocese of Utrecht. He was before a priest, and Vicar of Steenwyck, and after less than a year of probation he made his profession by licence of the Prior of the Superior House, on the birthday of St. John the Apostle; and he afterward was chosen Procurator.

In the same year, on the Feast day of St. Brixius, Bishop and Confessor, was invested William, son of Henry (who was called William Coman) of Amsterdam in the State of Holland. He was now twenty-three years of age and had lived with the devout Brothers at Deventer, but Florentius Radewin, before his death, sent him to Mount St. Agnes.

In the same year, on the day before the Feast of St. Catherine the Virgin, was invested Brother Frederic, a Convert who was born in Groninghen in the State of Frisia, and lived for a long while on Mount St. Agnes with the first founders of the monastery.

In the year of the Lord 1402, on the Vigil of the Nativity of Christ, was invested Brother Gerard, son of Tydeman, who was born in Wesep, a town in Holland: he wrote divers works for the use of the monastery and for sale. In the year of the Lord 1403, on the day of St. Pontianus the Martyr, was invested Conrad, a Convert; he was a tailor and was born in the Countship of Marck.

In the year of the Lord 1405, on the Festival of the Four Crowned Martyrs, Brother Alardus, a priest, and John Benevolt of Groninghen were alike invested: Alardus was forty-six years old and a Frisian by nation; he had been Curate at Pilsum, which was his native place, and was a good and devout man.

In the year of the Lord 1406, on the Feast of Corpus Christi, which fell in that year on the day before the Feast of St. Barnabas, two brothers that were Clerks, and one that was a Convert, were invested. These were Thomas Hemerken of the city of Kempen in the diocese of Cologne, and own brother to John of Kempen the first Prior. The father of these was called John and their mother Gertrude. The other Clerk was called Oetbert Wilde of Zwolle, whose father's name was Henry and his mother's Margaret. The Convert was Arnold Droem of Utrecht who brought great wealth to the monastery and was in charge of the Refectory.

CHAPTER XI

Of the death of Brother Wolfard, Priest in the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes.

In the year of the Lord 1401, on the Feast of the Holy Martyrs John and Paul, Brother Wolfard, son of Matthias, died in the monastery pertaining to our order, which is called the House of the Blessed Virgin in the Wood, and lieth near Northorn. He came from Medenblic, a town in Holland, and was one of the four first Brothers of our House. He was a man of great stature and grave deportment, eloquent in discourse, and his hoary head was comely to look upon. He took part in the labours of the younger Brothers, and would perform lowly tasks, such as washing the trenchers, digging the ground, carrying stones, or collecting wood. It was his wont to come early into the choir, to be alert in watching, enduring in fasting, careful in celebrating the Mass, and devout in prayer.

Once he was asked by a Religious what he had eaten during Advent, and whether he had had eggs from time to time; and he made answer: “Blessed be God, throughout Advent I have seldom taken eggs or fish, but I have eaten pulse only and have kept the fast in great contentment.”

So when by the ordinance of God the end of his life was at hand, and the time when his good deeds should receive a better crown, he made a most edifying end after the manner and order following:

At that time and in this year there was a notable pestilence in our House of the Blessed Virgin in the Wood, whereof the Prior and many Brothers died, and the one priest who survived, Brother John of Groninghen, a weakly and feeble man, was left desolate save for the presence of one novice, Brother Honestus. But our Brother Wolfard, hearing of the death of these Brothers, and of the grief of them that were left desolate, was greatly moved with compassion for this House. One day, therefore, when girt for labour, he said in a tone of pity to me, as I stood by him, “Who could deserve to have his portion with these good Brothers of Northorn, and to earn an end like theirs?” For he had known divers of these Brothers, and the place where they dwelt, and he loved their holy company. And as he was telling me many good things concerning them, Brother Arnold, a Convert from Northorn, entered in at the gate of our monastery to ask for one of our priests and when Brother Wolfard saw him coming he ran joyfully towards him and embraced him. But hearing the cause of his coming, he said that he himself was ready to go with him if it were pleasing to the Prior, and his obedience should permit. And Arnold, seeing his readiness to come, rejoiced thereat, and said: “Most beloved Brother, how good would it be that thou shouldst do so.” Then the Brothers were called together and considered who should be sent to succour those Brothers in their strait, and they determined upon Brother Wolfard, who was of fitting character and age, and he, being moved by charity, assented to their resolution. On the next day at sunrise, he set forth to Northorn with Brother Arnold, being ready to lay down his life for the Brothers after the example of Christ, that he might save it everlastingly. So he said farewell to the Brothers of Mount St. Agnes, who wept at his departure, and left the monastery never to return thither; but he knew not how soon he should be removed to a Higher Mount. In thus leaving the place and the Brothers he overcame his natural man and fulfilled the law of charity, following, in his death, the example of Christ. Therefore he entered into the Monastery of Mary, Mother of Christ, which is in the Wood, and within a few days he there made an end of his life, and was buried by the Brothers of the House aforesaid. Our Brother Egbert hath told me that long ago Gerard Groote had said to our brother: “Wolfard, thou shalt know two conversions,” for in the days of Master Gerard, Wolfard had begun to be well disposed to the religious life, but afterward he was turned away to the world: yet after many years, by the grace of God, it came about that he was again pricked to the heart, and, leaving his pastoral charge, he changed his worldly life, and was among the first of the Brothers to take the religious habit, and he thus ended his life with a happy death struggle.

CHAPTER XII

How Brother William Forniken was chosen to be the second Prior in the House of Mount St. Agnes.

In the year of the Lord 1408, on the Vigil of Ascension Day, Brother William Vorniken, from the Monastery at Windesem, was chosen to be Prior of Mount St. Agnes. He was the second Prior of our House, which he ruled for seventeen years, being a lover of poverty and discipline. After that he was taken away from us he was promoted to the Superior House at Windesem, and became Father General of all our Order. He it was who looked to the roofing of the church, the making of new stalls in the choir, and the provision of fair vestments to be worn by priests and servers on festivals. Also he enlarged the borders of the monastery, and surrounded the whole with a wall of stone; he built a new dwelling for the husbandmen and placed a byre for cattle near the gate, likewise in the year of his departure he began to make a mill and to build a brewery. In several places he planted trees of divers kinds, of which some were fruit trees; and he made smooth the slopes of the mountain, which for the most part still remained steep, and this he did by carrying away the sandy soil.

He ordered the altars to be beautified with pictures, and good store of books to be written for the choir and the library. Yet in the midst of all these things poverty and simplicity were dear to him, and with his own hand he illuminated many books. He took divers Lay Brothers to dwell with him, for he saw with the eye of charity that they would earn the reward of eternal life by faithfully cleaving to their holy labours, and living the common life under obedience. Some of these he received as Donates, others he invested with the habit of Converts.

During the years that he was Prior he invested fourteen Clerks, whose names, with the days of their investiture, are written hereafter.

In the year 1408, on the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel, was invested Brother Nicholas Creyenschot, a native of the town of Kampen, a youth in years but upright in character.

In the year 1410, on the Feast of All Saints, two Brothers were invested together, namely, Wermbold, a priest of Kampen and kinsman to John of Ummen, and Gerard Ae of Utrecht.

In the year 1411, on the Vigil of the Nativity, three Brothers were invested together, namely, John the son of Gerard, John Bowman, and Gerard son of Wolter, a Convert; all these came from Zwolle. In the year 1413, on the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, was invested Brother John of Lent, a town one mile from Zwolle. In the year 1418, on the Vigil of the Nativity, three Brothers were invested together, namely, Rudolph of Oetmersen in Twenthe, Otto Lyman of Goch in Geldria, and Henry the son of James of Zwolle.

In the year 1421, on the Vigil of the Nativity, two Brothers were invested: namely, Henry, son of William, of Deventer, and Deric Veneman of Zwolle.

In the year 1423, on Easter Eve, two Converts were invested, namely, Gerard ten Mollen of Zwolle, and Gerard Hombolt of Utrecht.

In the year of the Lord 1424, on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, these three Brothers were invested: John Lap of the town of Neerden in Holland, Christian Anversteghe of Campen, and Helmic Braem of Herderwijck in the State of Geldria.

CHAPTER XIII

Of the death of Brother Nicholas Kreyenschot.

In the year 1410, on the Feast of St. Barnabas the Apostle, Nicholas Kreyenschot died just after sunset. He was a youth of good disposition, and sprang from a notable family of the town of Kampen. He was about twenty-three years of age, for God dealt pitifully with him so that his short span of life fulfilled the task of many years, and he escaped longer struggles in this present life; for eight months and ten days after his profession he left dwelling in this present world and departed to the other. The virtue of obedience shone brightly in him, as was seemly in a good youth. Who should say, “Brother, come hither,” and Nicholas would not come straightway, or “Begone,” and he did not straightway depart? Moreover, a good return came to the monastery through his means. It happened in a time that he upset and broke a jar, and so grieved was he at this mischance and loss, that he wept bitterly. Once also he made ready a sharp rod, and came to the sub-Prior, saying: “I entreat thee, Father, for God’s sake, to inflict a sharp discipline upon me, for I do often transgress, nor do I make any progress.” He was buried in the eastern part of the cloister near the wall of the church and beneath the steps of our dormitory.

CHAPTER XIV

Of the consecration of our Church and of four Altars in the House of Mount St. Agnes.

In the year 1412, on the 8th day of the month of April, being the Friday after Easter, our church was consecrated, being dedicated in honour of St. Agnes the Virgin and Martyr of Christ.

The rite was performed by Matthias of Biduane, the Suffragan of our Lord and Reverend Father in Christ, Frederic de Blanckenheim, Bishop of Utrecht. Many religious persons and priests were present thereat, namely, the Prior of Windesem, the Prior of Belheem, Conrad Hengel and John of Haarlem, who were priests at Zwolle. Many other honourable persons also, both men and women, young and old, men of the town and men of the country, came together to this dedication. There was great joy in the hearts of all, and a general license to enter the monastery was given to strangers, as our statutes allow to be done on that day only. So when the consecration had been solemnly performed, the Bishop came forward in his mitre to consecrate the four altars. First he dedicated the High Altar in the Choir in honour of the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Mother of God, St. Agnes the Virgin, and the Apostles of Christ, and he sang Mass in solemn wise for the dedication of the church and altar.

Then going out of the Choir into the northern aisle of the church, he dedicated the Altar in the greater chapel in honour of the Holy Cross and the Blessed Martyrs, and afterwards the Altar which is in the midst of the church on the left of the Choir in honour of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin, and of St. Augustine the Bishop, who is Father of our Order.

Lastly, he dedicated the Altar on the south side of the Choir in honour of the most Blessed Mary Magdalene, St. Catherine, St. Cecilia, and the Eleven Thousand Virgins.

This done, masses were celebrated at the several altars, and the Host of Salvation was offered up in all reverence to God. But after midday, the Brothers being gathered together, he consecrated the burial-ground for the interment of the dead outside the church and on the western and southern side thereof.

On that day he granted Indulgences for forty days to them that were there present, and a like grace to all the benefactors of the church and all that visited the altars, as was set forth clearly in the Bishop's letter concerning the consecration of the church. In this same church there still stand the two altars that were consecrated in Westerhof at the first foundation of the House in that place; for these, by consent of the Bishop of Utrecht, were transferred to this church after the return of the Brothers from Westerhof. One of these was consecrated in honour of St. John the Baptist and the Blessed Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul; this doth stand on the south side of the church. The other was dedicated in honour of St. James and St. John the Apostles.

The Sunday after the Feast of the Blessed Gallus the Abbot (which is in the month of October), was appointed to be kept in every year as the anniversary of the dedication of this church and the several altars therein; and on this day also is kept the Dedication Festival of the House of the Blessed Virgin in Windesem and of the Convent of Nuns at Diepenveen, to the glory and honour of the most Blessed Trinity.

In the same year, when their General Chapter was held at Windesem, the venerable Fathers of the Canons Regular in Brabant came thereto, and were accepted and united to our Fraternity, together with the Houses belonging to them.

In this year from the Feast of Pentecost onward the Canonical Hours were sung in our church after the monastic manner.

CHAPTER XV

Of the death of the beloved Father John Ummen, the first Founder of the Monastery of Mount St. Agnes.

In the year 1420, in the evening of the 1st day of September, the Feast of St. Ægidius the Abbot, died that holy and faithful servant of Christ, John Reghelant, formerly a most beloved disciple of Gerard Groote, whose discourses he used to hear. He was born of honest parents, and for several years was educated in Zwolle; but while he was yet a youth he was diseased in the eyes, and God allowed him to fall into darkness, and he continued blind to the end of his life; but yet the less he could see the outer world, the more brightly did the grace of God illumine him inwardly. His mother, whose name was Regheland, was devoted to God, and often went on long journeys to visit the shrines of Saints in company with her blind son, whom she would lead by the hand, taking him with her to hear sermons in church, and leading him onward to every good thing.

So when the venerable Master, Gerard Groote, was preaching in Zwolle, and through God's inspiration was bringing compunction to many, the Lord did open the heart of this His servant also, and did inflame him, wherefore he began to love Gerard much, and often sought to be instructed by the doctrine of so great a man. For this cause he left wandering about the world and sought to serve God in quietness, also he exhorted all that came to him to despise earthly desires, and take hold on that new life in Christ which Gerard taught by his holy manner of living.

Therefore he took to him certain men that were well disposed, and with them he began to live the Common Life in Zwolle, but afterward they took up their abode upon Mount Nemel (which is now called Mount St. Agnes), because they wished to dwell outside the tumult of the world. Here they gathered a larger company, the which he governed for many years with faithful devotion, assisted by divers helpers, until the monastery was founded, for he did not fear the many hindrances that met him. But at length when the monastery was builded, and a Prior instituted in the canonical manner, John, being filled with brotherly love, and led by a yet fuller zeal for souls, took with him certain laymen of ripe age and began to form a new congregation in honour of the Holy Trinity, in the field of St. John, near Vollenhoe, which congregation, by the favour of God, he did enlarge greatly. And when in the process of time the number of the Brothers was multiplied, he and many others took the habit of the Tertiaries, and he continued to his life's end to be the humble servant of the Brothers and their first Rector. He was one of the first and original disciples of Gerard Groote, and had many spiritual discourses with him, for it was from Gerard that he learned the way of an holy life, and he submitted himself and his little ones fully to Gerard's counsel and discretion. Being prevented in due season by God's grace, Father John was devout, and is worthy of remembrance, for that going on day by day he reached forward continually to the things that are before, being a notable lover of poverty, one that kept lowliness and loved sobriety. He was the very beauty of purity, a pattern of simplicity, a strong upholder of discipline, an enemy of sin, a light of virtue, an ensample of devotion, strong in faith, long suffering in hope, prodigal in charity, and one that did convert many from the vanity of the world. A few things concerning him are written in the beginning of this book.

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