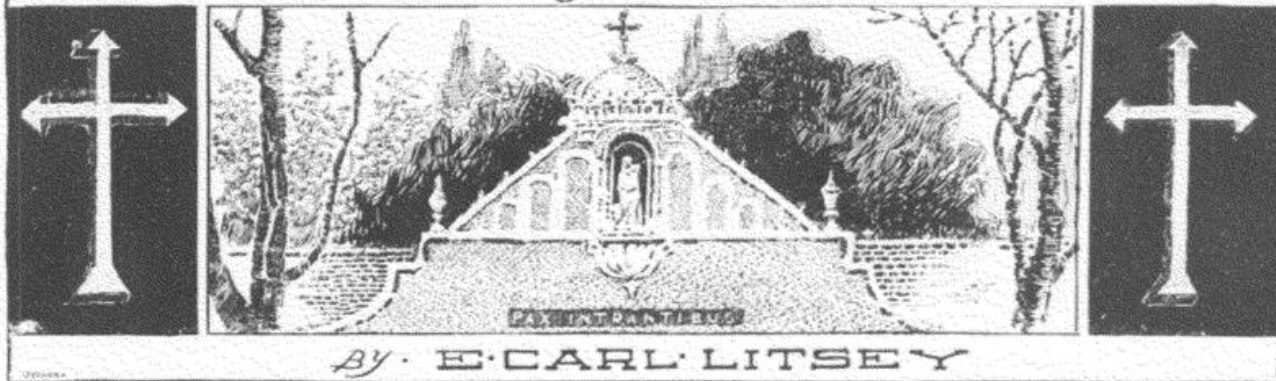


THE ABBOT OF GETHSEMANI.

The Abbey of Gethsemani.



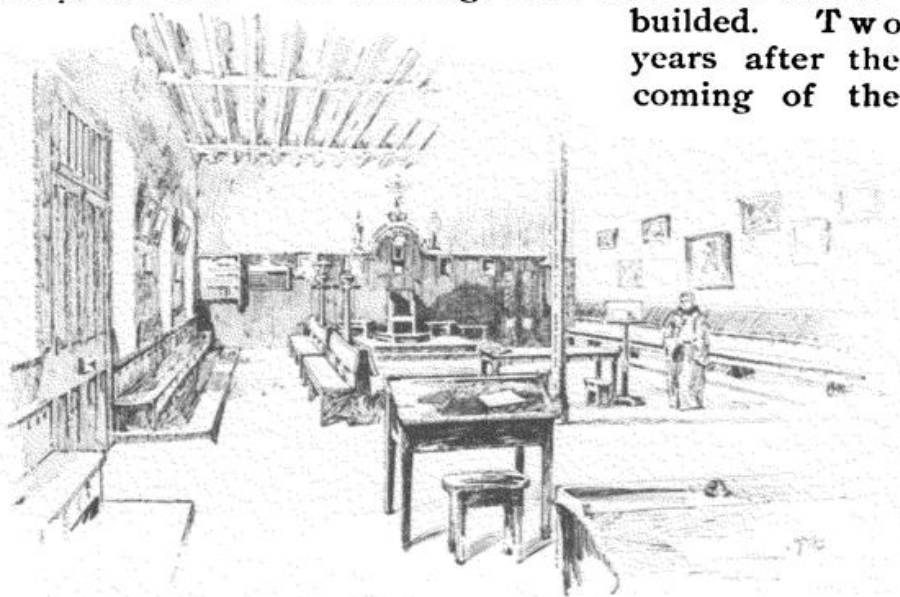
"PAX INTRANTIBUS;"—
"Peace to all who enter."

These are the words, written in white letters above the gate of the porter's lodge, which greet the eye of the visitor to the Abbey of Gethsemani.

On the 26th of October, 1848, a band of monks of the Order of Our Lady of La Trappe, left the Abbey of Melleray, near Nantes, on the Lower Loire, France, and turned their faces towards the new world. This band was composed of forty religious, sixteen choir fathers, and twenty-four lay brothers. The crowded condition of the French Abbey necessitated this movement, for room was so scarce that postulants could not be received. On May 26th of the same year, Rev. Father D. Maxime, Abbot of Melleray, had commissioned two of his flock to go to the United States for the purpose of selecting a site for a new monastery. With the assistance of Mgr. Flaget, then Bishop of Louisville, these men contracted for 1,400 acres of land belonging to the Sisters of Loretto, in Nelson County, the price paid being 20,000 francs (\$5,000).

Father Maria Eutropius, Prior of the Abbey of Melleray, was given charge over the band of pioneers. A detailed account of their eventful journey would make a small volume. They set sail from Havre on the second day of November, 1848, and arrived in New Orleans on the sixteenth of December. Proceeding by steamboat, they came to Louisville ten days later, and the fifty miles which yet lay before them were accomplished in three dray wagons. When their new home was reached, they found nothing but a few cabins gathered together on the declivity of a hill. These they occupied with grateful hearts, and Gethsemani was founded.

The growth of the order in America was steady and rapid. One by one the old buildings were torn down and re-built. Two years after the coming of the



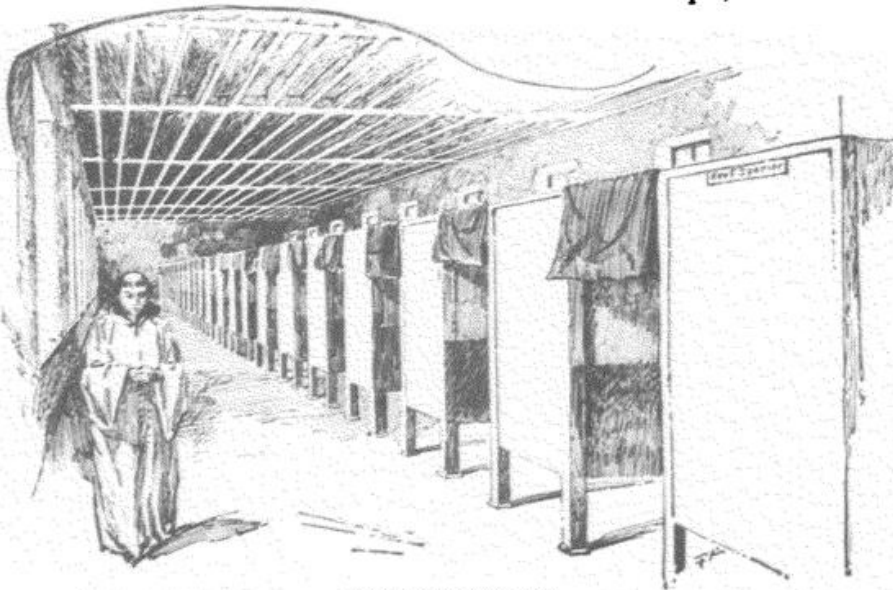
THE CHAPTER ROOM.



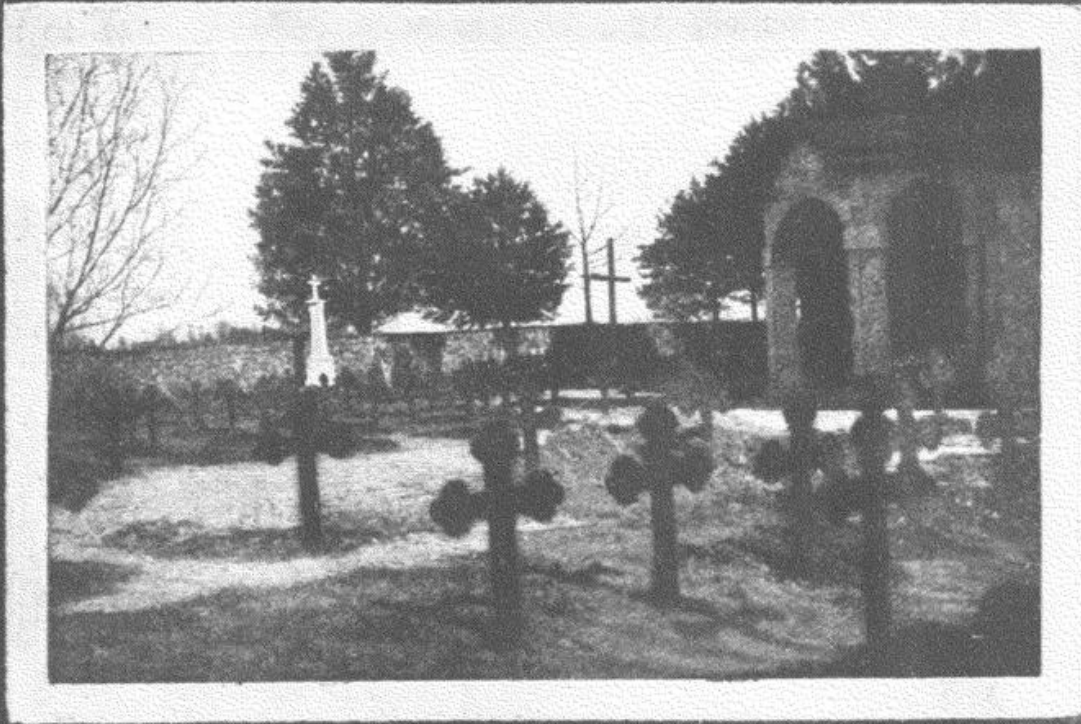
Trappists, their Superior, Father Eutropius, went to Rome to recommend the new colony to the fatherly protection of the Pope. The Sovereign Pontiff received him graciously, and placed in his hands a rescript bearing date of July 21, 1850, by which the new monastery, before only a priory,

was raised to the dignity of an Abbey. Upon his return, Father Eutropius was elected first Abbot of Gethsemani. Here he labored for nine years, when ill-health caused him to return to France, and to resign his office. Father M. Benedict succeeded him as Abbot in 1861. Father Benedict was, perhaps, the most austere Abbot that

Gethsemani ever had. The rigid rules of the order were carried out to the letter during his administration. But for all that he was greatly loved, and his resignation in 1889 was received with sincere regret by all the brotherhood. The third Abbot of the Order was Father M. Edward, elected in 1890. Serving in this capacity



THE DORMITORY.



Quasi here

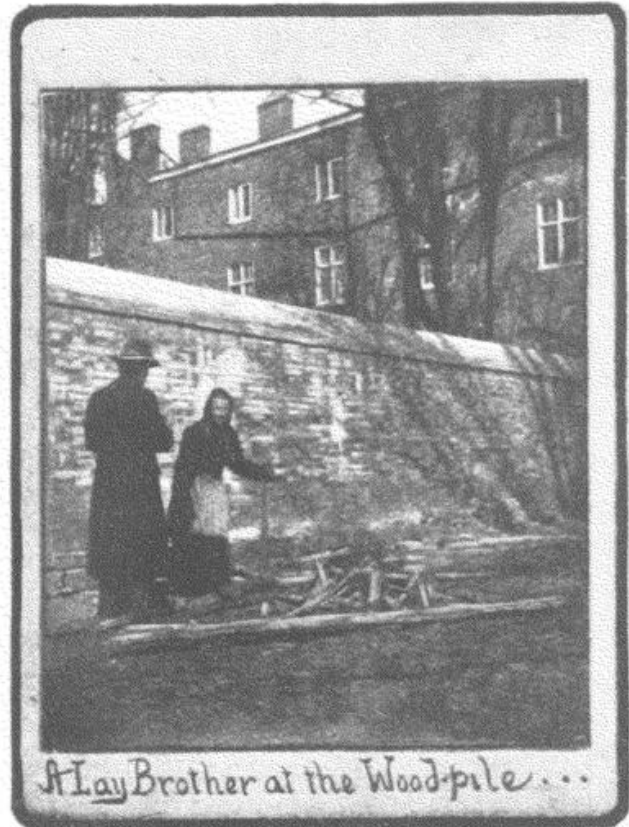
for five years, poor health drove him to France, whence he tendered his resignation.*

The fourth and present Abbot of Gethsemani, Father M. Obrecht, was elected in 1898.

Leaving Louisville any morning about eight-thirty, a two hours run over the Louisville & Nashville Railroad will bring you to the station of Gethsemani. Here you will find a distillery, a store, and a few cottages. A narrow dirt road winds over a hill towards the north. Following this road for a mile and a half—a delightful walk—you will arrive at the Abbey of Gethsemani. A magnificent avenue of elms, planted in double rows, leads up to the porter's lodge. These trees are eighty-six in number, and were brought from France by the first colonists, fifty-three years ago. The avenue formed by them is four hundred and forty-five feet long, and eighty-six

* Abbot Edward died the seventh of March, while this article was being written.—AUTHOR.

feet wide. Over the gate to which we have come, in a niche, is a life-size statue of the Virgin, with the Infant;



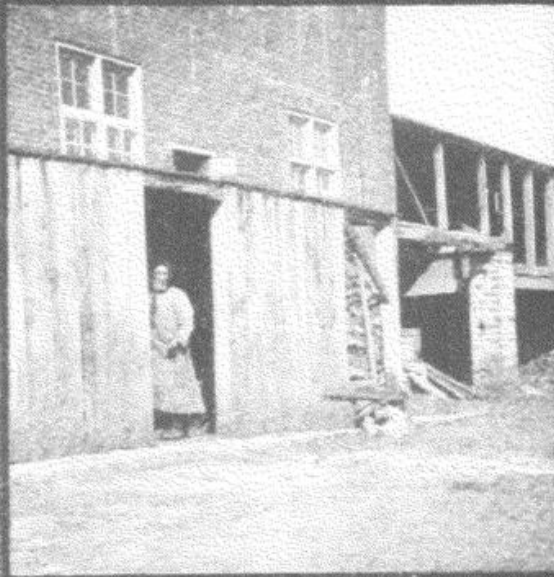
A Lay Brother at the Wood-pile...

below these figures are the words already quoted, "*Pax Intransibus.*" The gate is kept closed and locked. A wire hangs down from a hole high up in the shut gate, with a small wooden cross fastened to its end. Pull this

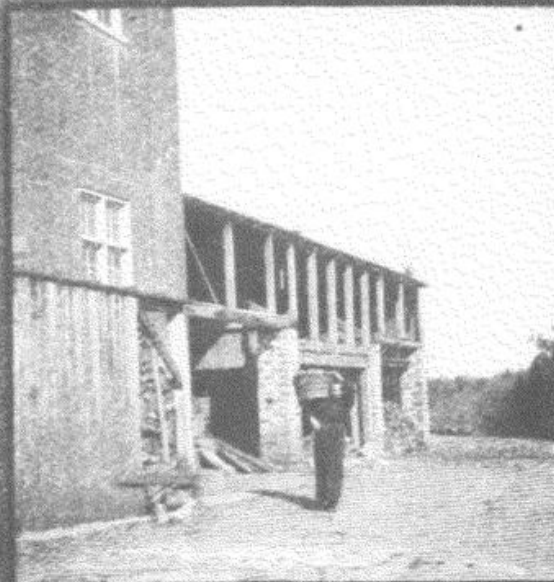
cowled figure, who greets you with the words "*Deo Gratias,*" or "*Benedicat.*" You enter, and are shown to a waiting room on the left, where mementoes of the Abbey may be obtained at a small price. Your business and your name are ascertained by the brother who admitted you, who straightway seeks the Superior with this information. He returns very soon, and beckons you to follow. Leaving the waiting room, you come to two more gates, opening into the first court. A placard upon the brick walls bears this inscription, in bold letters: "Women are forbidden under pain of excommunication to enter these gates."

This first court is practically a flower garden, with palms and plants and shrubs artistically arranged. At one side are two greenhouses, where the flowers are preserved in winter. In the center of the court is a shrine enclosing a life-size statue of the Virgin. In the trellis-work surrounding this shrine these words are set, in large letters: "DULCIS VIRGO MARIA SALVE." Crossing the court you ascend eight large stone steps, and enter the monastery proper.

Once within the bare hallway a feeling of awe descends upon you, for it is evident that you are out of the world. The hall is devoid of ornament. On the walls are framed mottoes, taken from the Scriptures, and from the writings of the Saints. Here is one of the more prominent: "If you desire to enter here, leave your body at the door. Here is space only for your soul." The room at the left is the reception room, furnished with two tables and a



At the Wine Press.



A Basket of Chips

gently, and the silvery notes of a bell are heard, quickly followed by the shuffling of feet, and the door is opened. Before you stands a brown-

few chairs, and here the guest-master hears what you have to say. If you are there for an hour to look over the place, he will courteously give you his time and attention. If you come as a guest to spend a few days, he will show you to a room and minister to your needs.

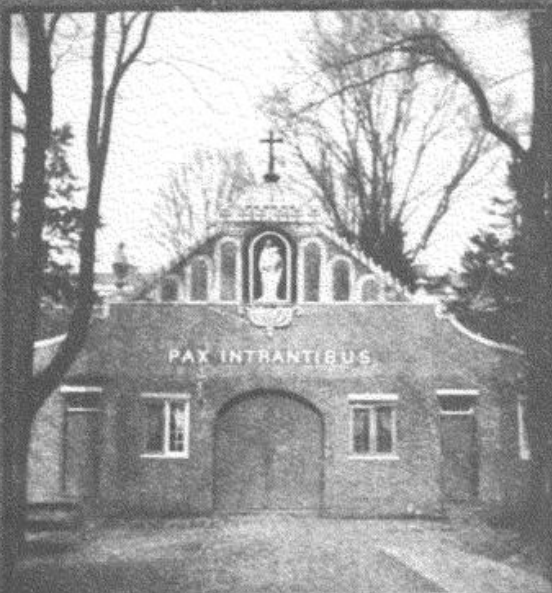
Upon the wall of the reception room is hung a painting of the Magdalene, by Van Dyck. This work of art is nearly three hundred years old, and was a gift to the monastery from a Mrs. Barron, of Baltimore. It was brought from France during the troublous times of the Revolution, and is now valued at several thousand dollars. Upon a small side table lies a ponderous volume full three feet long, eighteen inches wide and four inches thick. Opening this, we find the entire Psalms in Latin, done by hand in different colored inks. It was the life work of one of the brothers at the Abbey, and was bound by the monks, who possess a bookbinding establishment. On the ground floor of this wing are the rooms of the Abbot, Prior and Sub-Prior, and rooms for postulants seeking admission into the order. Leaving the reception room and coming into the hall again, two broad, high doors admit us into a cloister, running the entire length of the building. The walls are hung with pictures of saints, of Christ on the cross, and of the Virgin. Another door leads us to a latticed corridor, where we can see the second court, planted as a vineyard, with a cistern in the center. Along the walls of the corridor are similar pictures, and an occasional niche reveals the bust of Pope Leo

XIII. or of some bishop. The corridor terminates at a door giving entrance to the chapel of the monks.

Within the church you are impressed strangely with a sense of mystery and silence. The church is built in the



Shrine in First Court.

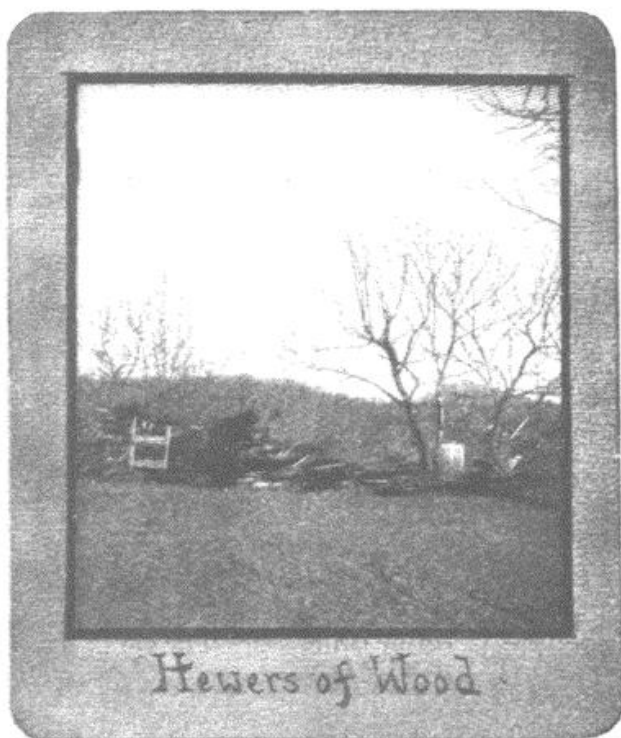


Entrance to Porters Lodge.

form of a cross. At the head of the cross is the altar, glowing with its multitude of tapers. Before the altar a hanging censer burns continuously. In

front of this censer three ropes hang down nearly to the floor. These ropes are connected with sweet-toned bells far overhead, which are rung during services. The lower part of the cross forms the monks' choir, where the brotherhood gather seven times a day to perform their religious rites. These seven services are, respectively: *Lauds, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers* and *Compline*. Two of these are often sung together. The arms of the cross are supplied with plain wooden benches, where visitors may sit. The church is built in the Gothic style, and is very beautiful and imposing. It is so arranged as to form two chapels; one for the community and one for the laity. It has fourteen altars, all of which are of stone, but two, which are of wood.

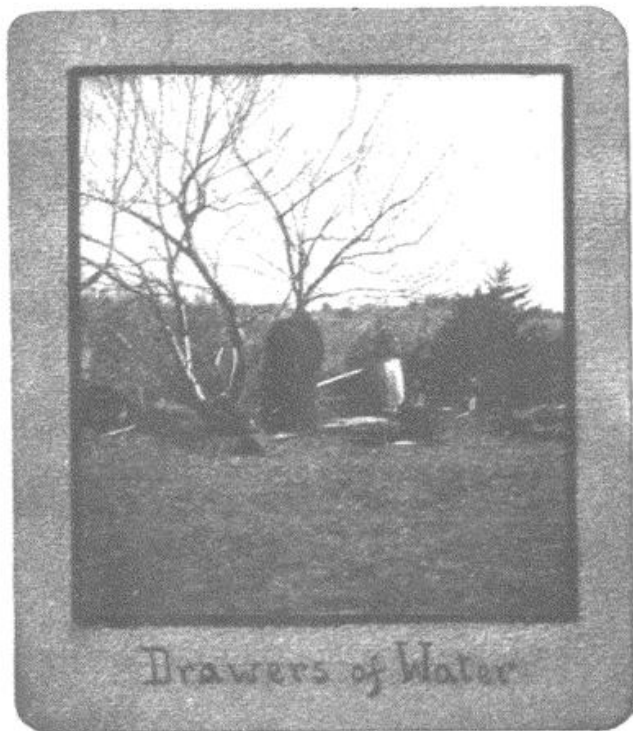
From the church we come to the chapter room, which adjoins it. Here the holy Rule—by which the monks live—is explained by the Superior every morning. Here, also the "*Culpa*," or public accusation of faults is made, and due penance imposed. At one end of the room is a kind of *daïs*, with the seats of the Abbot, Prior and Sub-



Hewers of Wood

Prior. At the other end are the confessionals. Here, too, we are shown the wooden cross which came over with the first band of Trappists from France. It is in this room that the monk spends all of his time not employed in manual labor, or prayer or sleep. A narrow stairway conducts us to the common dormitory of the monks. The beds are separated by partitions, forming cells six feet four inches long, five feet nine inches wide, and six feet high. The bed is a straw mattress placed on a few boards, with one comfort for covering. This room is not heated even in the most rigorous weather.

On this same floor are the library, tailor shop and infirmary. In this infirmary the old, the feeble and the sick are quartered, and for their benefit mass is celebrated here every morning at four o'clock. The refectory is on the ground floor of the east wing of the building, and is a room seventy-three feet long and twenty-nine feet wide. In it are five wooden tables. Four of these are for the choir religious and lay brothers, while the fifth is placed upon a platform at one end



Drawers of Water

of the room, where the Abbot, Prior and Sub-Prior sit. Though apart from the rest of the table, their fare is the same as the others. They all sit upon stools, formed of a piece of plank nailed to two uprights. Their fork and spoon are of wood, and their

Brown bread and lintels compose his food. During Lent one meal a day of bread and water sustains life. Peanuts are sometimes served as dessert.

At the back of the church, surrounded by a high brick wall, is God's Acre, the last resting place of the Trap-



THE CALVARY.

knife is of the poorest quality. The plates are of tin, and a brown stone pitcher about ten inches tall sits before each brother. In this is water, and on feast days, cider. On one side of the room is a pulpit, which a reader occupies during the meal. The Trappist never eats meat, fish or eggs.

pist monk. To this solemn spot each member of the community directs his steps once a day, to meditate on the vanities of the world, and to pray for his comrades who have gone before. On our way to this graveyard we pass a grotto, a fac-simile of the Grotto of Lourdes, in France, where the Holy

Virgin appeared to St. Bernadette and said: "I am the Immaculate Conception." Here we see the figures of the saint and Virgin. The graves are made in symmetrical rows, and in such a way as to leave a space between each grave for another. So when a line of graves is made, they start over again, digging new ones between the old mounds. In this way a brother always knows where his resting-place is going to be, to the exact spot. And to this

of a departed monk. He is simply wrapped in his cassock and laid away. This rule applies to the Abbot as well as to the humblest lay brother. There are about eighty monks buried here. And here, too, strange to say, the bones of one woman rest. Her grave is marked by a plain marble shaft, on which we read, "Ann Miles, Benefactress." We learn from good Father Columban, the guest-master, that this lady succored the Abbey in time of

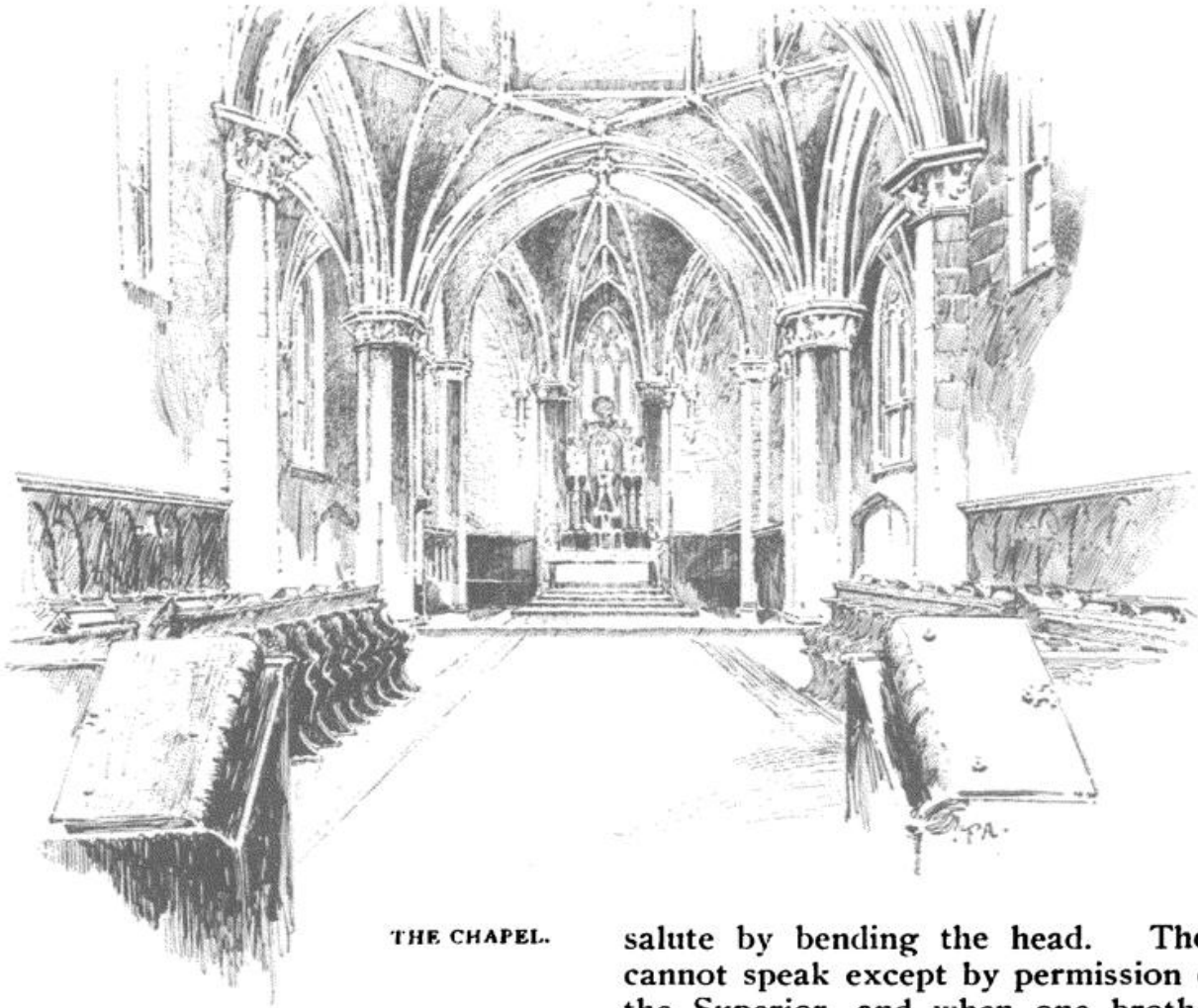


custom is due, perhaps, the foolish superstition that each day the monks take a shovelful of dirt out of their own graves. Each grave is covered with ivy; otherwise the ground is bare. At the head of each grave stands a small, black iron cross, with the name of the departed brother and the date of his death on it, in plain white letters. Priests are buried with their head at the feet of the lay brothers, so that even in death they can overlook their flock. No coffin enfolds the body

need, and all she asked in return was that her body might rest in the monks' graveyard. Her prayer was granted.

No women are allowed beyond the porter's lodge. An exception is made in the case of the President's wife or the Governor's wife, who are allowed to go through all the place once.

The community at Gethsemani is composed of three classes. The choir religious, the vow lay brothers, and the oblate lay brothers. The choir religious are those whose education es-



THE CHAPEL.

pecially fits them for this office. They memorize the Psalms in Latin, and chant the entire Book of Psalms twice a week. Their garb is a white cassock, which in length barely escapes the ground, with a black scapular over it. Their vows are for life. The vow lay brothers, as their name indicates, are the working class of the order who have taken life vows. They sow, plant, reap, cut wood and perform all sorts of manual labor. Their cassock is brown. The oblate lay brothers' duties are identical with the vow lay brothers, the only difference being that the former are not bound, and may leave the monastery whenever they please. The entire brotherhood wear cowls, and are girt about the waist with a broad leathern belt. Their vow is poverty, obedience and silence. When they meet each other, they

salute by bending the head. They cannot speak except by permission of the Superior, and when one brother knocks at the door of a room where another brother may be, a stamp of the foot is the sign for him to enter, instead of speaking. During the "Great Silence," which lasts from six in the evening till six in the morning, not a word is spoken by any. And in the cloisters eternal silence reigns, not even the Superior speaking there.

When any one comes and seeks admission into the order, the rule by which they live is first explained to him. If he expresses himself willing to abide by it, a room is given him, and he becomes a postulant. At the expiration of two weeks he is given the dress of the order. His novitiate lasts two years. During this time he is free to leave if he should so desire. When two years are gone he takes the vows, and the world is lost.

It seems strange to us of the world

how men can live as these do here. But a visit to the Abbey will dispel this mystery to a great extent. Father Cyprian, the Prior, is a man of vast learning, but he will tell you plainly that they are losing this life to gain the next. And should you who read this ever tire of the noise and strife of the world, a brief sojourn at Geth-

semani Abbey, with its solitude and quiet peace, will surely bring you rest. No one who knocks is ever refused admittance; a clean, comfortable room and bed are given you, with three excellent meals a day. When you leave no board bill is presented, and the blessings of these good men follow you as you step into the world again.

