ODILO OF CLUNY

The Life of Saint Adelaide

Epitaphium Adalheidae

SABBATISMUS

Odilo of Cluny (c. 962–1049)
Epitaphium Adalheidae · The Life of Saint Adelaide

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Epitaph of the Emperor Otto the Great

In this tomb lies hidden Otto, blessed and greatest, / strong in his rule, as David was in ancient time, / renowned as wise Solomon himself, and a friend of peace; / endowed with a greater hope than Hezekiah, he longs / that peace may come and truth increase through all the ages. / Behold, it is written that a Passover was kept with due solemnity, / and its feast days, by Josiah, first beneath the sun; / not that alone: the mystic deeds of those before him, / first ruling his kingdoms, reforming the sacred rights of the laws, / he keeps in the light of day, and in keeping them crowns the world. / The best that the land of Germany ever had, / you, happy Italy, together with a blessed woman, / received. The swollen rhinoceros, with zeal, / he made gentle too — he who subdued very many kingdoms, / tamed the Sarmatians, compelled them to serve Christ, / to drive out the demon, to bear the triumph of the cross as their sign. / Crushing the Hungarians in war, bringing home victorious standards, / he rescued, made worthy to bear the name of the holy faith, / countless peoples, hard pressed by dire peril. / You, once mistress, happy and splendid Rome, / Otto, together with his holy consort, granted you / to bear again, as of old, the sceptre

and diadem of the world. / The whole world dances for joy beneath so great a Caesar; / peace is taken away and perishes when greatest Otto departs. / As May brings round again in their order the mournful Nones, / the pious Caesar Otto is caught up to the heavenly hosts, / with his own Maurice leading him, to be joined on high / to him to whom he yielded his own hall, which you behold. / Famous in your consort, and happy in your offspring, / the world rejoices when Otto the Second is born. / The Third reigns; heaven resounds with jubilation. / But now your line, with illustrious governance, the world / protects, makes august, enriches, exalts and honours; / to whom that father of yours, called by the name of Henry, / had passed on this name, as you too yield him the honour. / While the glowing East shall stand, and the farthest land, / the sea and the stars of heaven, the regions of the world shall mourn you.

Preface to the Life of Lady Adelaide

To the lord Andrew, venerable abbot, and to all the brethren entrusted to him who devoutly serve our Lord and Saviour in the suburb of the city of Pavia, Brother Odilo, the offscouring of all the poor men of Cluny: prosperity in this present life and everlasting joys.

I have taken care to send to your fraternity the epitaph of our lady Adelaide, the Empress Augusta, written in a poor style, judging it right that among you there should be kept a continual memory of her by whose diligence and prudence the buildings of your monastery rose from their foundations, and by whose generous and unfailing bounty you are sustained. For we have not touched so great a subject in brief and humble words in the hope that our speech might suffice for the praise of such virtue and nobility, but so that some truly learned man might take from it the occasion to write; that this eminent matter, set forth in more eminent words, might sound in the ears of empresses and queens; and that, when they hear great things of the great and strive to follow in the steps of honour the woman of whom we speak, through them at least the care of the household may flourish, as through her the commonwealth flourished far and wide.

THE TEXT OF THE BOOK

1

In the times of this our age, then, the Lord who orders all things and bestows all honour and virtue gave the Roman commonwealth, while the first Otto was happily wielding the sceptre, a venerable glory in the female sex. For of many goods and virtues that then came to pass the author, after God, was the Empress Adelaide, of divine and celebrated memory. And as we strive to commend her in writing to the memory of those who come after, I fear we may rightly be censured, because, ill fitted as we are, we attempt to unfold in a poor style a subject of such nobility and virtue. Whoever censures us, as men deserving censure, whether for our unpolished speech, or for a thing newly begun, or for the simplicity of our native eloquence, let him know beyond doubt — let him know — that what moved us to this was not the craving for human praise, but the affection of a true and most sincere charity. If you wish, reader, as indeed you rightly should, to shrink from the rusticity of our poor wit, attend instead to the nobility of mind and body of her whom we have begun to commend. For if you wish to wait for a man endowed with such eloquence or wisdom as could fittingly describe this woman's life, then either Cicero the orator must be called back from the dead, or Jerome the priest sent down from above. For if that holy Jerome, incomparable in divine and human wisdom, had lived in the times of this empress — he who took care to commend

in books and letters Paula and Eustochium, Marcella too and Melania, Fabiola too and Blesilla, Laeta and Demetrias, and the woman struck seven times — he would surely have commended her in no few volumes. But since there is no one like Jerome, nor any other so learned in the liberal arts as to be able to describe worthily the character and life of so great a woman, let us unlearned men make the attempt, with God's help, as best we can.

2

She, sprung from a royal and religious line, while still a young girl in the sixteenth year of her age, by God's gift entered upon a royal marriage, being joined, that is, to King Lothair, son of Hugh, the very wealthy King of Italy. From this union she had a daughter, of whom Lothair, King of the Franks, begot King Louis, who died without children and is known to have been buried with royal honours at Compiègne. When the aforesaid Lothair died, about the third year after he had married the lady Adelaide, she was left widowed of her husband, deprived of her kingdom, bereft of a husband's comfort. Biting persecution came upon her, which is wont to purge the elect as the furnace purges gold. There came upon her, to speak truly, by divine design, bodily affliction from without, lest within, young as she was, the kindling lust of the flesh should burn her. The Lord willed that she be worn down by so many blows, lest, according to the sentence of the apostle Paul, she should be a widow living in

pleasures, dead while she lives (1 Tim 5:6). For with a father's love he willed her to endure so many perils, lest she be unworthy of that sonship of which Scripture speaks: The Lord chastises every son whom he receives (Heb 12:6). Often, indeed, she gave thanks to God for this, and spoke with her faithful friends of how much and what she had suffered at that time, and how mercifully the Lord had delivered her from the hands of her enemies. For she judged it better for her to have been taken up for a time with temporal anxieties than, living in pleasures, to be made subject to the laws of everlasting death.

3

After Lothair her husband had died, a certain man named Berengar, who had a wife named Willa, obtained the dignity of the kingdom of Italy. Seized shamefully by them, though innocent, tormented with various cruelties, the hair torn from her head, often beaten with fists and kicked, and at last shut up in a dark prison with a single maidservant for companion, she was set free by God and afterwards, by God's ordering, raised to the imperial heights. In the very night in which she was led out of prison, she came upon a marsh. There she remained for days and nights without food or drink, persevering, and begging God that help might come to her. While she was held in this danger, a fisherman suddenly came by in a boat, carrying in his little craft a fish called a sturgeon. When he saw the women, he asked who they were and what they were doing there.

They gave him an answer well suited to their pressing need: "Do you see that we are wandering here bereft of all human counsel and, what is harder, are in peril of solitude and hunger? If you can, give us something to eat; if not, offer us comfort." Moved with pity for them, as Christ himself, by whom he was sent, had once been moved for the poor who were in peril of hunger in the desert, he said to them: "We have nothing at hand for food but fish and water." He had fire with him, as those who ply the fisherman's trade are wont to have. The fire was lit, the fish was prepared. The queen took food; the fisherman and the maidservant waited on her.

4

While this was happening, a certain cleric arrived who had been her companion in captivity and flight, announcing that an army of armed knights was at hand; and they, receiving her with joy, brought her with them to an impregnable fortress. Afterwards, by the counsel of the princes of Italy and with the grace of God going before her, she passed from the throne of a kingdom to the summit of empire. For she is worthy to be named and honoured as the most august of all Augustas:

No woman before her so enlarged the commonwealth: proud-necked Germany and fruitful Italy, these with their princes she made subject to the citadels of Rome. Otto, the noble king, she set over Rome as Caesar, and of him she bore a son most worthy of the empire.

5

Enough has been said of her nobility of birth. But how and in what manner she exercised nobility of mind, no mortal is able to tell. Yet, to speak briefly according to my small measure:

Sure in hope and in faith, and filled to the full with twofold charity, / just indeed, strong, prudent, and modest beyond measure / she was, and lived happily while she ruled the age, / by the help of the Lord who governs the regions of the world.

Yet the words spoken by Solomon the wise befit this most holy woman: She opened her hands to the needy, he says, and stretched out her palms to the poor. She will not fear for her house from the cold of the snow, for all her household are clothed with double garments. She made herself a woven coverlet; fine linen and purple are her clothing. Her husband is noble in the gates, when he sits with the senators of the land. Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she shall laugh in the last day. She opened her mouth to wisdom, and the law of clemency is on her tongue. She has considered the paths of her house, and has not eaten her bread in idleness. Her children rose up and called her most blessed, and her husband praised her. Many daughters have gathered riches; you have surpassed them all (Prov 31:20–29). What we say of her we have learned not only by hearsay, but also by sight and by experience. Many words of salvation we heard from her; very many gifts we received. Often she made

those who lacked a coin rich in gold; those who at times lacked their daily sustenance she made illustrious with honours. She, for the adornment of the world consort of the first and greatest Otto, emperor most famous in all the earth, and for the profit of many mother of emperors, was found worthy to obtain that blessing which, as we read in the book of his father of the same name, Tobias was found worthy to enjoy: namely, to see his children's children to the third generation.

6

After the most august Otto had gone the way of all flesh, the Augusta with her son long and happily governed the monarchy of the Roman Empire. But once the sovereignty of the Roman Empire had, by divine will, been made firm through the merits and diligence of the Augusta herself, there was no lack of wicked men who strove to sow discord between them. Deceived by their flattery, the emperor withdrew in heart from his mother. Were we to commit to writing how much and what she suffered at that time, we would seem to detract from the splendour of so great a family. For we ought not to touch with the pen what humble amends soon set at rest. Loving her son, and unable to bear the authors of the discord, she gave place for a little to wrath, according to the Apostle's precept (Rom 12:19), and resolved to seek her father's kingdom. There she was received kindly and with honour by her brother, King Conrad, and by his most noble wife Matilda. Germany was saddened at her ab-

sence, all Burgundy rejoiced at her coming; Lyon exulted, that renowned city, once mother and nurse of philosophy, and Vienne too, the noble royal seat.

7

Afterwards the emperor Otto, moved by repentance, sent an embassy to his uncle the king and to Father Majolus of holy memory, begging most earnestly and in all haste that through their intercession he might win back the favour of his mother, which he had lost through his own faults; and again praying and beseeching them to make haste to meet him at Pavia as soon as they could, together with the Augusta his mother. Following the counsel of such great men, the mother met her son at Pavia at the appointed time. When they saw one another, weeping and shedding tears, they cast themselves full length upon the ground and humbly began to greet each other. In the son there was humble repentance, in the mother generous forgiveness; and between them both there remained thereafter the undivided bond of lasting peace.

8

Not long afterwards she was bereaved of her only son, who was succeeded by the third Otto, born of a Greek mother. Thus she was long afflicted by recurring blows; we cannot recount one by one how many and what troubles came upon her after the death of her son. Although

that Greek empress had been useful and excellent enough to herself and to others, towards her mother-in-law the Augusta she was nevertheless of a contrary mind. At last, following the counsel of a certain Greek and of other flatterers, she threatened her, as if pointing with her hand, and said: "If I live one whole year more, Adelaide shall not rule in all the world so much as can be covered by one palm." This sentence, rashly uttered, the divine judgement made come true. Within four weeks the Greek empress departed from this light; the Augusta Adelaide outlived her and remained in happiness. She went on mourning and lamenting the perils of the world, while bearing of necessity the care of the Roman Empire. Otto the Third, the son of her only son, brought up most happily and honourably by the leading men of the realm, did nothing towards her save what became both her and him. Therefore, through the merits of his grandmother and the diligence of the nobles, he attained the Roman sovereignty. For from her earliest youth the said empress had suffered much from strangers and from her own household, so that she could say with the Prophet: Often have they fought against me from my youth, and the rest (Ps 129:1). For she often repeated the Apostle's words: I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, which shall be revealed in us (Rom 8:18). If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him (2 Tim 2:12); and again: If we are partners in the sufferings, we shall be also in the consolations (2 Cor 1:7). To

many she returned good for evil, and according to the Lord's precept she forgave those who sinned against her before the sun went down (Eph 4:26). She kept back nothing of the injuries done to her, but committed all to the Lord, knowing that the Lord had said through the prophet: Vengeance is mine; I will repay (Rom 12:19). Spare, I beg you, those whom she spared! And let us tell, as time permits, in what adversities, and with what endeavours in prosperity, she strove to serve. For as many kingdoms as she had possessed by God's favour — first with the emperor, then with her son and her son's son, the Ottos, august emperors and Caesars — so many monasteries did she found at her own expense to the honour of the King of kings.

9

In the kingdom of her father, the most noble King Rudolf, and of her brother the lord Conrad, at the place called Payerne, where she had laid to rest her mother, Queen Bertha by name, devoted to God in all humility, she founded a monastery in honour of the Mother of God; and by her own munificence and by order of her brother King Conrad she committed it in perpetuity to the most holy Father Majolus and his successors to be governed. Afterwards in Italy, near the city of Pavia, she began a monastery from its foundations and completed it with honour, to the honour of the Saviour of the world, by imperial authority and by her own most generous gift; she enriched it most amply with estates and

ornaments, and handed it over to the aforesaid Father Majolus to be ordered according to the Rule. In Saxony, after the passing of the aforesaid prince of the commonwealth, with the help of her only daughter, most wise and most prudent, she bestowed very many gifts on convents of nuns.

10

About the twelfth year before her death, at the place called Selz, she resolved that a town should be made under Roman liberty, and this intention she afterwards brought to its perfect execution. In the same place she also built a monastery from its foundations with wonderful workmanship, and in honour of God and of the prince of the apostles, in the reign of the third Otto, her grandson, who stood there present beside her, she had it consecrated most solemnly and devoutly on the fourteenth day before the Kalends of December by Widerold, bishop of the city of Strasbourg. And so that this sacred place might be upheld with greater authority through the times to come, an assembly of bishops was also convoked, together with the aforesaid emperor, by the Augusta Adelaide — so often named, and to be named so often again — the emperor's own grandmother.

In this monastery she prepared a cloister well suited to monks, and resolved to order it according to the Rule of Saint Benedict. She set over it an abbot named Eccemagnus, a man of good repute, learned in human knowledge and divine wisdom, whom she wished to have as her con-

stant teacher in the sacred Scriptures. And she so enriched and ennobled the monastery with estates, buildings, gold and gems, most precious vestments and various other furnishings for its adornment, that those who served God in that place lacked nothing. In the four years by which she outlived this, giving herself and her goods to her Creator, she made the poor and the servants of Christ her friends, so that when temporal things failed they might receive her into the eternal dwellings (Lk 16:9).

11

Though she was held fast in the highest offices of the commonwealth, she did not disdain to bring help to the various anxieties of the wretched and the needy. And though, as befitted the imperial dignity, she could have adorned her body with wonderful garments and crowned her head with most precious gems, she would not burden herself with such encumbrances; but either she ordered them to be given to the poor, or she had the standards of the Lord's cross and the Gospels of Christ adorned with them; for she was a zealous imitator of her Redeemer, who, though he was the highest of all, did not disdain to suffer the lowliness of our human nature. Besides, on countless communities of canons, of monks and of nuns, established round about in various parts of the world, she bestowed very many benefits, so that the throngs of those serving God, refreshed by her munificent bounty, might more freely im-

plore for her and for the commonwealth the help that heaven would grant.

12

In all that she did she kept the form of justice and preserved a liberality shared by all, believing without doubt that he would be the judge whom hidden things do not deceive, whom unseemly things offend and honourable things delight. Therefore she was seen to be lofty in justice and most gracious in liberality, laying the works of beneficence upon Christ, whom the blessed Apostle sets as the foundation (1 Cor 3:11), and understanding wisely that faith is the foundation of all the virtues. She practised, then, a perfect liberality, so as to cover her work with silence as far as she could while longing to relieve the needs of each one; so that not her own lips but the mouths of Christ's poor might praise her, and that in her might be seen fulfilled what is spoken by the voice of blessed Job: The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me (Job 29:13). With diligent consideration she strove to weigh that saying of the same prophet, that no poor man should ever go out from her roof with an empty lap; so that, intent on such commerce, she might acquire in the land of the living the inheritance of the heavenly lot.

13

Now, in the very last year of her life, since, as I believe, it was not hidden from her that she

was about to depart from the world, ever a friend of peace, she went for the sake of peace and charity to her father's land, where the vassals of her nephew King Rudolf were quarrelling among themselves; to those she could, she brought covenants of peace; those she could not, she committed wholly to God, as was her custom. As for the rest — how zealously, how very devoutly she took care to visit the shrines of the saints — it is beyond my power to unfold. At that same time she came to the monastery of Payerne, which she herself had nobly founded, in honour of the Mother of God and for the healing of the soul of her mother who rests there, from her own goods as well as her mother's; and whatever the brethren serving God there then lacked for their temporal needs, she supplied with a most generous hand, as she was ever wont.

14

Something new happened then which we have judged should be set down in this work. Wearied by the journey, she could not give alms to the poor with her own hand as was her custom, and she called one of the brethren to give the coins to the poor in her stead. At her command he went to the poor. The number of the poor exceeded the number of the pennies. The almoner feared he had less than would suffice for the needy. Why say more?

Through the Augusta's merits the power of him was present who / fed five thousand of the people from five loaves.

The pennies were multiplied, and the poor went away rejoicing in the gift.

15

Leaving that place, she went to Agaune, where a most blessed rock holds the bodies of thousands of martyrs. With what devotion, with what reverence did she implore the prayers of the great martyr Maurice and his companions? How many were her groans there? How many her sighs? How many her laments? How many her rivers of tears? There were never, I think, any sins that would not then have merited an everlasting remedy. Had you looked upon the Augusta's face, you would have said that it surpassed the human likeness; and whatever she brought forth with her lips, you would have believed she was uttering nothing else than that word of the prophet: I pour out my prayer in his sight; I declare my trouble before him (Ps 142:3). And her greatest tribulation was a charitable compassion for all who turn aside from the law of God, so that she could say with the Prophet: Faintness has taken hold of me because of sinners (Ps 119:53), and with Paul: Who is weak, and I am not weak? (2 Cor 11:29). She bewailed the sins of others as many cannot bewail their own peril. She rejoiced in the gravity and the progress of those who had gone before; she grieved daily at the failings of those of the present, and most of all of those to come. And when I speak of things to come, I declare that she undoubtedly had the spirit of prophecy. For my

words would be wanting, had I not learned it by open proof.

16

For when she was about to leave that holy place, and was standing apart in a corner of the church to pray, a messenger came to her from Italy and announced that Franco, bishop of Worms, had died in Rome. And since he was a man of good repute, the lady Augusta loved him greatly, as she was wont to love all good men. As soon as she heard of his death, she called one of the household who were present and humbly asked him to pour out prayers to the Lord for him; and, as if in ecstasy, she began to speak thus: "What shall I do, Lord, or what shall I say of that lord of ours and grandson of mine? Many, I believe, will perish in Italy with him; after them, I fear — alas, wretched me! — Otto of august nature will perish; and I shall be left bereft of all human comfort. Far be it, O Lord, King of the ages, that I should live to see so mournful a loss!" Then you would have seen the Augusta prostrate full length upon the ground, and no less would you have believed her intent on heaven with all the striving of her mind, as though she had already found the footsteps of the martyr Maurice and were covering them with tearful kisses. After a little while she rose from prayer; she gave gifts to the martyrs and alms to the poor.

17

From there she went to the city of Geneva, wishing to see the church of the most victorious martyr Victor. Then she came to Lausanne, and there most devoutly venerated the shrine of the Mother of God. Received with honour in these places by the king and by the bishops, who were her nephews, she came to the town called Orbe. Staying there for some time, she gave what was needful to as many of the needy and wretched who came to her as she could. Conferring with the king and the princes of the country on matters of peace and honour, she also sent from there various and diverse gifts to holy places. For what church, what monasteries of monks, joined to her by kinship or by neighbourhood, did not deserve to receive gifts or presents? And, to tell a few things out of many: at the very time when her last day was drawing near, she visited the most blessed Father Benedict with gifts, small indeed but her own; and Father Majolus too, of blessed memory, already crowned with heavenly glory, whom, while he lived in this mortal flesh, she loved above all mortals in that order. Nor did she forget Cluny, a monastery so dear to her. For the restoring of the monastery of the most blessed confessor of Christ, Martin, which not long before had been burnt by fire, she arranged to send no small amount of silver, and, for the honour of the altar, part of the cloak of her only son, the emperor Otto.

18

To recall her sweetest words to the man by whose service they were sent, she said among other things: "I beg you, dearest, I beg you, speak thus to that most holy priest:" "Accept by my service, priest of God, these small gifts which Adelaide sends you, handmaid of the servants of God, a sinner of herself, by the gift of God an empress. Accept a part of the cloak of my only son, the emperor Otto, and pray for him to Christ himself, whom you clothed in the poor man with your divided garment." On the day on which she was to leave the aforesaid place, in one and the same hour, in the presence of us sinners, she both left an example of perfect humility and showed, not arrogantly but humbly, that she had the spirit of prophecy.

19

There was there in her presence a certain monk who, though unworthy to be called abbot, was nevertheless thought by her to be of some account. When she looked at him, and he gazed upon her, they both began to weep abundantly. I will say that she did more than if I were to say that she had healed many sick. For she humbly took hold of the rather rough habit he wore, pressed it with kisses to her most holy eyes and her most serene face, and said to him humbly and quietly: "Remember me, my son, in your contemplation, and know that I shall not see you again with bodily eyes. For when I have departed from human affairs, I commit my soul to the prayers of the brethren." From there, by the road by which she

had come, she reached the place where, by God's ordering, she had resolved to prepare her tomb.

20

On this last journey of her earthly course, then, she raised herself above herself as far as she could, so that, spurning the whirl of worldly things, she might devote herself freely to divine contemplation. Even the business of her household was irksome to her. She had already performed with vigour the praiseworthy active life of Leah and Martha; she longed to seek the desirable leisure of Rachel and Mary. So, intent on reading and constant in prayer, she spurned earthly things, longing with her whole mind for heavenly ones. And if anyone addressed her about worldly business, she gave no answer to it, but, mourning, turned over in her heart that word of the Apostle: Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom 7:24). And, secure in the hope of divine reward, she would say: The grace of God, through Jesus Christ (Rom 7:25). Then, taught by heavenly instruction, she came to the place where she was to render her last breath to God. For the day was at hand on which the yearly devotion was kept in memory of her son, the emperor Otto. Crowds of the poor had flocked to her from the places round about, as they always did.

21

It was her custom, on the anniversaries of her friends and household, to bestow a spiritual largess on her spiritual soldiers — alms, I mean, on the poor of Christ. The multitude of the needy had been set in order in the place. She came to them and, after the example of the patriarch Abraham, not doubting that God was among them, humbly bowed in worship; and, forgetting her weakness, she undertook more than her strength allowed; she gave to each with her own hand, and to those she saw most wretched she gave garments or other small gifts. When this spiritual business was ended, she had Masses celebrated for her son by a venerable archbishop. That very night she was seized with a fever, and over some days, as the weight of the sickness grew heavier, she was brought to the very end. Yet still, as far as she could, she was intent on prayer, and with eyes that longed for Christ she deigned to look on nothing else. Having recovered a little bodily strength, she asked very earnestly to be fortified with the mysteries of the Church. Then, anointed with the holy oil, she received, humbly and most devoutly adoring, the sacrament of the Lord's Body, in whom she had always hoped and believed. Then, strengthened by such defences and fed with such a banquet, she told the elders who stood by and the clergy to sing the penitential psalms and to recite the names of the saints in the manner of the Church. When this was done, she sang the psalms with those who sang, she prayed with those who prayed, up to the place where she besought God to be present to her

and merciful. She knew nothing of holding the timbrel and the dance with the sister of Moses, or the strings and the organ with David; but, taking up the well-sounding cymbals with those who follow the Lamb, she was now wholly caught up in jubilation.

22

So, as the thousandth year from the Lord's incarnation drew near, longing to see in the courts of the Lord that one day which knows no setting and is better than thousands, she often said with the Apostle: I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ (Phil 1:23). And while she was awaiting with spiritual joy the feast of the Nativity of the same Lord Jesus Christ, then near at hand, as happy December was completing its sixteenth day, she too, happily laying down the burden of the flesh, flew away to the pure splendour of the purest heaven. For she had with her household a grave cheerfulness, with strangers a most honourable gravity; towards the poor an untiring kindness, in honouring the churches of God a most abundant largess; towards the good a constant benevolence, against the wicked a generous severity; in seeking, fear; in what she had sought, vigour; in prosperity true humility, in adversity patient long-suffering; in daily food sobriety, in dress also moderation; in reading and prayer, in vigils and fasts, assiduity; in giving alms one and the same will. No pride in her noble birth held her back; no craving for human praise could draw her to itself on account of the

goodness God had granted her. No presumption over the virtues God had granted her, no despair prompted by her own transgressions held sway over her; no ambition for the honours, riches and delights of the world ruled in her; but in all things she was accompanied by discretion, the mother of all virtues. And she had in faith a secure firmness, in hope a firm security, and in the love of God and neighbour charity, the root of all goods and the chief cause of the virtues. But, to speak truly, how great and of what kind her life was, the divine power has made plain through the wonders of the miracles that shine forth at her tomb. Were they described in order, they would need a volume of their own; for they cannot be set forth by our eloquence. But lest they remain wholly covered in silence, and avoiding length of speech, it has pleased us to gather them in one brief chapter.

23

At her tomb the blind recover the lost light of their eyes, the paralysed the health of their bodies. The fevered are healed there. Many who are sick of various infirmities are restored, by the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prologue to the Second Book

Since it is plain from the pages above with what zeal this handmaid of God imitated blessed Martha, it is fitting also to bring forward some signs of her heavenly contemplation, from which we may infer that she attained more perfectly to Martha's sister Mary. Moreover, we can easily understand how, by keeping her body chaste and pure according to the Apostle's precept, she deserved to be made fully a temple of the living God (2 Cor 6:16). For although throughout her life she abounded in royal riches and in means worthy of her birth, she is known to have subdued her flesh with a hair shirt from the first days of her widowhood, and, trampling with contempt of mind on the height of worldly glory, to have stood before Christ alone — that is, before justice — with such longing for heavenly contemplation that she was in accord with the sweet voice of the Psalmist, who concluded that his good lay not in enjoying the delights of a kingdom, but in cleaving to God (Ps 73:28).

THE MIRACLES OF QUEEN ADELAIDE

1

One day, when she was sitting at table for the body's refreshment with an honourable com-

pany of clergy and laity, and the purest of fare was satisfying the needs of all, she — as is the way of holy minds, which to avoid men's favour show one thing outwardly and do another within — feigning the intention of eating, held her knife in her hand for a long while, and so drew out the banquet not for her own pleasure but for the wishes of others; when suddenly, the colour of her face changing together with the state of her mind, the knife fell from her hand upon the table; and with a sigh she made known that this had not happened as a mark of ill manners, but that she had perceived something wonderful by divine revelation. While the whole company wondered what this might portend, and none dared to ask, she, for the beauty of evangelical perfection, hid the dignity of the secret from the crowd, and deigned to address with these words only the bishop of Augsburg, Dudo by name, who for the merits of his life was her familiar and attended her in constant service: "Now, venerable Father, there is need of much consolation, for the western wall of your mother church has fallen by divine dispensation. So great a loss does not so much lay on your prudence the care of its repair as it has brought upon our mind a cloud of grief for your trouble and for the common loss of our church. But at the same time I bid and urge you to take comfort in the tranquillity of the Godhead, which alone, dwelling in light inaccessible without any vicissitude of change, permits all things in a manner to be shaken for our guilt, but in its ineffable clemency will bring the greater part

back to a state of wholeness." The bishop, troubled as much by the foreboding as by the loss, carefully noted the time of the said collapse and sent a messenger in haste to Augsburg to learn the cause and the truth of the matter; and from his report he learned that the fall had happened, and that the hour agreed, just as the handmaid of God had foretold.

2

At another time, too, a wonder like this foreboding was shown by her, the more worthy of admiration as the event was the more distant both in place and in time. For her son, elected prince of the Roman commonwealth, having taken a Greek wife as the partner of his bed, was deceived by her depraved disposition and worse counsel, and tried to win the kingdom of the Greeks. So, having gathered an army from all his forces, he went beyond the bounds of Italy, and thus gave the king of the Greeks occasion to wage war, and brought upon himself and his men the loss of fame and of life. Meanwhile his pious mother, persevering day and night in the worship of God, fulfilled without doubt the devotion of blessed Anna, and according to the canonical rule showed with all diligence the observances of widowhood. One day, intent with zealous devotion on the safety of her only son and the state of the whole realm, while she was offering herself to God as a living sacrifice, standing as usual before the crucifix, she was rapt in ecstasy and to human eyes seemed already dead. Coming to herself after an

hour, she kept in her memory what she had seen; and the fate of that battle, shown to her beforehand in spiritual vision, she made known not by telling the event but by grieving for the slaughter of good men. From these signs it may plainly be gathered with what purity of soul she shone, or rather with what freedom of spirit she served Christ in secret; for the Lord revealed things to come to her as to the prophets, strengthened her faith as the patriarchs', taught her the perfection of the Gospel as the apostles, granted her endurance in tribulation as the martyrs, gave her care for the Church as the priests, increased in her the sincerity of a most holy mind as in sacred virgins, showed her his familiar presence as he shows it to monks; and with the apostolic women disciples — I mean the widows chosen by Peter and Paul and appointed to the office of religion — he endowed her with devotion on earth and exalted her in eternal glory. And through the work of her kindness she won so great a grace of healing that, as she relieved the want of the needy with lavish alms, so too by a powerful gift she restored health to the sick and the infirm. But in a wonderful way, fleeing human notice so as to avoid pride, and eager to please the Giver of so great a gift in the secret of her mind, she either seized the effect of the signs with stealthy swiftness, or, if any could not escape the knowledge of her people, she gave strict orders that they should nowhere spread it in idle talk; turning over, no doubt, in her watchful heart that saying of the Teacher of the Gentiles: This is our glory, the tes-

timony of our conscience (2 Cor 1:12). And what the Lord himself commanded, that the work of the right hand be hidden from the left (Mt 6:3), she fulfilled with simple prudence in all her conduct. Yet a city set on a hill (Mt 5:14) could not be hidden from all. For the brightness of one sign has come to our knowledge, and we are taught that the power by which it was wrought was the cause of very many miracles.

3

Once, when she was sitting in her chamber occupied in heavenly meditation, and every witness was absent save a lame man, a steward named Hicemann, welcome to her for his faithfulness and discretion, brought her a gift of beautiful apples. Receiving the gift with a most serene face, for she was a friend of cheerfulness, she took one of the many and ordered the rest to be handed to the keeper of such things. But by chance the apple slipped from her hand and rolled some way off; the lame man, told at once to bring it back, refused the service, because his mistress was keeping the little stools with which he made shift to walk. As he resisted and reasonably pleaded his infirmity as the reason for his disobedience, at last the familiar of the saints reverently bowed her head before the venerable relics that she always kept set before her eyes, and declared that her lords willed with her that the lame man should walk.

Quicker than said, the lame man rose up from the ground; / obeying the service, he is made

whole in all his body; / and, bidden to keep silent about so great a sign, / he betrayed his joy; nor could so great a grace lie hidden.

4

At the time when the blessed woman departed from the world, Hermann, Duke of Swabia, who had married the daughter of her brother Conrad, wished to seize by right of inheritance the goods of the handmaid of God that belonged to the monastery. But she proved to him and to all who lived round about, by manifest signs, that she had left no heir but the apostles and the monks who serve them. There happened to be at that time with the same duke a man lately deprived of his sight, who had once been trained in the art of bloodletting and for that reason had enjoyed the blessed queen's favour generously. And because he had learned by experience the abundance of her kindness and the brightness of her holiness, he came to her tomb eager to pray, and with prayers and tears had called on her to help him. And when for a whole week he had frequented the place of the holy body with insistent supplication, once, tired and sad, as he sat on the floor, he was steeped in the dew of sleep out of the weariness of his drooping soul. Then Saint Adelaide appeared to him plainly in a dream, beautiful beyond human form, with a most reverend countenance; and in a terrible voice she asked why his lord Hermann was usurping the apostles' own property for his unjust dominion. When he confessed that he did not know, or rather added

an account of the duke's tyranny, she said: “See to it that, if by our merits you receive the health of your eyes, you go to the prince as the faithful bearer of our message, and with plain speech, and with the sign, teach him to put away such wickedness altogether. If not, let him know that I and my lords, the twelve apostles, who are the judges of the whole world, will pursue our own right, and let him learn beforehand that he and his will be scourged by the inescapable stroke of vengeance.” At these words the man at once awoke, gladdened by the memory of the vision and of what had been said to him, and followed the steps of her who was departing as far as the tomb; there, prostrate full length, he lay given over to prayer until the choir of monks celebrated the office of the Mass. And as soon as the cantor began the Introit, the blind man received his sight and mingled his joy with the singers. At once, the miracle being made known by the sound of the bells, all the people came running; the man, recognised, is marvelled at; the handmaid of God is venerated; and the restorer of light — nay, the confirmer of his own creation — is praised by men and women of every condition. After this the man who had gained the light, not forgetful of his witness and of the message laid on him, went back to his lord in joyful haste, explained what he had been forewarned in his sleep, and testified that his own enlightening was the proof of a divine judgement, should he or any of the powerful or any person whatever presume henceforth to do harm to the church endowments of this

woman, glorious in the Lord. So the duke, struck with fear, took care to amend whatever he had foolishly done, in his unjust undertaking against the will of God, to the property of God's handmaid; and he added to the said monastery an estate useful for making salt, situated at the town of Marsile.

5

It seems to us worth relating how King Henry, a singular devotee of the holy martyr George, became also a suppliant venerator of this most holy widow. For when, having obtained the empire, he came to the aforesaid place, it happened by chance that he had his bed set and took his rest in the very spot where that most holy soul was set free from the prison of the flesh. And the emperor was struck with so heavy a sickness that, unable to rise from his bed, he sought the various opinions of his people as to what they thought of so great and so sudden a pain. All of them said with one voice that reverence for that holy place was the cause of such an affliction. Turning this over long within himself, and considering whether he had offended the venerable Augusta in any other way, he was moved to repentance and had himself carried to the chapel of the tomb. And because it was not lawful to celebrate her merits without the decree of the pope and the consent of the clergy, he promised to build an oratory of blessed Mary in the said place, and released the abbot of that monastery, as she herself had ordained, from service to the emperor.

6

About the same time there came to the same place a reckless knight who, though kindly received as a guest by a poor man, set about abusing his few belongings at the devil's prompting. Among other injuries he did to his host, he killed his poultry and had a meal prepared for himself from another man's goods. The master of the house, pouring himself out in prayers and tears with his wife, first begged the man to spare him for the sake of the abbot, his lord; at last he implored him, out of reverence for Saint Adelaide, to give up such insolence. He, persisting in his wantonness, nay heaping up worse evils, said: "I, who am alive, am master of you and yours this night; but Adelaide, being dead, has no power to protect you." Without delay he was scourged from on high for so great a slander: as he hurried to eat the ill-gotten food, he began to gnaw his own hands and his other limbs as well. At once he was bound, because he could not master himself and for the harm his frenzy might do, and through that whole night he endured a hard bondage of mind and body. But when at first light he was dragged against his will by the hands of others to the tomb of the handmaid of Christ, he recovered the soundness of his senses in the presence of the brethren; for that most merciful woman, who had avenged the offence with power, afterwards forgave it generously to the man who would repent.

7

A nun named Frowessa, who had been lame in both feet from her earliest years, was gladdened with health, though late, in the year after the memorable passing of the Augusta. And because this was the first miracle whose fame had reached the people's ears, the whole assembly of the people was made exceedingly glad, and, putting a cross and a candle into her hands, they went about through the various churches celebrating the praises of God.

8

Nor, it seems, should we pass over in silence what is known to have happened to a certain stranger, to spread abroad her merits. As he was making his way through a forest which in the common tongue is called Biwalt, he happened to be followed all the way to the town of Selz by a horse that was grazing nearby. For this he was accused of theft before a certain powerful man named Heimo, who had come there at that time with the aforesaid Emperor Henry. He, passing a certain sentence on uncertain grounds, ordered the man to be wretchedly scourged, stripped and blinded. Straightway the blinded stranger, lifting up his mind and his hands to heaven, said: "If I, innocent of theft and fraud, have suffered such evils undeservedly, you, Saint Adelaide, give me back my sight by your prayers and merits!" After this, taken into the house and care of a man named Benno, a few days later, when the pain had eased, he approached the shrine of that precious treasure and, testifying to his innocence,

recovered the health of his eyes. Yet afterwards, the pupil of his eyes being divided in half, he showed the traces of his true blindness.

9

Among the other gifts which this familiar of the saints bestowed on Saint Peter was a certain family of serfs, dwelling in the district called Nordgau. When a certain man with insolent presumption tried to make them the property of himself and his descendants, and no one could by any means subdue them as they resisted, he seized one of that family, called Benzo, and rashly blinded him. Learning some days later that he could still see something, he seized him again and at last gouged out all his sight more deeply. Straightway the blind man, his face disfigured, bloody and pitiful, his wound still raw, went to the monks, sought the venerable tomb of his lady, and in the way of rustic simplicity began to reproach her as the cause of so great a calamity. And he did not cease from weeping and lamenting and blaming her until he recovered whole pupils with the clearest use of his eyes — a thing which we know to be, among the saints, not unheard of but rather rare.

10

There came also from the territory of Metz a woman on whom, by divine will, the affliction of blindness had grown. As she went about through various places longing to obtain health, she was

admonished in dreams by the saint herself to seek her help. And while she sought only the health of her eyes, she obtained a double grace. For at that very time it happened that Conrad, glorious prince of the Roman Empire, had come with Gisela, the partner of his bed and of his throne. And when the venerable queen saw the woman, now given her sight, there before her, she magnified God, the author of good things, with worthy praises, and rejoicing in the holiness of the Augusta, her kinswoman, she took under the care of her own generosity the person whom the blessed woman had visited with light.

11

There was also in the parts of Gaul a powerful countess who had become the sorrowful mother of a mute son. For this cause, while she was devoutly going round many monasteries, she heard of the great fame of the miracles and longingly sought the holy place, where for three days she gave herself to prayer. After this, despairing of the gift of healing because of the length of time, as she was preparing to return home, she prostrated herself with the boy before the altar which is consecrated at the head of the life-giving body. The mother, intent on tearful prayer, confesses that she alone is unworthy and left without a share, and tells how she came glad with hope but goes back sad. Meanwhile the boy was overcome by the sudden quiet of sleep. When an hour had passed he woke of his own accord, rose up joyful, took hold of his mother's garment, and with his

first words asked whether this was the tomb of Saint Adelaide, who had appeared to him in his sleep and loosed the bond of his tongue. So the lady, who had been about to leave in despair, spent the rest of the day there in gladness, and, devout and grateful for her son's health, offered small gifts to the brethren, who praised God in his saints.

12

A certain man born in Burgundy was from his mother's womb so lame and bent that the soles of his feet seemed glued to his buttocks and his hands to his knees. When he had been freed from this affliction through the merit of Saint Sulpicius, he was permitted by divine will to be troubled by another affliction, so that, when he was cured by the prayers of this most pious and most holy woman, the power of that most illustrious confessor might be equalled. It happened that this man was living with the crowd of other poor people at the house of Gerbert, abbot of the said place, a man of pious memory, and on the feast of blessed Peter the apostle he was attending Matins with idle ears. For, heedless of evil and good, and scornful too of the venerable time and place, he began to exchange filthy talk with men and women, and so, with gatherings of fools, he hindered the praise of God. Then suddenly, with wonderful swiftness, both his arms sprang tightly back behind him, and both his hands were bent back upon themselves with such force that the joints of his fingers burst and the bystanders

were wet with a spray of blood. Nor was he struck within by a lesser punishment, for he was seized by a most wicked demon; and thus bound by a double penalty, a pitiable spectacle, he moved the whole people to weeping and lament. But while the choir of monks was celebrating the praises of God at Mass, and all the people with sorrowful prayers were calling on the merits of Saint Adelaide, at last the knots of his arms were loosed and he obtained soundness of mind and body. Some days later, however, he was struck dumb, and at the tomb of the same most blessed mother he recovered the use of his tongue.

13

In the times of the third Emperor Henry, the wonderful outcome of one sign shone forth, by which we have recognised with the truest proof that spiritual power of hers among the number of the saints. A certain man named Burchard, who lived faithfully in the service of Liutpold, Archbishop of Mainz, belonged by the servile condition of his kindred to the lordship of the venerable Augusta. By her most generous kindness an estate had been given to his forebears, which he held by hereditary right without any dispute; and so he used to venerate in every way, with the greatest devotion, the lady who had given it. It happened, however, that the Duke of the Alemanni, Otto of Schweinfurt, though he followed very many examples of justice and of the other virtues, yet, inflamed by the fires of insatiable greed, set about claiming unjustly for his own do-

minion the said little estate, which happened to adjoin his very wide possessions, after the manner of Ahab, or rather of Jezebel. So the man, having suffered such a loss of his lands by violence and not by law, and despairing of human help against the height of so great a power, called to mind the privilege of the generous gift and faithfully betook himself to the protection of the lady who had given it; bringing with pitiful ceremony the charter written for that possession, he laid it on the sacred tomb; with a fitting peal of bells and loud lament he declared, in his rustic way, that he was waking his lady, who for him was asleep; and he moved the community of the brethren to pity his case, for the comfort of their kind patroness. Anointed, then, with the promises of brotherly consolation, he went home strengthened by the anchor of hope amid the tossing waves of so great an adversity. After this, when the said duke had been struck by the blow of a most grievous sickness, blessed Adelaide, with a face as stern as it was noble, appeared in the silence of the night and with power pronounced dreadful threats of hellfire, unless he quickly restored to her servant the estate unjustly taken from him. The prince, trembling at the reproachful threat of a person as wise as she was venerable, swiftly sent for the man who was suffering the injury and bearing an intolerable wrong; and, first telling him of the wonderful vision and the most dreadful threat of sudden death and everlasting punishment, he gave him back with a ready mind the right to the possession he had lost. At once the man, who

had known such losses and gained such benefits, giving due thanks to the Lord God and to Saint Adelaide, hastened joyfully to her monastery, bestowed many gifts suited to the adornment of the church and the needs of the brethren, and, having told the cause and the manner in which his property was restored, never ceased from the praise of Saint Adelaide and of Almighty God.