

## HOLIDAY PAPERS.

### "SERMONS IN STONES."

Holiday making is in the air, holiday plans are under discussion everywhere.

Some Nurses have finished their holidays, and, full of happy recollections are back at work. Others are counting the days that must elapse before they can escape from "the daily round, the common task," and carry out long cherished plans of a trip abroad, or a jaunt to the seaside, where breakfast in bed, and nothing to do all day long is, from their point of view, the climax of bliss!

But there may be a small number left who must wait for an autumn outing, who have made no plans, and who have no bent for any place in particular.

It is for this section of holiday makers that I write these lines, and tell of my pilgrimage to a ruined Abbey, and of the sermons preached by the stones that lay scattered round and about the old foundations.

What a dull way of spending a holiday, I hear you say, but wait until you have tried it!

As we go on in life, we all, more or less, *look back*, and, in looking back,

we discover, hidden beneath the surface, the foundations on which our lives have been built. Were those foundations sound, and will they endure as those on which my Abbey was founded? Thus I meditated when I reached my goal, thus spoke the moss covered stones around me!

A pilgrim starts out on his quest with sandals on his feet, a scallop shell as a drinking cup, and a staff to help him over rough places on the road. I armed myself with a glossary of architecture, a history of our ancient Church, and inspired with a thirst for further knowledge, and with a great reverence for the Early Fathers, the pioneers and missionaries who brought the Faith to us, I wandered through the highways and byways of Devon until I found myself in the valley of the Dart. Not the Dart known to

trippers and tourists from the decks of a pleasure boat, but the unfrequented reaches, where the Dart is but a stream, tumbling over boulders in its haste to grow up and reach the giddy world of Totnes down below. And by the banks of sparkling river, I found a spot, apparently untouched by time! At least, that was my first impression!

On reaching the village of Buckfast, I turned down a lane to enquire for the "Guest House," the Rest House for pilgrims to the shrine, and there I found a man in monk's garb milking cows and another feeding pigs and chickens. I was told in broken English that I was in the Abbey farm, and that the Guest House lay at the further end of the village.

I wandered up the street to the accompaniment of the Abbey bells calling the Faithful to Benediction, and I passed under a stone archway through

which Edward I. rode when he visited the Abbey in the year 1297.

Am I in England? I asked myself, or am I dreaming? My ears were greeted with foreign tongues, French and German on every side!

Monks and nuns with peaceful, happy faces, their daily tasks over, were wending their way to their beloved church.



BUCKFAST ABBEY: REMAINS OF NORTH GATE.

Again I asked, "What are these strangers doing in this corner of our fair land?" When did they bring the Faith to this secluded spot?

Before many days had elapsed I had learnt much, not only of the history of bygone, and, alas! forgotten times, but I also woke to the realisation that "the Faith that can remove mountains" is still alive amongst us. The Abbey of Buckfast dates back to Saxon days, when the red deer roamed over Dartmoor and came down to quench their thirst in the waters of the Dart that flows through the Abbey grounds.

In this remote corner of Britain the monks of the Order of St. Benedict raised to the glory of God, and in honour of Our Lady the beautiful buildings which, for 700 years, stood and testified to the Faith. Every stone in those walls was fashioned and moulded by hands dedicated to the

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