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## FRA SALIMBENE AND THE FRANCISCAN IDEAL

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One of the most engaging personalities of that most engaging of Christian centuries, the thirteenth, is Brother Salimbene of Parma. His life, begun in 1221, five years before the death of Francis of Assisi and ended, probably, about 1288, thirteen years after the birth of Dante, connects the mystical, devotional, ascetic piety of the Middle Ages with the rational, individualistic, personal attitude of the modern mind. A devoted member of the Franciscan Order and acutely sensitive to its historic significance, he spends his life in its manifold activities, and toward the close sets himself to the congenial task of putting down in order the most vivid impressions remaining to him of the men and things he has had dealings with.

The result is the famous Chronicle, now for the first time presented to the learned world in an edition worthy of the best traditions of modern editorial thoroughness and exactness.<sup>1</sup> It was a fortunate chance that brought the work of this Italian, concerned almost entirely with the affairs of his own country and his own Order, within the scope of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* and thus into the trained hands of the late Professor Oswald Holder-Egger. As an Italian patriot, citizen of a Lombard commune, and devoted servant of the papal system, Salimbene regarded the emperor—or, as after 1245 he always called him, the *quondam* emperor—Frederic II as the embodiment of all evil. He loses no opportunity of describing, often in considerable detail, this plague of

<sup>1</sup> *Chronica fratris Salimbene de Adam ordinis Minorum*, ed. Oswald Holder-Egger in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, SS. XXXII. MDCCCCV-MDCCCCXIII.

Italy, this implacable enemy and ultimate victim of the sacred Papacy. His work is, therefore, at many points a direct contribution to German imperial history and as such belongs properly in the majestic collection of the *Monumenta*.

The original of the Chronicle exists in but one manuscript, and that an imperfect one, in the Vatican Library. It has long been known and partially exploited by scholars, but heretofore has been edited but once, in 1857 at Parma in a fragmentary and altogether unsatisfactory fashion.<sup>2</sup> The present work leaves little to be desired for completeness, accuracy, and elegance of form. In several beautiful facsimiles of the manuscript we are able to admire the painstaking care of the author—who was unmistakably his own amanuensis—the uniformity of his characters, the regularity of his abbreviations, and his sense of decorative effect. A companion piece to this final edition of the original text is the German translation by Professor Doren of Leipzig, of which only the first volume, covering about half of the original, has appeared. Dr. Doren has fully appreciated the vast difficulties of putting into modern form the singularly varied and altogether individual mode of expression which makes the charm of Salimbene's narrative, but he has gone far toward realizing the ideal of a good translation. He has striven to represent the spirit of his text, and with considerable success. If at times he glides rather too easily over the rough places, he at least avoids the error of too bold conjecture. Until some competent hand shall take up the task of giving us a complete version in English, these handy volumes of Dr. Doren will be the readiest means of making acquaintance with the genial friar.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Chronica Fr. Salimbene Parmensis ex codice Vaticanae nunc primum edita Parmae MDCCCLVII.*

<sup>3</sup> *Die Chronik des Salimbene von Parma nach der Ausgabe der Monumenta Germaniae, bearbeitet von Alfred Doren. Leipzig, 191.*

In saying this we are not forgetting the praiseworthy attempt of Mr. G. G. Coulton, who already in 1906, using presumably the first part of the present volume, which had appeared the year before, and also advance sheets of later parts, produced his attractive study called *From St. Francis to Dante*.<sup>4</sup> He undertook to give, to use his own words, "a translation of all that is of primary interest in the Chronicle of the Franciscan Salimbene." Mr. Coulton's work is well done and will be satisfactory for all those readers who are willing to let some one else decide what is "of primary interest" and also what is suited for ears polite. After all, when we have finished, it is Mr. Coulton's book we have been reading with a somewhat flattened Salimbene as its illustration.

Salimbene is an instructive instance of the impossibility of drawing sharp lines between the great periods of human progress. Mediaeval in his faith, in his class spirit, in his childlike indifference to observed facts, in his utter incapacity to estimate the value of evidence, he is modern in his intense interest in himself and all that belongs to him. We call him a "chronicler" and his work a "chronicle," but he was as far as possible from being a systematic recorder of events in their regular sequence. He does, indeed, follow a general chronological order, but this is nothing more than a very meagre scaffolding on which he clammers up and down at will, with excursions on side lines whenever the temptation offers. If we can believe his own words, the motive to his literary activity was the desire of a niece, a nun, daughter of his elder Franciscan brother, to know more about her ancestry and incidentally about the world activities in which they had been engaged. The good uncle proceeds, therefore, to satisfy this laudable curiosity; but first he must go back and furnish a background of general historical information. His sources

<sup>4</sup> *From St. Francis to Dante*, G. G. Coulton, M.A. London, 1906.

for this early narrative are fairly easy to trace, and the inquiry into these sources has been valuable in clearing up many hitherto obscure points of critical scholarship.

Perhaps the most vivid impression we receive from Salimbene's story is that of the real motive of the monastic or the fraternal life. The ideal of the true mediaeval monasticism was an ideal of separation from the life of the world, primarily for the good of the separated soul. Yet even in this earlier period nothing is clearer than that such separation affected chiefly such commonplace characters as would have been of little account in any social scheme. The man of capacity in any form was not allowed to rust in the stupid routine of the cloister. The "world" he had affected to despise and appeared to desert called him with myriad voices, and through precisely these earlier centuries there is no more familiar figure than the aggressive monk, active in all the ways open to any of his contemporaries, none the less a fighter in the world's battle because he did not—ordinarily—wield the weapons of the flesh. The history of monastic "reform" throughout the Middle Ages is nothing more or less than the ever renewed but ever fruitless protest against these worldly activities. Only in one respect was the principle of separation fully maintained, in the absolute rejection of the family as the basis of social activity and the substitution for it of a self-perpetuating, self-sustaining community. Certainly in our own day, when a similar menace to the family is becoming more and more acute, we ought to understand more sympathetically than ever the peculiar attraction of this peculiarly mediaeval institution.

The mediaeval monastic ideal had been separation from the world, but against this there had never been lacking the kind of protest which at last culminated in the great new departure of the Mendicants. The Franciscans and Dominicans, or, to use the terms by

which Salimbene invariably calls them, the Minorites and the Preachers, alike in their common rejection of the principle of bodily "inclusion" differed only in their specialization of functions. The Franciscan professed to supplement the work of his predecessors on the side of practical benevolence, the Dominican on the side of learned exhortation to moral duty. But both alike continued the rejection of the family as the ideal unit of social efficiency. In the story of Salimbene we have a graphic illustration of this persistent antagonism. His family was of ancient and honorable station. Father and mother were living. An older brother, married and a father, had already been swept into the current of spiritual enthusiasm that was carrying the youth of Italy away from the safe moorings of civic tradition into many varieties of ecstatic religious experience, and had joined the Franciscan Order. Young Ognibene—as he was then called—in his eighteenth year fell into the same net. He was the third and youngest son, the last hope of his father's house. He knew his parents would disapprove, and so he slipped away from home and found shelter in the local Franciscan house, to be sent afterward to several other and safer retreats. Let him tell the story in his own words:—

“So long as he lived, my father grieved over my entrance into the order of the Minorites and refused to be comforted, because he had no son to succeed him in his inheritance. He made a complaint to the emperor (Frederic II), who was at Parma at the time, that the Minorites had taken away his son. Thereupon the emperor ordered Brother Elias, Minister General of the Order, as he valued his favor, to send me back to my father. After that, my father went to Assisi, where Brother Elias was, and gave the emperor's letter into his hands. As soon as he had read it, Brother Elias gave him an order to the brethren of the house at Fano where I then was, charging them upon their obedience to hand me over to my father at once, if I desired it; but otherwise, if I was unwilling to go, they should hold me precious as the apple of their eyes.

“So a number of gentlemen [*militēs*] came with my father to the house of the brethren at Fano to see the outcome of my affair, and I was made a spectacle for them, but they a means of salvation for me. When the brethren and lay members were gathered in the chapter-house a great deal of talk went on back and forth, and then my father brought out the letter of the Minister General and showed it to the brethren. Brother Jeremiah, the Custos, read it aloud to them all and replied to my father: ‘Sir Guido, we are sorry for your grief, and we are ready to obey the orders of our Father; but here is your son; he is of age, let him speak for himself. Ask him if he wishes to go with you, and if so, let him go, in God’s name! But if he will not, we cannot compel him to go.’ So my father asked me whether I would go with him or not. And I answered, ‘No! For the Lord says, *No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.*’ Then my father said, ‘Have you no thought for your father and mother, who are in great trouble on your account?’ And I said, ‘No indeed, I have no thought for you! For the Lord says, *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.* And He says of you too, *He that loveth son or daughter more than me, etc.* It is you, father, who ought to be thinking of Him who for our sakes hung upon the cross, that He might give us eternal life.’

“Then the brethren rejoiced that I spoke thus to my father, but he said to them, ‘You have bewitched my son and deceived him into refusing me. I will complain again to the emperor against you and your Minister too. But now let me talk with my son apart from you, and you will see that he will come with me fast enough.’ So the brethren allowed me to speak with my father apart from them, because from what I had already said they had quite a little confidence in me; but they listened behind the wall, for they were trembling like a reed in the water lest my father with his blandishments might change my purpose, and they were afraid, not only for the safety of my soul, but lest my withdrawal might keep others from entering the Order. Then my father said, ‘My dear son, don’t trust these petticoated knaves! They have been fooling you. Come with me, and I will give you everything I have.’ Then I answered and said to my father, ‘Go, father, go! For the Wise Man says, Prov. iii. 27, *Prevent not him from well-doing who is able, and if thou canst, do well thyself.*’ And he answered me with tears and said, ‘What shall I say to your mother, who grieves for you without ceasing?’ I said to him, ‘Say to her from me, Thus says your son, Ps. 26, *When my father and my mother forsake me,*

*then the Lord will take me up.*' And when my father heard all these things, in despair of my return he threw himself on the ground before the brethren and the laymen who had come with him and said, 'A thousand devils take you, accursed son! and your brother here, who has befooled you! My curse be upon you both forever, and may it bring you to the infernal spirits!' And he went out in a violent passion; but we remained greatly comforted, giving thanks to our God and saying to each other, '*Let them curse, but bless thou*', Ps. 108. The laymen went away powerfully edified by my perseverance; but the brethren rejoiced mightily because God had done manfully through me his little child.

"The following night the blessed Virgin gave me my reward. For I seemed to be lying before an altar in prayer, as the brethren are wont to do when they rise for matins. And I heard the voice of the blessed Virgin calling to me, and lifting up my face I saw the blessed Virgin seated upon the altar where the Host stands and the Cup, and she had her child in her bosom and held him out to me and said, 'Fear not! but come and kiss my son, whom to-day you have confessed before men.' And when I was afraid, behold! the child opened his arms eagerly awaiting me; and so trusting in the eagerness and the innocence of the boy and the wide charity of his mother, I approached and embraced and kissed him. And the gentle mother left him to me for a long time; but when I could not have enough of him, the holy Virgin blessed me and said, 'Go, dear son, and rest, that the brethren who are rising to matins find thee not here with us.' So I complied and the vision left me; but in my heart there remained an indescribable sweetness, such as I have never felt in the world."

Once more Salimbene tells with the same gusto of a renewed attempt to bring him to some notion of respect for his family obligations. Five years after his entrance into the Order there came to him certain clowns (*ystriones*) who were called "knights of the court" (*milites de curia*), "but I cared no more for them than for the fifth wheel of a coach. One said to me, 'Your father sends his greetings, and your mother says, if she might but see you for one day, she would gladly die the next.' He thought he was giving me a powerful motive for a change of purpose; but I said to him in anger, 'Away with you, you wretch! I won't hear another word. My father is an Amorite



and my mother a Hittite!' (Ezek. 16 3). So he went away in confusion and never came back again."

This is the view of his monastic vocation which Brother Salimbene, writing some forty years later, desired to impress upon the world—perhaps upon himself. It is of interest as giving fairly both sides of the problem, the claim of the world as well as the summons to the "higher life." The detail is almost purely conventional—the heartbroken parents, their appeal to the highest secular authority, the trembling boldness of the brethren, saving their case by throwing the responsibility upon the novice himself, the glib priggishness of the boy with his pat quotations from Scripture, and finally the consoling vision of the Madonna—it must have been a dull student indeed of saintly literature who out of these elements could not weave an appealing story. The valuable part of it is its dramatic presentation of a world conflict. After all, the "world," including the supreme representative of earthly power, had to give way before the passive resistance of a handful of friars strong only in their loyalty to a false ideal of society.

A curious side-light is thrown upon the youth's actual feeling at the time in a later passage where Salimbene, speaking of the Emperor Frederic, says, "I have seen him and at one time liked him [*dilexi*]; for he wrote in my behalf [*pro me*] to Brother Elias, Minister General of the Minorite Brethren, directing him, as he valued his favor, to give me back to my father." Did the memory of the aging friar slip back to what was his honest state of mind during his novitiate, and is the earlier account just given only a bit of pious "literature"?

While Salimbene was still a very young man in the Franciscan house at Pisa he became greatly interested in the writings, genuine and spurious, of the Abbot Joachim of Floris, who in the generation preceding had caught the imagination of Young Italy by an interpre-

tation of Christianity as a phase in the development of that "Eternal Gospel" which had always been fulfilling itself in stages corresponding to the dispensations of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Joachim's mystical temper appealed powerfully to our young brother, and he became an avowed follower of the Calabrian prophet. Joachim himself appears to have preserved a certain caution in his prophetic function; for Salimbene says that he never set definite dates of fulfilment, leaving it to those who should be living at the time to see his exact meaning. Some of his interpreters, however, were less careful, and it was the failure of some of Joachim's alleged prophecies which finally broke the historian's faith in him.

The nature of the Joachite methods is well shown in a spirited scene at the Franciscan house at Hyères while Salimbene was a visitor there. He had come to Hyères chiefly to hear Brother Hugh of Digna discuss about Joachim, and the opportunity came in this way. Two Dominicans were waiting in the town for a favorable chance to take ship, and one day after dinner a brother of the house asked one of these, named Peter, what he thought of the doctrine of Abbot Joachim.

"Brother Peter answered, 'I care no more for Joachim than for the fifth wheel of a coach [a favorite simile of our author]. Why, even Gregory [I] believed that the end of the world was near in his day because the Lombards had come and were destroying everything before them.' So the brother ran to Brother Hugh's room where he was surrounded by jurists and notaries and scientists [*phisici*] and other scholars and said to him, 'There is a certain Dominican here who does not believe a word of that doctrine of yours.' Brother Hugh said, 'What is it to me if he doesn't? Let him take the consequences. However, invite him to a discussion and let us hear his reasons for doubting.' So the Dominican came, but unwillingly, partly because he had so low an opinion of Joachim, partly because he did not believe there was any one in that house who could compare with himself in learning or in knowledge of Scripture. When Brother Hugh saw him he said, 'Are you the man who doubts the teaching of Joachim?' 'Indeed I am,' an-

swered Brother Peter. 'Have you ever read Joachim?' said Brother Hugh. 'I have indeed and thoroughly too.' 'Yes, I've no doubt you have read him, as a woman reads her psalter, and when she gets to the end forgets what she read at the beginning. That's the way many people read and don't understand, either because they despise what they are reading or because their ignorant hearts are darkened. Now then, tell me what you would like to hear about Joachim.' 'I should like to hear you prove from the prophet Isaiah, as Joachim teaches, that the life of the emperor Frederic is to end after seventy years—for he is still alive—and also that he cannot be slain except by God, i.e. not by a violent death, but only by a natural one.' Brother Hugh answered, 'Gladly; but you must listen patiently and not with shouting and objections, for in this doctrine the inquirer must have faith.' Abbot Joachim was a holy man, and he says that his predictions were revealed to him by God for the benefit of men.

"As to the holy life of Joachim, besides what is found in his 'legend' we can prove it by an instance of his exceeding patience. Before he became abbot, while he was still under discipline, a serving brother who had a grudge against him filled his drinking-cup regularly for a whole year with water, and he bore it with patience, making no complaint. But when, toward the close of the year, he was sitting one day next the abbot at table, the abbot said to him, 'How is it that you are drinking white wine and haven't offered me any? Is that your idea of politeness?' To which the saintly Joachim replied, 'I was ashamed to offer it to you, my Father, because this is a secret of mine.' Then the abbot lifted Joachim's cup to try it, tasted of it, and found he had made a bad bargain. Then when he found that it was water not made wine he said, 'What is water but water? Who gave you permission to drink such a beverage as this?' Joachim answered, 'Father, water is a sober drink, it doesn't trip the tongue, nor cause drunkenness nor much speaking.' But when the abbot learned in the Chapter that this insulting revenge was due to the malice and ill temper of the serving brother, he was minded to turn him out of the Order; but Joachim threw himself at his feet and begged that he would not punish the lay brother with expulsion."

The poor fellow was let off with a severe reprimand and the penalty of drinking water for a year in his turn. The argument is obvious. A person of such distinguished humility must be worthy of all acceptance in the rôle of

prophet! There follows a long disputation, in which Brother Hugh defends the principle of prophecy even through the mouths of evil men or, still stranger, through heathen agents. Poor Brother Peter gets the worst of it, of course, overcome by the amazing learning and readiness of his opponent.

The discussion is broken off by the announcement that the expected ship is ready to sail, and the two Dominicans hurry away without so much as saying good-bye. After their departure Brother Hugh said to the rest who had heard the discussion, "Don't take it ill of me if I have said some things I ought not to have said, for debaters are apt to be led into extremes by their excitement;" and he added, "These good people are always bragging about their learning, and saying that in their Order is the fountain-head of wisdom. And they say they have been among fools when they have been in the houses of the Minorites, where they have been most kindly entertained. But, by the grace of God, they weren't able to say this time that they had been among fools, for I have done as the Wise Man says in Proverbs—'answered a fool according to his folly.'"

Salimbene can never resist the temptation to take a fling at the Dominicans, especially to ridicule their claim to superior learning. Yet he has a sincere respect for them as, after all, sharing with his own Franciscans the character of honest mendicancy. It gives him solid comfort to find in his precious Joachim, who died in 1202, the obvious prophecy of two great twin Orders, who are to realize the prototypes set forth in the interpretation of the prophet Jeremiah then attributed to his Calabrian successor. It is of no importance, so far as Salimbene's faith in his master is concerned, that this interpretation is now believed not to be the work of Joachim. Some of these prototypes are the crow and the dove—since the Dominicans are all black and the

Franciscans parti-colored; the two angels sent at evening to Sodom before its destruction; Esau and Jacob; Joseph and Benjamin; Moses and Aaron; the two spies sent by Joshua to Jericho; Peter and John going to the sepulchre, of whom it is said "the two ran together," etc. And again comes the sly dig at the Dominicans. The Abbot Joachim thought the Dominicans were prefigured by Peter because, when Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, it was Peter who said, "Silver and gold have I none," although John was as poor as he and deserved just as much credit for his poverty. Now the Dominicans are always claiming every praiseworthy thing for themselves and therefore they must have been prefigured in the character of Peter. "Nor is that passage in John [xx]—'the two ran together'—without its mystery, for at the same time and under the same pope, Innocent III, both Orders began. In the tenth year of the pontificate of Innocent III, the year 1207, the blessed Francis began the Order of the Minorites." So far so good; but it is amusing to see how Salimbene's desire to chaff the Dominicans gets the better of his own chronology: "And where it is said, '*That other disciple outran Peter and came first to the sepulchre, but did not enter in,*' that means that the Order of the Minorites appeared in the world first in the above-named year; but the blessed Dominic began the Order of the Preachers in the year 1216 under Pope Honorius III."

So in the reference to Jacob and Esau: "The Order which was prefigured by Esau went to the daughters of Heth, i.e. to the secular sciences, as, for example, to Aristotle and other philosophers. This is the Order of Preachers, prefigured in the crow, not as to the blackness of their sins but as to their dress. But Jacob, a plain man, dwelt in tents. This was the Order of Minorites, who at the beginning of their appearance in the world gave themselves to prayer and contemplation."

But this very devotion of Salimbene to the two great Orders, no matter how severely he might criticise the shortcomings of individual members, made him fiercely intolerant of all imitators. It is obvious that the apparently easy lives of the begging friars would attract many of the unemployed, and there seemed no good reason why Orders should not be multiplied as far as the patience or the superstition of the well-to-do could be stretched. Salimbene gives us vivid sketches of several such attempts which came under his own observation. The leaders were usually disappointed candidates for one of the great Orders. One such applied to Brother Hugh at Hyères; but that clever person told him, if he felt the call to poverty, to "go into the woods and learn to eat roots, for the time of tribulation was at hand." The fellow, however, was not looking for that kind of poverty. He got together a band of loafers like himself, who clothed themselves in striped mantles and began to beg. "For," confesses Salimbene, "we and the Preaching Brethren have taught all the world to beg, and all kinds of people are putting on gowns and making mendicant rules for themselves."

These particular specimens were called in derision by the neighboring Franciscans "Men of the Woods," by others "Sack Brothers," from their peculiar dress. They seem to have enjoyed a certain vogue for about twenty-five years, but were abolished by a general order of Pope Gregory X in 1274. No wonder that a certain lady of Modena said, as she saw these beggars going from door to door, "We had bags and satchels enough before to empty our store-houses without these Brethren of the Sack!"

Another similar movement had its origin at Parma while Salimbene was living there. He begins his account of it with a sufficiently clear description of its "charter-members." "That congregation of loose fel-

lows, swineherds, fools, and clowns 'who call themselves Apostles and are not so, but are the Synagogue of Satan'; for they are of no use in preaching or chanting the service or celebrating Mass or hearing confession or teaching in school or giving good counsel or even saying prayers for their benefactors, because they are running about town all day making eyes at the women. How they serve the Church of God or are useful to Christian folk I cannot see. They spend their whole time wandering idly about; they neither work nor pray."

The leader of this troop was one Gerardino Segalelli, a townsman of Salimbene, "of low origin, unlearned, a layman, a clown [*ydiota*], and a fool." He had tried to join the Franciscans, but being refused he "hung about the church of the Brethren planning the foolish scheme which he afterwards carried out." Like all the imitators, says Salimbene, he tried to copy the Franciscan dress, let his hair and beard grow long, sold his bit of a house and scattered the price of it, not among the poor but among the loose fellows of the place, who spent it forthwith in gambling, blaspheming the living God. But, not satisfied with emulating the virtues of Francis, he wanted to be like the Son of God, and so had himself circumcised and went about making extravagant claims to chastity, but deceiving unsuspecting women. He trotted about Parma alone—this was one of his sins—saluting no one, but crying out at intervals "Repenshe! Repenshe!"; for he did not know how to say "Repent ye," and his followers after a time spoke in the same way, because they were country folk and simpletons [*ydiote*]. Salimbene gives several detailed accounts of individuals who tried their fortunes with these "apostles" to the scandal of their several communities, goes on to state three reasons why the "apostles" are not in a state of salvation, and then enumerates twelve specific forms of foolishness which they display. In this enumeration we find a general

summary of the author's views as to the true position of Orders in the Church.

First, they neither fear God nor honor man; for when Pope Gregory declared their association, as well as that of the Sack Brethren, dissolved, the latter obeyed, taking on no more members, so that they gradually died out, but "these fools, beasts and simpletons took no notice of the papal order but kept on increasing their numbers, and," says Salimbene, "they will never cease from their folly until some other supreme pontiff shall wipe out their memory from the earth." Secondly, some of them do not practise chastity, to which all *religiosi* are bound and which our Lord taught by word and example. Thirdly, some of them do not keep the vow of poverty, but after selling their property keep the money for scandalous uses. "Now observe," says Salimbene, "that these three things are the basis of all 'religions,' without which there can be no salvation for a '*religiosus*'; in fact, if one lacks any one of these he can in no way be called a '*religiosus*.'"

The twelve kinds of foolishness of the "apostles" are their lack of a head, their wandering about alone, their idleness, want of discipline, failure to teach their novices the rule of life, "which is a great folly, for whereas beasts and birds have at once by nature what they require, the soul of man is created by God as a *tabula rasa* and therefore needs instruction." They live around from house to house, "which is a vile life." They give up the work for which they are fitted, namely, herding cows and pigs, cleaning out vaults and tilling the ground, thrusting themselves into work for which they have no fitness, namely, teaching and preaching.

Here Salimbene darts off at a tangent to describe his own studies from earliest childhood. He had never ceased studying, and now, at the age of sixty-three, "I may say in truth with Socrates, 'This only I know—



that I know nothing.' But those untaught fools and ribald fellows who call themselves 'apostles' want to preach without learning, having neither knowledge of Scripture nor good morals nor an upright life; but they go about the world making fools of themselves and sowing the seeds of heresy. It is as if a bird should try to fly without wings or a lame man to walk without feet." It particularly offends Salimbene that these precious knaves should try to outdo the original apostles in the matter of dress. It appears that they thought to acquire merit by obeying literally the apostolic injunction not to take two coats for their journey. This is overdoing it. They claim to know too much. Of course there are limits both ways. It was plainly an extravagance in the other direction for a certain Patriarch of Aquileia to begin Lent with forty courses at dinner, cutting off one every day till Easter, that the honor and glory of his Patriarchate might not be diminished. But that is no reason why these fools should suffer the "torments of vermin which they cannot shake out and of sweat and dust and foul smells, because they cannot shake or wash their one garment unless they go naked. One day a woman told two Minorites that she had a naked 'apostle' in her bed, and there he would have to stay until she had washed and dried his garment. Thereupon the brethren had a good laugh at the stupidity of the woman and of the fool apostle too."

Another offence was that these people begged but gave no alms, keeping all they got, whereas it was the duty of every clerical person to render service in return for the support which the community was bound to give him. The charge that they had taken upon themselves a name far too lofty and noble for their low quality gives Salimbene a chance for one of his excursions into ancient prophecy. These people were not prefigured by any of the numerous twelves and seventies mentioned

in the Scriptures old and new. "Apostle" means "one sent," but these people were not sent by any one. They came of themselves and even refused to obey the papal order to disperse. Putting together all these reflections, we are able to see clearly Salimbene's conception of the Franciscan ideal.

If our chronicler had a hero, it was John of Parma, a fellow Franciscan and during the years 1247 to 1257 Minister General of the Order. Salimbene was proud of him as a townsman, admired him for his many capacities, and revered him as a leader. He devotes to him a considerable section of his recollections and uses him in various ways as a type to express positively the ideal he has just been negatively defending. He gives his account of John largely in quaint anecdotes simply told and bearing the marks of essential accuracy. The monastic virtue of humility is, of course, chiefly emphasized. Salimbene had gone up to Tarascon in Provence to meet the General on his return from a long tour of inspection in England, France, and Spain. There one evening after compline at the Franciscan house the General went into the cloister to pray; but the visiting brothers were afraid to go to bed before their chief.

"So, seeing their trouble and hearing them muttering, since they wished to sleep and could not, for a light was shining where the beds were, I went to the General, because he was very close and intimate with me, being of the same city and related to relatives of mine. I found him in the cloister praying and said to him, 'Father, the visitors are worn out with the toil of the journey and would like to go to bed, but they are afraid to get into their beds until you shall first come to yours.' Then he said to me, 'Go, and tell them from me that they are to go to sleep with God's blessing.' And so I did, but I thought I ought to wait for the General, to show him to his bed. So when he came back from praying I said to him, 'Father, you are to sleep in this bed, which has been made ready for you.' And he said, 'That bed which you are showing me is fit for a pope to sleep in, but never shall Brother John of Parma lie in it.' And he lay down in the vacant bed which I was expecting

to have. I said to him, 'Father, may God forgive you for taking away the bed I was expecting to sleep in, because it was assigned to me.' And he said, 'My son, you are to sleep in that pontifical couch.' And when I, following his example, refused, he said, 'But it is my special wish and command that you lie there.' So I had to do as he ordered."

There follows a pretty little scene to illustrate the General's business capacity and fairness in making appointments to office. It so happened that an English friar, one Stephen, to whom John had promised a lectorship in Rome at his own request [*pro consolatione sua*], arrived in Tarascon just as messengers came from the brethren at Genoa asking the General to send them a good Lector. "Then the General, who knew how to dispatch business quickly, for he was a man of good counsel and always had ready a well-considered plan, said to Brother Stephen, 'Here is a letter in which the brethren of the Genoese house ask me to provide them with a good Lector, and if you would be willing to take the place I should be greatly pleased; and when I come there I will send you on to Rome.' Brother Stephen answered, 'I shall be willing and glad [*consolatorie*] to obey you.' And the General said, 'You will be blessed, my son, for you have made a good answer. You will go with these brethren, you and your comrade, and I will write to the Minister and the brethren there to accept you as well recommended.' And so it was done."

But however great his admiration for the General, Salimbene must have his little joke. His comrade, also a John or Littlejohn (Johanninus), and also of Parma, said one day to the General, "'Won't you help Brother Salimbene and me to win our halos?' The General turned to my comrade with a smiling face and said, 'How can I help you to a halo?' 'By giving us a license to preach,' answered Brother Littlejohn. Then Brother John, the General, said, 'Verily, if you were both my

own brothers, you should not have it except by the sword of an examination!’ Then I answered and said to my comrade in the hearing of the General, ‘Get out! get out! with your halos! I had my preacher’s license a year ago from Pope Innocent IV at Lyons, and now do you suppose I would take it from Brother Littlejohn of St. Lazarus? It is enough for me to get it once from him who has the power to grant it.’ And truly Brother John was called ‘Master Littlejohn’ when he was a teacher of logic in the world [*in seculo*].”

This gives Salimbene a start for a detailed sketch of the General’s life, beginning when he was a poor boy brought up by an uncle in the monastery of St. Lazarus in Parma.

“He was of moderate stature, rather short than tall, with well-shaped limbs, well set up, sound, and with great endurance as well in walking as in study. His face was like that of an angel, friendly and always merry. He was generous, liberal, courteous, charitable, humble, gentle, kind, and patient, devoted to God, diligent in prayer, pious, benevolent, and compassionate. He celebrated Mass every day and with such devotion that all present felt a certain grace therefrom. He preached with such fervor, both to the clergy and to the brethren, that he moved many of his hearers to tears, as I have often seen myself. His speech was most eloquent, never hesitating. His learning was great, for he had been a teacher of grammar and of logic in the world, and as a Minorite he was a great theologian and disputant. When he passed through Rome the brethren had him preach or discuss before the Cardinals, and he was reputed by them as a great philosopher. He was a mirror and an example to all who looked upon him, for his whole life was full of honesty and holiness, and his conduct was perfect. He knew music well and sang well. Never have I seen such a rapid writer or so beautiful and accurate and readable a hand. His literary style was lofty and polished and extremely sententious when he so desired in his letters.

“He was the first General Minister who began to go about through the provinces of the Order. But when Brother Bonagratia [a successor of John] undertook to follow his example and visit the Order in this way, he could not endure the hard work and within four years fell sick and died. Brother John was also the first to issue

letters of reception to lay devotees, both men and women, into the benefits of the Order. And this is the form of the certificate which he gave them:

“‘To our beloved in Christ, friends and devotees of the Lesser Brethren, Sir J. and the lady M., his wife, and A. their beloved daughter, John, General Minister and servant of the Order of the Lesser Brethren, health and everlasting peace in the Lord! Accepting with sincere affection your devotion to our Order, which I have learned from the pious report of the brethren, and desiring to make a salutary return for your love to us, I admit you to all the benefits of our prayers in life and in death, granting you by these presents full participation in all the blessings which the grace of our Saviour shall deign to bestow through our brethren wherever they may dwell throughout the earth.’ And please to observe that he refused to give these certificates except upon the express request of persons known to be devoted to God and the Order and special benefactors of the same.”

It seems as if Salimbene must have had some experience of the scandals which were sure to result from this trading in the divine favor thus inaugurated by his friend, and desired to guard him against suspicion.

The weak point in John of Parma appears to have been that he was what Salimbene calls “a very great Joachite,” inclined, that is, to a vague mysticism and perfectionism which seemed dangerous to the organized church system. The result was that popes who had at first regarded him with the utmost favor began to suspect him as a fanatic. “Pope Nicholas III took him one day by the hand and led him familiarly about the palace saying to him, ‘Since you are a man of prudent counsel, would it not be better for you and for your Order if you should stay here in Rome with us as a cardinal, rather than to follow the words of fools who speak prophecies out of their own hearts?’ Brother John answered the pope and said, ‘For your honors I care not at all . . . but as to giving good counsel, I tell you I could indeed give wholesome counsel if there were any to hear me; but at the court of Rome in these days, little is talked of but wars and

scandals, and nothing is said about the saving of souls.' Thereupon the pope groaned and said, 'We are so used to all this that we imagine that everything we do and say must be worth while.'"

Here our chronicler makes a skip of several years and goes on to say, "When I was living at Ravenna Brother Bartholomew said to me, 'I tell you, Brother Salimbene, Brother John of Parma made a great deal of trouble for himself and for his Order; because he was of such learning and holiness and of such exemplary life that he could have rebuked the Roman Curia and they would have listened to him. But when he followed the prophecies of fanatics he brought reproach upon himself and greatly injured his friends.' 'Well,' I said, 'it seems to me so too, and I am greatly grieved, for I was very fond of him indeed.' 'But you too were a Joachite,' said Brother Bartholomew. And I replied, 'That is true; but after Frederic died (1250), who was once emperor, and the year 1260 had passed, I gave up that doctrine completely and am disposed to believe nothing but what I see.'"

This extreme disobligingness of the Emperor Frederic in dying so many years before the date set for his exit by the prophecies of Joachim was only one of the grudges which Salimbene had laid up against him. A considerable portion of his narrative is devoted to a recital of Frederic's Italian campaigns, especially of those in which his native Parma played the central part. At the close of this narration he sums up the life and character of his subject under the scheme of twelve misfortunes and seven "curiosities" or "superstitions." It is characteristic of his method that when he comes to his tenth "misfortune" he calls it the last, but then, evidently later, felt it important to add two more, in order, as he naïvely says, "to make up the number twelve." Frederic's misfortunes, the loss of empire, the rebellions of his son

and his most trusted servants, the entire failure of his Italian policy, are all traced by Salimbene to his hostility to the Church. "His second misfortune was that he desired to trample the Church under his feet, so that the pope and the cardinals and all the rest of the clergy should be paupers and go afoot; and this he purposed, not out of zeal for religion, but because he was not a good Catholic, and because he was greedy and avaricious and wanted the wealth of the Church for himself and his children and to crush the power of the clergy, lest they rise up against him. And this his purpose he confided to his intimate councillors, through whom it afterward became known. But God did not permit that such things should be done to His own.

"His third misfortune was that he tried to subdue the Lombards, but could not, for when he had them on one side he lost them on the other. For they are a mighty subtle and slippery folk, saying one thing and doing another; as when you try to hold an eel or a lamprey tight in the hand, the harder you squeeze the faster he slips away."

Salimbene writes with especial joy of what he calls Frederic's "superstitions, curiosities, maledictions, unbeliefs, perversities, and abuses," all of which he says he has described in another chronicle unfortunately lost. All these categories may safely be reduced to the one idea of "eccentricities." To this Franciscan mind the greatest of moral aberrations was what we should call "originality," or, to come nearer to Salimbene's vocabulary, "curiosity." Out of such a quality was sure to come a search for novelty, and this—to us the indispensable motive toward all valuable activity—was to the thirteenth century churchman the inevitable starting-point for every kind of disturbance in the divinely ordered scheme of things. It was certainly a shade more than queer if the emperor did really cut off the thumb of his notary

because he wrote his name "Fredericus" instead of "Fridericus"; but our faith in Salimbene's accuracy is not strengthened when he dishes up again for Frederic the old story told by Herodotus of an Egyptian king who tried the experiment of segregating young children to see whether they would speak "Hebrew or Greek or Latin or Arabic or at any rate the tongue of their parents." Salimbene adds the detail that the children all died "because children cannot live without the hand-clapping and gestures and smiling faces and petting of their maids and nurses; whence the name *fascenine* is given to the songs a woman sings as she rocks a child to sleep."

Still more curious is the accusation that "when Frederic saw the Land of Promise which God so often praised, calling it a land flowing with milk and honey and excellent among all lands, he did not care for it, and said the God of the Jews could not have seen his country, the Terra di Lavoro, Calabria, and Sicily, or He would not so often have praised the land which He promised and gave to the Jews; like that clerk who spoke unseemly things against God, and straightway lightning from Heaven smote him and he fell dead."

"A sixth curiosity and superstition of Frederic was that he once gave two men a good dinner and then sent one to sleep and the other out hunting. Then at evening he had them both cut open in his presence to see which had the better digested his meal; and the doctors said he who had slept had made the better digestion." Precisely why Frederic should have shut a man up in a wine-cask till he died in order to prove that the soul dies with the body, one does not quite see; but Salimbene says he did this, and uses the tale to show that Frederic was an "Epicurean," who believed in eating and drinking, for tomorrow he would die. He accuses Frederic of hunting up all possible passages of Scripture to defend this view of life, and then piles up a mass of counter-quotations,



“which,” he says, “all tend to destroy the credulity of Frederic and his wise men, who believed there is no life but the present, so that they might the more freely live in the wretchedness of fleshly lust.”

Putting together all these criticisms of this extraordinary man we see that Salimbene’s indictment really means that Frederic II was a person of keen and eager intellect, anxious to learn and fearless in his investigation into the facts of Nature—in short a modern man and therefore detestable to the mediaeval spirit of conformity and dread of the unknown.

I hope to have shown by these random selections what a wealth of material is offered in this new volume for a better understanding of that mysterious transitional age when the dark shadow of priestly domination was passing slowly from the mind of Europe, giving place to the gradual illumination of a new doctrine of life, whose central idea was the goodness of earth and of humanity because they were alike the creation of a God who was good. In their blinded way the earliest followers of the Franciscan ideal were making their contribution to this development. The value of Salimbene’s comments is in showing to what grotesque misapplications this ideal, in itself essentially false, was sure to be subjected. His own experiences fall within the first two generations of the Mendicant experiment, precisely the time when the great opposition of the “spirituals” and the “conventuals” was shaping itself within the Franciscan Order. In the generation following him this antagonism was to break out into a furious struggle in which the supremacy of the papal system itself was put in jeopardy. The stammering apology of Salimbene is a direct prophecy of the crushing indictment of Ockham and Wycliffe.