

SAINT HERMES

A Roman Martyr honoured in Cornwall

BEING A SERMON PREACHED IN
ST. ERME CHURCH, CORNWALL, ON
ST. ERME FEAST, AUGUST 28, 1934

BY

The Revd. GILBERT H. DOBLE, M.A.

HONORARY CANON OF TRURO CATHEDRAL, VICAR OF WENDRON AND
EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF TRURO

AUTHOR OF

"S. Mawes," "S. Euny," "S. Budoc," "S. Winwaloe," "S. Corentin,"
"S. Melaine," "S. Carantoc," "S. Gwinear," "S. German," "SS. Mewan and
Austol," "S. Feock," "S. Petrock," "SS. Docco and Kew," "S. Melor,"
"S. Nonna," "S. Brioc," "SS. Sithney and Elwin," "S. Senan," "S. Tudy,"
"S. Clether," "Four Saints of the Fal," "S. Neot," "S. Selevan," "S. Cuby,"
"SS. Nectan and Keyne and the Children of Brychan in Cornwall," "S. Constantine
and S. Merryn," "S. Symphorian," "S. Perran, S. Keverne, and S. Kerrian,"
"S. Gudwal," "A Kalendar of Saints for the Diocese of Truro," "Some Remarks
on the Exeter Martyrology," "A John Wesley of Armorican Cornwall," "Two
Cornish Parishes in the Eighteenth Century," "Breage in the Eighteenth Century,"
"S. Decuman," "S. Day," "The Lanalet Pontifical," "S. Yvo," "S. Meriadoc," etc.

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SAINT HERMES

A ROMAN MARTYR HONOURED IN CORNWALL

BY THE REV. CANON G. H. DOBLE, M.A.

"Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them."—Rom. xvi. 14.

I

ONE of those "that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints,"* to whom S. Paul wrote the greatest of his epistles, was called Hermes. The apostle sends him a greeting in the last chapter. Like other names in the long list of Christians at Rome to whom S. Paul wished to be specially remembered, Hermes is a Greek name. It was the name of a Greek god, identified by the Romans with their own Mercury. If we look at any book about the martyrs and saints of the early Church, we shall be surprised to find among them quite a number of names of gods or heroes belonging to the old heathen mythology. The great S. Martin of Tours took his name from the Roman god of war. It is a silent reminder of the triumph of a religion of love and purity over ancient superstitions which condoned cruelty and lust. As in his case, so in that of many others, the child of heathen parents, called by them after a heathen god, became an earnest Christian, lived a life of eminent sanctity and his name, having acquired associations as different as possible from those which it originally possessed, passed into the kalendar of the Christian Church. *Bacchus* sounds at first a strange name to find among the saints, yet there was a Syrian martyr of that name, whose cult spread all over Europe—several parishes in Cornwall during the Middle

* Rom. i. 7.

Ages belonged to the great Abbey of SS. Sergius and Bacchus at Angers. *Hermes* was a very popular name 1900 years ago : there are eighteen saints called *Hermes* in Holweck's *Dictionary of the Saints*,* besides an equal number bearing the name *Hermogenes*.

Not many years after S. Paul sent a salutation to the *Hermes* whom he knew, another Christian of the same name lived at Rome and died there as a martyr in one of the great persecutions.† He was buried in a Christian cemetery (afterwards known as the Cemetery of Basilla, though sometimes bearing his name) on one of the roads that led out of Rome, the *Via Salaria*, which ran in a north-easterly direction through the country of the Sabines towards Picenum, and his tomb was greatly venerated by the Roman Christians; who built over it a *martyrium* or chapel, and celebrated a yearly festival there on the anniversary of his martyrdom, August 28. The fact is noted in the famous list of martyrs' commemoration days known as the Hieronymian Martyrology: *Romae via Salaria vetere in cimiterio Basillae Hermetis* ("At Rome, on the old *Via Salaria*, in the cemetery of Basilla, the commemoration of *Hermes*"). The tomb was ornamented in the fourth century by Pope Damasus (a fragment of the inscription he placed upon it, with the name of the martyr, has been discovered there recently), and was carefully restored, with its surroundings, after the devastation of the catacombs during the siege of Rome by Witiges and the Goths, by Pope Pelagius (579-590).‡ Two centuries later

* For other martyrs of this name see Delehaye, *Origines du culte des Martyrs*, pp. 243, 247, 329, 350.

† The celebrated Roman archaeologist De Rossi attempted to identify the "house of Prisca" (Rom. xvi. 3) with the church of Sta Prisca on the Aventine, and thought that Nereus (v. 15) might be commemorated in the basilica of SS. Nereo ed Achilleo, but he did not suggest that the *Hermes* of v. 14 was our saint. All the names in Rom. xvi. have been found in ancient Roman cemeteries.

‡ "Hic fecit cimiterium beati Hermetis martyris."—*Liber Pontificalis*.

Pope Adrian I. (772-795) built a magnificent basilica over the tomb.* The honour paid to S. *Hermes* in Rome is also shown by the mention of his festival in the Sacramentaries of Gelasius and Gregory. The latter provides a proper preface for use on that day. His cult soon began to spread outside Rome. A church of S. *Hermes* at Antium on the coast of Latium is mentioned in the Life of Pope Boniface (418-422). At the end of the sixth century we find Gregory the Great sending relics of SS. *Hermes* and *Hyacinthus* to Chrysanthus, Bishop of Spoleto in Umbria.† He founded a monastery bearing the name of S. *Hermes* at Palermo in Sicily, and in his correspondence he refers to three other churches or monasteries dedicated to S. *Hermes* in Italy and Sardinia.‡ His cult had already spread to Gaul, as we find S. Cæsarius, Archbishop of Arles (d. 543), building a church in honour of S. *Hermes*, after being rebuked by the saint in a vision for having neglected to observe his festival.§

II

Who was this greatly honoured martyr?

In many cases the story of the life and sufferings of a martyr of the early Church—his "Acts" or "Passion"—was written down soon after his martyrdom and read at the annual festival in the *martyrium* built over his tomb. Unfortunately this was not done in the case of S. *Hermes*, or, if it was, the document has perished. Instead, we have to content ourselves with a highly coloured story, of late date, known as "The Acts of S. Alexander." This romance professes to tell the story of some incidents relating to the

* "Basilicas cimiterii sanctorum martyrum Hermetis, Proti et Iacincti atque Basillae mirae magnitudinis innovavit" (*ib.*).

† These were not *bones*, for Gregory would not allow the bodies of martyrs to be touched.

‡ See Delehaye, *Origines du culte des martyrs* (second ed., 1933) pp. 271, 272.

§ *Acta Sanctorum* (Paris edition), August VI., p. 148.

martyrdom of Pope Alexander and that of his convert Hermes. The part relating to Hermes was summarized by Ado, Bishop of Vienne, and inserted in his famous Martyrology, which he finished in 858, two years before his election to the see of Vienne, under the date August 28. Ado's version was in turn summarized in the fourteenth century by Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter, for his *Legenda Exon.* The story, as it was read in Exeter Cathedral in the Middle Ages after Prime, will be found in *Ordinale Exon.*, III. 327 (ed. Henry Bradshaw Soc.). It is a greatly abbreviated adaptation, giving the gist of the story without the tedious speeches, and omitting most of the more incredible details, but for that very reason it gives a false impression of genuineness to a story which is really entirely fictitious. I will therefore translate Ado's version:

"At Rome, the *natale* of the blessed martyr Hermes. This most distinguished man was baptized, when he was Prefect of Rome, by the Blessed Alexander, Pope and Martyr, together with his wife and sons and his sister Theodora, and with him his 1250 slaves, with their wives and children, were also baptized, after he had given them their freedom. Not long after, he was put in prison by the Emperor Aurelian* (the Blessed Alexander being also imprisoned), and was committed to the charge of the tribune Quirinus. The latter said to the Blessed Hermes, 'Why dost thou, a distinguished man, and occupying a post of honour and responsibility, suffer thyself to be thus stripped of thy dignity and thrust into bonds like a common criminal?' S. Hermes replied, 'I have not lost my dignity, but changed it for a better. For earthly honour is removed from the earth and is changed, but heavenly honour endureth for ever.' Quirinus saith to him, 'I wonder that thou, a sensible

* Ado has here made a careless mistake. The original he copied said that Hermes and Alexander were imprisoned by Aurelian, the emissary of the Emperor Trajan.

man, should have become so silly as to believe that after this life thou shalt have anything remaining to thee, when the ashes of the human body have been so reduced to nothing that not even the bones are left.' Blessed Hermes replied, 'I also used to laugh at the idea and say that this carnal life was (alone) of any use.' 'Prove to me,' said Quirinus, 'that it is as thou hast believed, and I too will believe.' Said Blessed Hermes, 'S. Alexander, who is now in prison, taught me these things.' When Quirinus heard this, he began to curse Alexander, and said to Hermes: 'I asked thee to prove that what thou hast believed is true, and thou hast spoken to me of an enchanter, whom I have in prison, and keep bound in its innermost recesses. If what thou sayest is true, I will go to him myself and treble the chains that bind him and the guards that watch him. If he can come to thee at suppertime, I will believe what he teaches.' He went, trebled his fetters, placed guards outside his prison. At nightfall however there came a boy, who seemed to be not more than five years old, who brought a burning torch into the prison, and knelt and prayed with Alexander, saying the Lord's Prayer, and then, taking him by the hand, brought him out through the window and transported him to where Blessed Hermes was in Quirinus's house. When Quirinus saw this he was terrified. Blessed Hermes said to him, 'You see, your two prisoners have met.' He continued, 'The reason why I believed S. Alexander is as follows: My only son, who was still at school, was very ill. His mother and I took him to the Capitol, to sacrifice to the gods and to give presents to the priests, and he died [suddenly]. His nurse began to reproach me, saying: "If thou hadst taken him to the shrine of S. Peter and hadst believed in Christ, thou wouldst not have lost thy son." I answered her: "Considering that thou thyself art blind and hast not found healing, how should Christ restore to me my son?"

She replied : " If five years ago I had believed in Christ, my sight would have been restored." I said : " Go, and believe, and if Alexander open thine eyes, I will believe that he can restore to me my son." She went to him blind, and lo! she returned to me cured, and taking my dead son on her shoulders, she carried him off and laid him down at the feet of Blessed Alexander, who prayed, and raised him to life. And straightway I cast myself at his feet and asked to be made a Christian. I also bestowed upon him the patrimony of the boy's mother, and added some of my own, and gave the rest, part to the poor and part to my slaves, who were made Christians with me.' When he had finished his story, Quirinus believed, with his whole house, and was baptized. Aurelian, hearing of all this, gave orders that Hermes should be beheaded. His body was taken by his blessed sister Theodora and buried in the old Via Salaria, not far from the city of Rome, on the fifth day of September."*

Anyone who has studied the genuine Acts of the martyrs will recognize at once that this is a pure work of fiction, belonging to the very large class of " Passions " invented to supply the want of authentic information about saints whose tombs were venerated and their festivals duly observed long after the story of their lives had been forgotten. It is, as the celebrated Bollandist Father Delehaye says,† " a romance.

* A slip for " the fifth of the Kalends of September "—i.e., August 28.

† In a note to me, written August 11, 1934. The name *Alexander* is in the Canon of the Mass, and in the Roman Martyrology " Pope Alexander, with Evencius and Theodulus, presbyters," are commemorated on May 3. The Hieronimian Martyrology has, under this date, " Romae via Nomentana miliario VII natale sanctorum Heventii, Alexandri, Theoduli." Fr. Delehaye says that this Alexander is a different person from Pope Alexander, but afterwards confused with him. His basilica, with an inscription calling him simply " Alexander," has been recently discovered (*Orig. du culte des martyrs*, 1933, pp. 276, 277). Adon inserted the names of Quirinus, Balbina and Theodora in his martyrology on March 30 and 31 and April 1, but without any authority (ib. *Méthode Hagiographique*, 1934, p. 66; Quentin, *Mart. Hist.*, pp. 113 and 491).

The principal heroes are martyrs known to history, but the plot and the rôle attributed to the different characters in the story" [e.g., Hermes being represented as Prefect of Rome] "are the invention of the hagiographer." I am afraid therefore we must conclude, with Butler, that "there are few martyrs whose cult is more ancient than that of S. Hermes, but at the same time there are few whose history is more obscure."

III

We must now trace the story of the cult of S. Hermes through the Middle Ages, since in this way we may possibly find some clue to explain the fact that the churches of three parishes in Cornwall were dedicated to this early Roman martyr.

We have seen that the martyrs of the first three centuries were always buried in tombs outside the city, in cemeteries which lined the great roads by which it was approached for several miles, and their anniversaries were celebrated there. But with the coming of the Barbarians the neighbourhood of Rome became insecure, and the bodies of most of the martyrs were eventually brought within the city, and placed in its churches. The catacombs were disused and in course of time their very existence was forgotten, though the churches which had been built over the tombs of the chief martyrs were still visited by pilgrims, in spite of the tombs being now empty. Early in the ninth century, as we learn from Eginhard, the biographer of Charlemagne, Pope Gregory IV. took the body of S. Hermes out of the tomb on the Via Salaria where it had lain so long, and translated it to the church of S. Mark the Pope, which he had recently rebuilt. Eginhard obtained at the same time (by means of the notorious dealer in relics, the deacon Deusdona) a finger-bone of the saint for the monastery of Seligenstadt in

Franconia (on the Main, above Frankfurt), of which he was Abbot, together with some relics of SS. Protus and Hyacin-



CRYPT OF CHURCH OF S. HERMES, RENAIX.

thus. He relates a story of a miracle wrought shortly afterwards on a paralyzed woman in the church of Seligenstadt

after matins on the Feast of S. Hermes, apparently in the year 830.*

The body of S. Hermes did not remain long in the church of S. Mark. The churches of Germany desired relics of saints. In 850 the Emperor Lothaire visited Rome for the coronation of his son, Louis II., and obtained from Pope Leo IV. the body of S. Hermes, which in the following year he translated to Aix-la-Chapelle, and placed in the church of the Benedictine monastery of S. Sauveur-sur-Ende (afterwards called Cornelimünster), a few miles to the east. Late copies of Ado's Martyrology commemorate this translation on January 10—*Adventio Sancti martyris Hermetis*.† After a short stay there, the saint's body was removed by Louis II. on July 6, 860, to the little town of Renaix (Rothnacum or Hrodnacum in Flanders), where the monks of Ende had a "cell." Here it has ever since remained, except for short periods during the Danish invasions and the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The possession of the body of such a famous saint made Renaix the resort of pilgrimages which have never ceased down to the present day.

The story of the cult of S. Hermes at Renaix is told in an excellent little book published in 1934 by the Curé-Doyen of Renaix, M. l'abbé F. D'Hollander. It is an interesting record of how the pride taken by the canons in the sacred relics of which they were the guardians, assisted by the offerings made by pilgrims at the saint's shrine, led to the

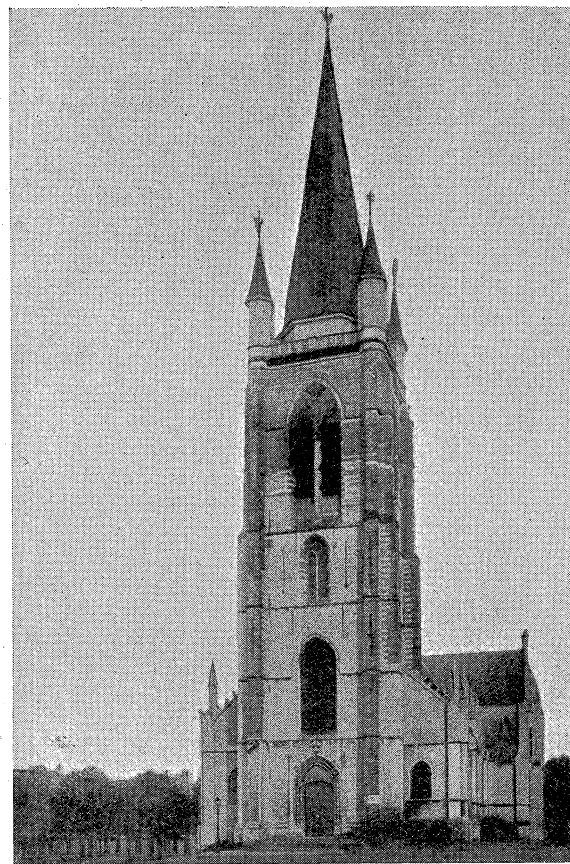
* By this time the universal desire to possess some relic of a saint had destroyed the old Roman respect for the dead which for centuries forbade the very least interference with the bodies of the martyrs, and would not even allow their tombs to be touched when churches were built over them. Bones were now distributed, and false or doubtful relics traded in by ignorant or unscrupulous persons. See Fr. Delehaye, *Les Origines du Culte des Martyrs*, pp. 50 f.; *Cinq Leçons sur la Méthode Hagiographique*, c. IV.

† See Dom Quentin, *Les Mart. Hist.*, p. 476.

building of a magnificent church, and of how the social life of a mediæval town centred round such a church and its relics, especially when those relics were the object of a famous pilgrimage.

The Emperor had a little sanctuary built to receive the body of S. Hermes on the south side of the church of S. Peter, which had been built at Renaix by S. Amand in the seventh century. This sanctuary was served by monks from Ende, who were afterwards replaced by canons. In 1129 a new Church of S. Hermes was built, apparently incorporating in the crypt beneath its north transept part of the original church, and the canons, who had hitherto used the church of S. Peter for their daily services, established themselves therein, bringing with them the body of S. Hermes, which in 1089 had been placed in a magnificent silver shrine. All through the Middle Ages this shrine was visited by innumerable pilgrims. Thus in 1392 the poor mad King of France, Charles VI., sent to Renaix, in honour of S. Hermes, a life-size statue of himself in wax, with other gifts, and is said to have recovered his reason for a time. A new shrine was made in 1526. Towards the end of the fourteenth century the choir of the present church was built, and the rest of the church of 1129 was rebuilt during the fifteenth century. The collegiate church of S. Hermes became and remains one of the finest churches in Belgium. During the Wars of Religion in the second half of the sixteenth century, and later, during the wars with France under Louis XIV., the relics of S. Hermes had to be several times removed to a place of security. The shrine of 1526 was destroyed by the Protestants, and replaced in 1583 by one of wood covered with red velvet. In 1855 the present shrine was made. A book is kept in the church, called in Flemish "S. Hermesboek" or "Zottenboek" (= "Lunatics' Book"), which records the names of persons mentally

afflicted who have come to seek relief at S. Hermes' shrine since 1670, as well as the names of the members of the Con-



COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF S. HERMES, RENAIX (BELGIUM).

fraternity of S. Hermes. Insane persons used to be regarded as possessed by the devil, and the former shrine of S. Hermes had inscribed on it the words "S. Hermes is beheaded.

Before his beheading he prays to God that those who remember his passion may be preserved from the vexations of the devil." A seal of the church of Renaix represents S. Hermes holding the devil in chains.

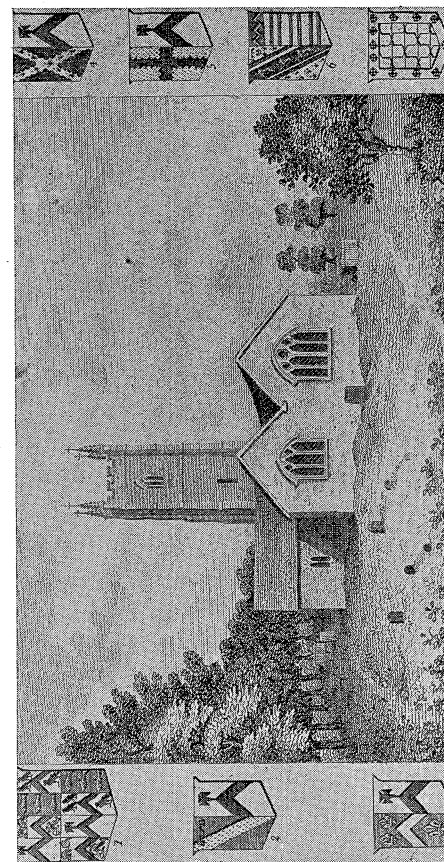
The pilgrimage to S. Hermes at Renaix is still flourishing. The college of canons was suppressed at the French Revolution, when the Republican armies conquered Belgium, and the church is now parochial, but many of the old customs are still kept up (though, since 1597, lunatics are no longer plunged in water while mass is said for them !). The Feast of S. Hermes is observed with great solemnity on August 28, and on Trinity Sunday a huge procession of townspeople and the inhabitants of the surrounding district (resembling the Grande Troménie of Locronan in Brittany) makes a circuit of several miles, carrying the shrine and relics of the saint. Extra confessors have to be provided to shrive the throngs of penitents who come to Renaix on this day.

Hermes is, as we should expect, a Christian name at Renaix.

Several churches of Rome claim to possess relics of S. Hermes : S. Maria Maggiore an arm, S. Alexius part of his head, S. Clement and S. Anne *ad funarios* other fragments of his head. The city of Bologna in Italy, the cathedral of Prague, the monastery of Hersfeld in Germany, the church of S. Gereon in Cologne, the English college of S. Omer, and the collegiate church of S. Amatus in Aix-la-Chapelle possessed relics of him, and the cathedral of Tournay treasured one of his ribs.

Apart from the diffusion of the relics of S. Hermes, his cult was spread over Western Europe by the universal acceptance of the Roman sacramentaries. Most mediæval missals and breviaries contain his name in their kalendars, though as a rule they only give him a memorial collect. The *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine, which was the

most popular and influential book on the Saints in Europe during the Middle Ages, has the stories of Pope Alexander



FORMER CHURCH OF S. ERME, CORNWALL.
Rebuilt (except the tower) in 1820.

and S. Hermes, not on their festivals, but, strange to say, in the chapter on S. Peter's Chains under August 1.

There was a certain limited amount of popular cult of S. Hermes in Normandy, and perhaps in other parts of

France. In the parish church of S. Hilaire at Rouen there was a Confrérie de Saint-Hilaire, Saint-Herme, Sainte-Catherine.* My friend M. Seguin, of Avranches, tells me that he has found in the church of Mesnil-Opac (Manche), near S. Lô, a statue of the saint (apparently early nineteenth century) surrounded by numerous ex-votos. He is invoked to obtain the cure of an infantile malady known as "nœuds." The priest is asked to bless the little patient's linen, and to say a mass for him.

The town of Saint-Erme (Aisne) near Laon is not called after our saint, but after a local S. Ermin, Abbot of Lobbes (d. 737). The *Dictionnaire des Communes* does not give any other place of this name in France.

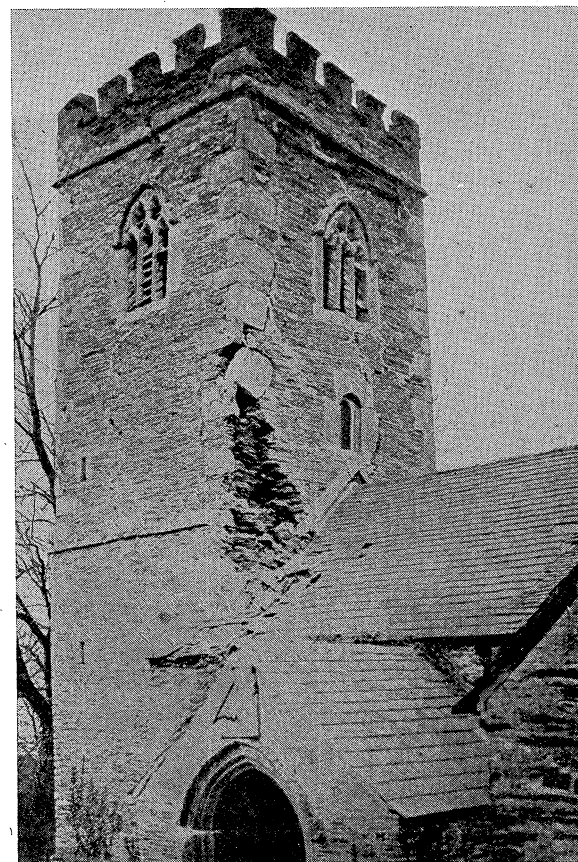
It is impossible at present to say precisely by what channels the cult of S. Hermes reached Cornwall, but I think we may be sure that it was *not* owing to Breton influence, as suggested by Miss F. Arnold-Foster (*Studies in Church Dedications*, I, 141). She says: "His name is found in a Breton liturgy of the tenth century. . . . The owner of the original name having been wholly forgotten, the parish [of S. Erme] was glad to adopt a saint whose name was famous through the Breton service-books." (She does not mention *which* "Breton service-book" contains his name, but this does not matter much, since practically *every* Continental service-book after the time of Charlemagne would commemorate S. Hermes.) There appears to be no cult of S. Hermes in Brittany. His name is not found in the *Iconographie Bretonne*, and the Comte de Laigue tells me that he knows of no statue or dedication to our saint there.

IV

It is remarkable that S. Hermes should have had three churches dedicated to him in Cornwall during the Middle

* Quin-Lacroix, *Hist. des Confréries Religieuses de la Capitale de la Normandie*, p. 509.

Ages, and not a single dedication anywhere else in England.



TOWER OF S. ERVAN CHURCH.

From an old photograph, showing the former tower of S. Ervan Church, already menacing ruin, before it was taken down in 1883. It is hoped that this pathetic picture may lead some generous reader to send a donation for the Tower Fund to The Rector, S. Ervan, North Cornwall.

His three Cornish dedications were S. Erme, S. Ervan, and Marazion. In each case (except, *perhaps*, the last-named) he must have replaced some ancient Celtic saintly founder; but when, or at whose suggestion, we have at present no means of deciding.

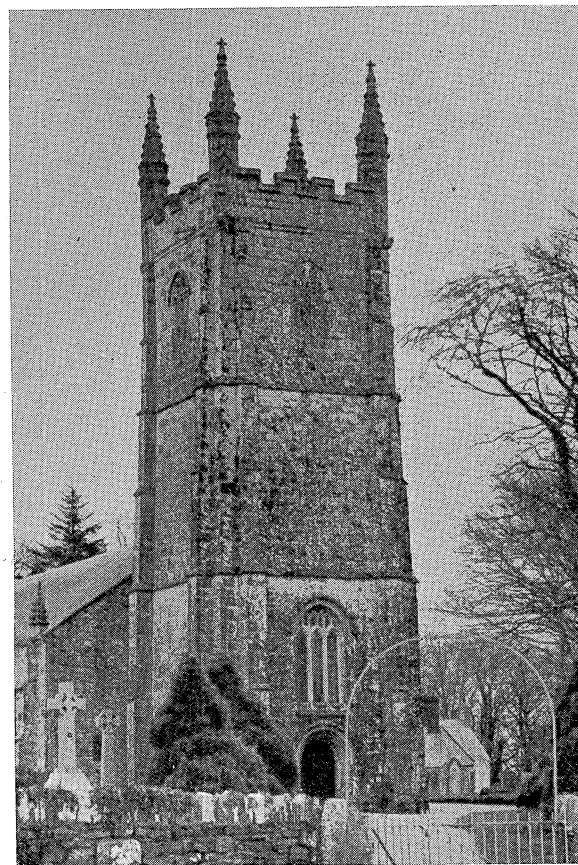
The churchtown farm at S. ERME is called Eglos-Erme.* Names beginning with *Eglos* (=church) are always ancient Celtic foundations. Who was the Erme who built the first church at Eglos-Erme? Well-meaning people have been busy for some time making suggestions. Some have tried to identify him with *Erbin*, who, according to the Welsh genealogies, was the father of Geraint, and grandfather of Selyf (the father of Cuby), Constantine, Iestyn, and Cungar. All these six persons are apparently eponyms of Cornish parishes or chapels.† Other antiquaries have thought of *Armel*, the patron of Ploermel in Brittany. Now all this is pure guesswork, and may do harm by putting us on a false scent. There is no documentary evidence for either Erbin or Armel. I think it is far more likely, considering how common was the name Hermes under the Roman Empire, that there should have been a Romano-British Christian of that name in Cornwall. Quite a large number of Cornish saints bear Roman names—*e.g.*, Probus, Cornelly, Just, Gennys (=Genesius), Kea (=Caius), Decumanus, etc. A native British Hermes may quite possibly have been the original patron of Eglos-Erme.

In any case it is quite certain that S. Hermes the Martyr has been for many centuries the official patron of S. Erme (*Sti Ermetis*, 1283, 1377, 1383, 1390-1, 1432, 1437; *Sti Hermetis*, 1373-4; *Sti heremitis*, 1405).

* *Egloserm* 1344, *Egloserme* 1613.

† Erbin is the eponym of Erbistock in Denbighshire ("Saynt Erbyns" in the *Valor* of 1535). See *Saint Cuby*, No. 22 in my "Cornish Saints" series, p. 12. Mr. Wade-Evans considers that *Erb*, *Erbic*, *Erbyn* and *Urbgen* are all forms of the same name, and shows how *b* and *m* may be interchanged, as in Vortimer=Gwrthebyr.

I suppose that S. ERVAN really may be S. *Erbyn*, and I think that this may have been the opinion of the late Mr.



TOWER OF S. ERME CHURCH, CORNWALL.

From a photograph by Mr. W. G. Sandy, Truro.

Charles Henderson, since in a notebook he kept, marked "Dedications (summary)," he gives the place-names *Trever-*

byn and *Treverven* as possibly containing the personal name Ervan. *Ervan* is found as a surname in Brittany; in 1809 there was a *propriétaire-cultivateur* called François Ervan in the parish of Redenné near Quimperlé.

There is a *Saint Eruen* in Langwm, Monmouthshire, and a *Saint Erven* honoured in Brittany at Plouay near Le Faouet, at Damgan and at Meucon, all in the Morbihan, but M. Loth says definitely that our S. Ervan "is the Breton *Saint Erwan*, confused [at a later date] with S. Yves," the famous saint of Tréguier. There is a *Sant-Yrouan* in Plouaret near Lannion.*

In 1556 Richard Hore, in his will, directed that he was to be buried at S. *Ervyn*, "in the somytory before the picture of S. *Erasmus*." Baring-Gould and Fisher assert, but without giving any authority, that "the church was placed under the patronage of S. *Urban* the Pope by the Bishops of Exeter. . . . The day of S. Urban is May 25, and on that day a fair is held at Penrose in this parish."† If this is true, it looks as if ecclesiastics at S. Ervan or at Exeter in the Middle Ages were almost as prone as some modern antiquaries rashly to identify their saint with any whose name had the least resemblance in sound, and that *Hermes*, *Erasmus*, and *Urban* were three of their unsuccessful efforts!

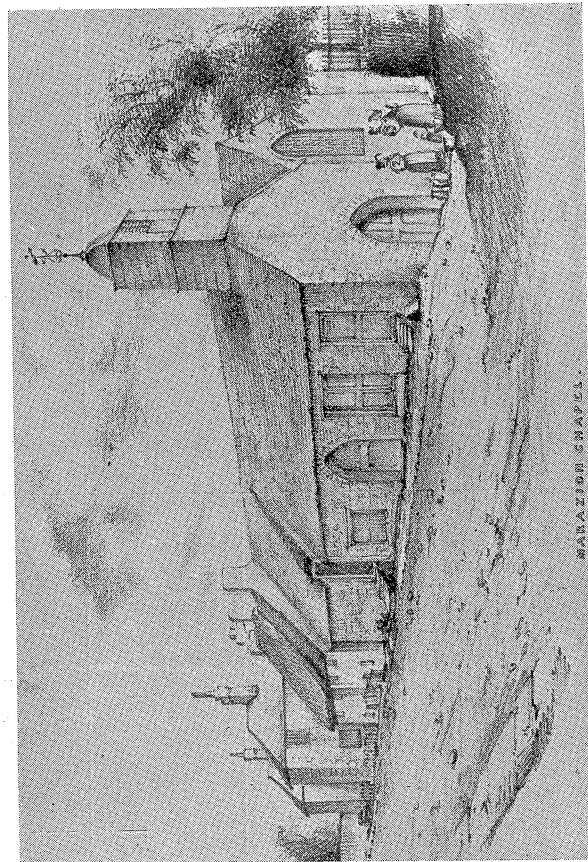
In the Episcopal Registers the parish is *Sti Hermetis*, 1288; *Sti Ermetis*, 1309; *Sti Ermetis in Manerio de Poutone*, 1257; *Sti Ermetis in Pidershyre*, 1361.

The present church of MARAZION was dedicated to All Saints when it was built in 1861. Its predecessor, which was a chapel-of-ease to St. Hilary, was licensed in 1308-9 as "Capella Sti Hermetis in parochia Sti Hilarii." It was also known as "Sti Ermetis de Marghesyow." Here again we

* *Noms des Saints Bretons*, p. 40.

† *Lives of the British Saints*, II. 458.

have to lament the mischievous results of the mistakes made by careless historians in modern times, who have succeeded in this case in creating a false "tradition" by identifying



THE CHAPEL OF S. HERMES, MARAZION.

Rebuilt in 1861 and re-dedicated to All Saints. From a print by John P. Vibert, dated October 26, 1832, Penzance.

the patron saint with the popular Breton saint Herbot. The latter has actually been introduced into a stained-glass window in Marazion church, and Kelly's *Directory of Corn-*

wall calmly informs us that "the church . . . was formerly dedicated to S. Ervett or Herbotus"! In this case it is clearly the late Mr. Baring-Gould who is to blame, as he says (*Lives of the British Saints*, III. 267) that S. Herbot "seems to have had a chapel at Marazion . . . under the name of Ervetus (B. Stafford's Register, licensed 1397)." "Ervetus" is simply a scribe's blunder for "Ermetis."*

We have no clue whatever to the reason why S. Hermes became the patron of Marazion. William Worcester appears to have thought that it was due to the influence of the monks of S. Michael's Mount, since he notes that the name was in the calendar he saw there :

"IN KALENDARIO ECCLESIAE MONT MYGHELLE.

Sanctus Hermes confessor [sic]. . . Cornubia 28 die Augusti."

(It is tantalizing that Worcester was not able to read the words before "Cornubia.") As the name of S. Hermes was in most mediæval kalendars, English and Continental, William Worcester would not have remarked its presence in that of S. Michael's Mount if it had not been that he had learnt that the chapel he had seen on the mainland, so close to the Mount, was dedicated to him. But there seems to have been no cult of S. Hermes at Mont S. Michel; they had no relics of him, and possessed no church dedicated in his honour among the fifty-five benefices which belonged to them in France.

* Prebendary Chanter has consulted the original entry (June 12, 1397) for me. He reads "Capella beati Erviti apud Margasyow in parochia Sancti Illarii."

APPENDIX

Proper Mass of S. Hermes (*from the ancient Missal of the Chapter of S. Hermes at Renaix*).

Introit.—The righteous shall not be cast away, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand. The righteous is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Ps. 37: Fret not thyself because of the ungodly, neither be thou envious against the evil doers.

Collect.—O God, Who didst arm the blessed Hermes Thy martyr in his passion with the virtue of constancy: grant us, we beseech Thee, after his example, for the love of Thee, to despise this world's prosperity and to fear none of its adversities. Through J. C.

Epistle.—2 Tim. ii. 8-10 and iii. 10-12.

Gradual.—The righteous shall flourish like a palm-tree, and shall spread abroad like a cedar in Libanus in the house of the Lord. To tell of Thy loving-kindness early in the morning, and of Thy truth in the night-season. Alleluia, alleluia. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life.

Gospel.—S. John xii. 24-26.

Offertory.—The righteous shall rejoice in Thy strength, O Lord: exceeding glad shall he be of Thy salvation (Ps. xxi. 1).

Proper Preface.—To Whom we offer this sacrifice of praise, which we beseech Thee favourably to receive, by the prayers of S. Hermes, Thy martyr.

Communion.—A multitude of diseased persons and they that were vexed with unclean spirits came unto him, for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all (Luke vi. 17-19).

NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF THE CATACOMB OF S. HERMES SINCE THE REMOVAL OF THE SAINT'S BODY.

After the body of S. Hermes had been taken out of the tomb and removed, first into the city and later to Renaix, pilgrims still visited his church, and guides written for their benefit described its position—some of them apparently thinking that the martyr's mortal remains were still there. Thus the *Itinerarium Salisburgense* tells the pilgrim that "from thence he must turn south by the Salinarian way till he comes to S. Ermes," and the *Epilome de Locis Sanctorum* says that "next, as you turn to the west, appears the Basilica of S. Ermes, where the martyr himself lies." William of Malmesbury, writing several hundred years after the removal of the body, speaks of "the fourth gate and the Via Salaria, which is now called after S. Silvester. There, by the wayside, rests S. Hermes."

The basilica of S. Hermes was used for worship for some centuries after it had lost its great treasure. "It appears to have been abandoned

about the year 1200," says Hvlsen.* It is mentioned in the fourteenth-century list of the churches of Rome, called the List of Turin, as having "no priest in charge." "The *Vineae ad S. Ermetem* are constantly mentioned in the documents of S. Silvestro in capite."†

Early in the seventeenth century, after the rediscovery of the catacombs, many bodies of Christians buried in the catacomb of S. Hermes, believed to be the bodies of martyrs because their tombs contained little phials of blood or an inscription with a palm or a dove bearing an olive branch, were taken from their resting-places and given to newly built Jesuit churches, especially in Belgium. Fr. Gazet, in a letter of December 29, 1612, describes a visit to this catacomb—a somewhat perilous adventure among underground galleries stretching for a considerable distance, with numerous ramifications where it was easy to lose oneself, and where one had to creep through very small openings. He saw some early wall-paintings there, representing (apparently) Daniel in the lions' den, the three children in the fiery furnace, and the judgement and glorification of a soul. (See *Analecta Bollandiana*, 1934, pp. 334-342.)

Mgr. Gaume made a pilgrimage to the basilica in 1842. He says: "Leaving the city by the Pincian Hill, we arrived, by the Via Salaria Vecchia, at the catacombs of S. Hermes. The entrance is in a vineyard, opposite the villa of the German college. Sixty stairs lead down to the underground church, which is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful and venerable in the catacombs. What prodigious labour it must have involved to build a church so far below the soil!"

Capgrave, who visited Rome in the fifteenth century, and prepared a very accurate and complete guidebook called *Ye Solace of Pilgrimes*, speaks vaguely of the "cymyteries" of the martyrs, and says that even residents knew little about them. He saw, within the city, the church of "seynt balbine," who, he says, "was doutir to a worthi man of rome whom they clepid qwirinus. This same *qwirinus* had in prison at comoundement of the emperour a man of rome which had be meyr of the cite thei cleped him *hermes*." He proceeds to repeat the story with which the reader is familiar. (Ed. Oxford University Press, 1911, pp. 107, 108.)

* *Le Chiese di Roma nel medio evo*, p. 262.

† *Ibid*.