

BELL INSCRIPTIONS OF WESTERN EUROPE

WRITING, THAT MARVELLOUS ARRANGEMENT of lines which can "speak to the eye", was in some cultures considered so extraordinary that its origin was attributed to the gods. Writing on bells forms one of the oldest records of man's use of this marvel, being traceable back over three thousand years on existing artifacts. It has been placed there for four principal reasons: to memorialize their origin, to state their purpose, to ornament them, and to add to their magico-sacred power. This last purpose had been considered the most practical one in some cultures, including periods in our Western Christian civilization. Vestiges of it are found even in inscriptions on modern bells which are heard by thousands of people daily and are not connected with any church, but we have little knowledge of what is actually written on bells because we almost never see them closely.

The origin of the magico-sacred inscription is the concept that an all-seeing deity observes a bell whether it is on display to mortals or hidden in a tower, just as he hears it—if he can hear prayers (otherwise why are prayers spoken?)—whether it is as small as a thimble and has a very faint tone or is as large as a room and booms out over a whole city. This fact is what has made the bell play such an important role in the life of man; it is an object which uses both acoustical and visible elements in order to get the attention of beings both visible and invisible.

Inscriptions have been placed on bells in Christian cultures for about twelve hundred years. We shall examine some of those on western European and North American bells, and see how they came to be written for immortals as well as mortals to read.

A survey of bell inscriptions must be prefaced by stating that reading them is not an easy task. As we go farther back from the present we find that time has a way of slowly dimming the meaning of statements that must have been quite clear to contemporaries. When destruction is added to this, we are left with gaps that it is impossible to fill. On the other hand, so many inscrip-

tions have been recorded from the bells of more recent centuries in Europe that it would take years to classify them and analyze all their meanings. Some have been gathered by amateurs, some by professionals; some have been taken down from hearsay, others have been carefully copied often at risk of life and limb by climbing over high scaffolds or by being let down in baskets over the sides of towers.

If the precedence for church bell inscriptions is taken from Zechariah xiv, 20—"In that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses: *HOLLINNESS UNTO THE LORD*"—the earliest inscriptions which have come down to us are very different in content. One of the oldest is on a bell found at Canino, near Rome, and now in the Lateran Museum in Rome. It is considered to date from the eighth or ninth century. Hammer blows, which have mutilated most of its surface, have also effaced some of its inscription, but it must have read something like this: "In honour of the Lord Jesus Christ and Archangel Michael. Vivenitus offers it". This would be a proper inscription today, consecrating the bell to the Head of the Church and its guardian angel, and recording the name of the donor.

Not all ninth-century inscriptions were so short. One on a bell near Charleroi in Belgium is said to have stated: "By order of Habertus, I have been made through the art of Paternus. I will not measure our charming strains for the muses, which I could, but watchful night and day will bring forth songs to Christ." This is one of the more flowery inscriptions of which we learn from contemporary manuscripts, almost all early mediaeval bells having long ceased to exist. There is a bell of the tenth century in Cordova, Spain, which is inscribed, "The Abbot Samson offers this regalia to the House of St. Sebastian, Martyr for Christ". This is perhaps the oldest dated Christian bell, bearing the year 882 in the Mozarabic calendar, which corresponds to 963 in the Gregorian. Dates were rare before the thirteenth century: in fact, judging from the few remaining examples, most tower bells were plain. It may have become customary to place inscriptions first on the smaller bells in view inside religious buildings and only later on the larger ones in outside locations where writing on them could not be read. This did not mean that the church bell was not a sacred object, too holy for lay hands to touch. We read that in 1060, "The king . . . gave permission to hang the bell high up on the rafter, which heretofore was a great sin for the laity." Bells had been baptised since the time of Charlemagne, and were given names, but these were not always inscribed on them. Most divine names which appear before the twelfth century are couched in the formula, "In honour of . . ."

In the twelfth century a noticeable change in the content of the inscription emphasizes the magico-sacred aspect of the bell. The monumental is not forgotten, as one can see in seven contemporary names on a bell of 1113 at Anagni Cathedral near Rome; but names without magico-sacred power are generally discarded as being profane. In the later Middle Ages, should a donor's name appear, which is rare, it probably carries with it some symbol of piety. As long as bells were made in monasteries it was considered of no consequence to state the names of the monks who cast them; hence they were almost never given. After bell-founding passed into lay hands it was more difficult for the church to prevent the founder from putting on the bell some indication that it was his product. He therefore made a cryptographic mark which usually consisted of his initial intertwined with a sacred symbol such as the Cross. As he took on partners or as his work passed to his widow or his sons, the mark was varied to show these changes while retaining enough similarity to its former design to indicate the continuity of a craft shop. If his name appeared, as it did occasionally towards the end of the Middle Ages, it was with the prescription *ME FECIT* or *ME FUNDIT* (So-and-so made me, or So-and-so cast me) as if told by the bell.

As the inscription became more potent it often became more contracted. The words "In honour of" were frequently dropped, so that only the name of the divine aspect or person to whom the bell was dedicated appeared. These might be several, as *MATHEVS - MARCVS - LVCAS - IONNES* on the late twelfth-century handbell of St. Bernard of Dijon. The names of the four evangelists—not always in the same order—are found on many bells of different sizes in the Middle Ages, but with the spread of the handbell as altar furniture they became more distinctively an inscription for altar bells. (Because handbells are a more practical item for the collector than tower bells, many imitations of antique altar bells bearing these names are seen in art shops today.) The name of a revered person on a bell further enhanced the magico-sacred aspect of an already sacred object. The little "Thomas" bells which pilgrims bought and took away from the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury were expected to carry the salutary power of the saint all the more because they bore his name. By the end of the twelfth century so great was the divine potency attributed to a holy name that sometimes it was considered too sacred to be written out. On some bells, as on other consecrated vessels of the church, only the monogram was inscribed, as *M* for *MARIA*, or a tetragrammaton, four letters for the name of God. One example of this is *AGLA*, the first two letters of *ALPHA* alternating with the last two of *OMEGA*.

If the inscription was shortened because of the potency of the sacred word, it was also lengthened to emphasize the divine power in the sound of the bell. In 1063 Archbishop Sigwin of Cologne explained that, just as the *Dona nobis pacem* ("Grant us peace") was inserted into the Agnus Dei of the Mass to pray for general peace desired by all, so *O Rex Gloriam veni cum pace* ("O King of Glory, bring peace") has been inscribed on bells to petition for the Pax Dei. The Pax Dei, the Truce of God, had long been promulgated in various parts of Europe as a means of diminishing, if not ending, the many private wars which caused devastation and great suffering to innocent people; and now, for this, the sound of bells augmented human prayers. The sound of the bell thus becomes the voice of the people speaking to the deity. On the bell of 1258 which still rings every Thursday evening in the Minster of Freiburg, it is extended to, "O king of Glory, bring peace, my pious ringing sounds".

The sound of the bell, however, might be not only the voice of the people speaking to the deity. The same faith in its magico-sacred power could also conceive it as the voice of the deity speaking to the people. Early in the twelfth century, Honorius of Augsburg declared that bells are prophets, and in 1185 St. Martial of Limoges inscribed *VOX DOMINI*—The Voice of the Lord—on the great bell of his monastery. But the most widely used inscription of this type was the response to "O King of Glory, bring peace", in the form of *Christus Rex venit in pace* ("Christ the King comes in peace"). These two inscriptions, petition and response (never both on the same bell and seldom in the same region), spread over the surfaces of bells from Italy to Scandinavia and from Spain to Hungary as the most popular "legends" on Western church bells in the Middle Ages.

Close to them came prayers to the Blessed Virgin: "Mary, help thy people", "Hail Queen, have pity", "When I ring, O gracious Mary, bring happiness to everyone. Amen". Little by little the most popular prayers of the church were written on bells. The words of the priest, such as "Blessed be the name of the Lord", might be on liturgical handbells, but those of the people, such as "Hail Mary, full of Grace", were on tower bells where, with some of the most exquisite iconography done in bronze, they were closer to heaven for the angels to see. In fact the artist who created the pictures on the bell, like the craftsman who laid out the letters, knew that his work would almost never come before human gaze, but he worked all the better for that. He shared the common conviction that his work added to the sacred power of

the sound of the bell, what we might call the sheltering umbrella stretching as far as its note carried every time it was rung.

Along with prayers to the Virgin were prayers to the saints. The commonest invocation was simply, "Saint . . . , pray for us". Frequently it was addressed to the Blessed Virgin and the patron saint of the church. The name of the person to whom the invocation was addressed became transferred in the popular imagination to the name of the bell. This might be inscribed on the bell, as for example, *PAVLVS VOCOR* ("I am called Paul"). The bell of the Sorbonne, cast in 1358, which students hear every day in Paris, has inscribed on it, *EGO VOCOR MARIA* ("I am called Mary"). An English village bell of the early fifteenth century had inscribed on it, "May the voice of Augustine [the name of the bell] sound in the ear of God".

As the number of bells in towers increased, and as each was given a specialized use, different names came to be more or less reserved for a bell sounding a particular signal. Thus the angelus bell was in some regions given the name Mary, in others Gabriel. The passing bell, which was rung as a person was dying, and by its strokes told whether it was a man, woman, or child, was often called Michael. When people heard these bells they recognized them by their tone, and would think, "Mary speaks" or "Listen to Michael. Who is dying?" The number of strokes sometimes gave the age of the deceased, and, when they counted them, the villagers would know who had died.

The bell gave its name, and spoke to heaven or earth as its legend indicated. The next development of the inscription was to state what the bell did. Here the most amazing claims were made, for the role of ringing passed not only from the religious to the secular, as might be expected, but from sacerdocy to magic. It might not surprise us to find on a thirteenth-century bell, "O citizens, at my ringing come to arms!", for this was stating a common function of a bell at that time; but to find on a bell of a century earlier, "When Clinsa [the name of the bell] sounds, tempest, foe and fire go far away" is more surprising. Tempest, foe, and fire were the commonest enemies of the Middle Ages, and the bells, which could speak to God, were called upon to dispel not only these but all other disturbers of the peace.

Thus there grew up in the Middle Ages what were called the *virtues* of the bell. These were usually expressed in two or three words of Latin, and anywhere from two to twelve were inscribed on a bell according to its location, importance, and use. The best known are the three on a bell of 1486

at Schaffhausen, Switzerland, which inspired Schiller three hundred years later to write his immortal poem, "*Das Lied von der Glocke*", The Song of the Bell. The conciseness of the Latin gives a power which no translation can convey: VIVOS - VOCO - MORTVOS - PLANGO - FVLGVRA - FRANGO - ("I call the living; I wail for the dead; I break the lightning.")

It will be seen that, from our present-day viewpoint, the *virtues* vary from the highly religious to the deeply superstitious. In the Middle Ages there was no clear dividing line between the religious and the non-religious. It was therefore quite natural that the inscription which mentioned such virtues as, "I praise the true God", "I signal the sabbath", "I note the hours", "I arouse the lazy", "I call for assembly", "I weep at the burial" should also include "I torment demons", "I drive away the plague", "I break offensive things", and even, "I dispel the winds", "I drive away the cloud", "I break the lightning", "I dissipate hail", and "I extinguish fire".

These last are citations of belief in the power of the sound of the bell, a belief which was so strong that it did not die with the Middle Ages. The bell could therefore say with sublime authority, "With my living voice I drive away all harm", or "My voice is the terror of demons", or "Flee, all that is adverse". On a bell of 1251 at Aix-la-Chapelle the inscription declared, "I am terrible to brigands and murderers", while that of 1379 at Strasbourg said, "My voice informs of danger to the land". The bell at Aix-la-Chapelle bore a secular name, *Horrida*, as did a similar bell in Antwerp Cathedral. The name really meant *The Shaggy One*, and referred to its coarse sound. Modern bell-founders who point out their improved tuning by comparing the sound of their bells with these ancient ones do not realize that the mediaeval client got pretty much the bell tone he wanted. A sound which frightened away demons or sent every man between sixteen and seventy running out of his house to arms had to sound terrifying. A common name for such bells in northern France was *The Ban-Bell*, "ban" meaning a summons which could not be disobeyed. A bell of 1392 at Tournai had inscribed on it, "I am the Ban-Bell of this renowned community, for I am sounded for the terror of war. So was the one cast before me; and for this reason I tell you that Robin de Croisille (it's clear) made me, to arouse the assembly".

Such bells were not intended to be rung often, although it is an historical fact that most of them were sounded more frequently than had been hoped. There were other bells in the tower for other purposes. The one most regularly struck was the bell which sounded the hours. Its inscription was most likely religious in content, in which case the sounding of the bell could, with

all respect, be called a Christian example of machine-rendered prayers. The hour bell of Ulm City Hall radiated its sound from the words, "O merciful God Jesus have pity on all those who hear my sound who are Christians"; that at Hampton Court Palace from "Mary, Star of the Sea, save us from corruption". Before automation raised its ugly head, the hours were tapped by men swinging hammers, a frequent daily spectacle which was a sight for visitors and a distraction for town loafers. When outdoor tower clocks came into use in the fourteenth century, in some places the spectacle was maintained and made even more wonderful by having an automatic man swing the hammer. This is done in Venice, Orvieto, Dijon, and other places to this day. The Orvieto bell of 1351 tells the ringer to hit with force or his striking will be in vain. The legend on the Dijon bell, which was cast in 1382 but which broke in transport, begins "I am the bell which can never rest because I am hit hard 24 hours day and night."

A less pleasant type of inscription was placed on a few bells in the Middle Ages. One, on a bell presumably of the fifteenth century, at Verona, read: "I announce the execution of criminals, and draw to the attention of those who have need of this lesson, not to let themselves be drawn into the evil instinct of crime". A bell in Bern for the same purpose had a sort of growing inscription; the names of those executed were carved on the inside. Such a lugubrious record of names, however, was rare. The Middle Ages continued to invoke help and ask forgiveness on its bells. Only at their close does the historical reference begin to appear, as placed on a bell cast in 1473 in Strasbourg: "In 1473 the Emperor Frederick was here".

In 1493 a bell was erected at Basel to replace one cast forty or fifty years earlier. The inscription on this new bell reads more like a modern billing label than a declaration of authority or an assertion of miraculous power. It states, "Gift of Felix V at the time of the Council; broken by the imprudence of ringers, I was recast at the expense of the Fabric". The Council of Basel met from 1431 to 1449, during which Felix V was elected Pope. He then gave a bell to Basel and it, before long, broke. The legend blames the ringers for its breakage and memorializes the fact that what we might call the local office of works went into its own pocket to replace it. Whether the ringers broke the bell through their own carelessness, or whether they were ordered to ring it much louder and longer than they deemed prudent, we do not know. Formerly, demons broke bells. Now it is only ringers. The wording of the in-

scription makes us think that when the bell broke, the Middle Ages came to an end in Basel.

Of course the Middle Ages ended nowhere with the suddenness of a bell cracking. The mediaeval *virtues* continued to be written on bells for centuries. On a bell of 1705 in England we find, "I weep for the departed, and cause the return of fine weather; I guide the night wanderer; I am the foe of fire". But there is just this difference: the foregoing was supplied by a bellfounder, not by a bishop. Gradually the composition of inscriptions passed from the clergy to the laity, and the bellfounder, who usually had the widest knowledge of what was on bells in different towers, was called upon more and more to supply his clients with epigraphs. No longer modestly concealing his identity in a quasi-secret mark on his bells, he proclaimed it with a seal, the sign of a respected citizen. When family names came into common use he placed his surname after his Christian name, dropped the name of his native town, and instead stated the place where the bell was cast. He often styled himself *MAGISTER*, Master, and sometimes even added the names of subordinates who helped to make the bell. Three such names were inscribed on a sixteenth-century bell at the manory of Oudenarde, Belgium. It must be remembered that changes in the style of indicating the bellfounder took place gradually over the centuries. Eventually some founders, in order to show the antiquity of their house, reintroduced the mediaeval mark of their ancestors, as can be seen in the fifteenth-century mark of the de Suan family of Venice on a bell of 1706 in the Monastery of the Transfiguration, at Meteora in Greece. The modern style of title of many bell-founding firms, consisting of the names of one or more persons long dead, which are usually different from that of the present owner, is of relatively recent origin.

The inscription on the mediaeval bell spoke to the eye with an authority which was sublime, but after the passing of the Middle Ages inscriptions became less exalted, and sometimes even petty. Amanda—a bell which hung in the abbey tower of Saint-Amand-les-Eaux, France, from 1639 until recently, when it was placed in the Bell Museum of that city—was inscribed, "Dubois, Abbot of Saint-Amand, had me cast, to call the people to holy prayers. I cheerfully obey this command. Let whosoever would remove me from my office and my location perish, struck by lightning." The inscription on a bell cast seventeen years earlier in England is much more terse: *CURSED BE ALL CHURCH ROBBERS.*

While the religious inscriptions of the Middle Ages continued to be copied, many more were added, some quoted from old sources and others newly

composed. An example of these last is on a bell of 1591 at Cremona: "Mary has ascended into heaven / The angels are rejoicing / The Cremonese are jubilant". The number of saints increased, and because of the growing numbers of bells there were opportunities to use their names without decreasing the use of the previously most popular ones such as those of the Blessed Virgin, St. John the Baptist, and others more favoured in some countries than in others. With the Counter Reformation, the names of a host of newly created saints appear. By the eighteenth century we find the Sacred Heart, the Immaculate Conception, and various local manifestations of Our Lady. This last may have been placed on bells in the New World first. Our Lady of Guadeloupe is on a Mexico City cathedral bell of 1654.

The prayers, however, did not continue everywhere as before. First there was the slow, unceasing development of the Roman Catholic liturgy. Then suddenly, against this, the Reformation cut across all church writings, and those on bells had to be made to suit the confession they were to serve. The Lutheran reform brought forth statements such as, "God's word and Luther's teaching will never pass away" on German bells. The Calvinist is seen reflected in the statement on a bell of 1611 at Bern: "Formerly I served the vain adoration of saints, for this superstition was desired. But now, O Christ, the true faith, piety and religion command me to consecrate myself wholly to Thee".

The Anglican Reformation produced no such biting epithets, unless we except, "Lord by Thy might keep us from pope and hypocrite" on a bell of 1678 in Gloucestershire; and "hypocrite" in this case might have been meant to refer to Puritan. In the previous century when loyalties were shifting back and forth, "Praise ye the Lord" and "Honor the Lord" were found to be safe for both confessions. English adherents to Rome continued to put saints' names on tower bells because they knew they would be hidden from view, but they did not risk the more dangerous *ORA PRO NOBIS*. Anglican religious inscriptions, when not Biblical verse, become mottoes such as "Love God, praise God, fear God", and "Jesus be our speed, in God is my hope, draw near to God". John Locke, the father of the philosopher, composed Latin verses for English bells.

On the Continent, the sixteenth-century wars of religion gave reason for placing historical references on church bells. In 1526 a Roman Catholic community in Flanders placed on a bell an appeal not to the Almighty, but to the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, to save it from being overrun by Protestants. It ran, "O Imperial Blood, turn to us before the wolves dishonour

your sheep". In contrast to this is an inscription placed in 1545 by the town of Duren, west of Cologne, to memorialize, albeit in a veiled way, the pitiless slaughter of its citizens by the troops of Charles V. It reads as though a celestial being were speaking: "Famous Duren, under the patronage of St. Martin, delights me; for although it suffered great anguish while innocent, yet Almighty God who from his high seat rules the hosts above, will provide dwellings for its blameless citizens in the shining realms of heaven".

If during the Middle Ages the bell served God and the community, by the sixteenth century the sovereign had stepped in between. This is seen on a bell at Dreux, near Chartres (cast in 1561) in the legend: "I was cast to honour God and serve the king and the community of Dreux". After this, the mention of suffering caused by political events is more frank. A bell of 1599 at Dourdan, southwest of Paris, has inscribed on it: "At the coming of the Bourbons at the end of the Valois, great fires engulfed the French—the city sacked, this sacred place burned, many citizens held for ransom. O Dourdon, pray God that, as I rang the unfortunate hours for you then, so may I always sound for you the better ones". In the tower of the New Church in Delft, which for centuries has been famous for its carillon recitals, there is a bell older than the carillon, with an inscription which reads, "For liberty give praise only to God. My name is *Freedom*. I was cast in the year when they thought they had us in the bonds of slavery; but as it happened, they took on these from us". The year is 1607.

The religious and the secular become so intertwined that it is impossible to separate them as European man and his American counterpart continue to use the surface of the bell, especially the tower bell, hidden and enduring, as an object on which to record his anguish, triumphs, and convictions. It is therefore not surprising that in 1753 the religiously-minded Assembly of the Province of Pennsylvania chose, out of context (for it was to be only once in fifty years), a portion of a verse from one of the sterner parts of the Bible. Leviticus xxv, 10, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto the inhabitants thereof", as the inscription for the secular bell which was to adorn their State House. Within twenty years the English were putting on their bells "God save the King" (not the first reference on their bells to either the popularity or unpopularity of a sovereign); and within forty years the French combined the secular with the religious (now in reversed order) in "I am liberty. I announce law and religion".

The nineteenth century produced little that was startlingly different in religious inscriptions, or that was either inspiring or poetic in secular. An inscription on a nineteenth-century bell at Bischofswerda, east of Dresden, records a relatively insignificant act of Napoleon's army on its retreat from Moscow, yet the kind which local inhabitants do not wish to be forgotten: "In May 1813 Bischofswerde was taken by a part of the French forces in Bientz, plundered, and at 8:30 in the evening set fire to in several places. By 2 the following day the whole city except three small houses was reduced to smoke and ashes".

The newer political forces of the twentieth century sought to put a little poetry back into secular bell inscriptions. Italian Fascist sentiment is seen in the legend on a church bell replacing one destroyed in World War I at Lovran on the Istrian peninsula, and installed between World Wars I and II when that territory was part of Italy. It reads, "The fury of the enemy broke me, but I relive, made out of enemy bronze and singing daily with the clear voice of Italy". To this is added the Fascist year VI and 1928. German National Socialist sentiment found expression during World War II in an inscription placed on "souvenir" bells in the Netherlands as a token of justification for the sequestration of Dutch bells into the German metal pool. It read, "The bells join in fighting for a new Europe". When the Red Army was in Vienna at the end of World War II, the Soviet Occupation Authority permitted Russians to take enough metal from remaining Austrian bells sequestered for the war effort to make one new bell. This was to take the place of one which had been confiscated from the Russian Orthodox church there. It was cast locally, and two texts were considered—one religious, the other glorifying the Red Army. Both were discarded, and instead, a legend was selected which simply stated that the bell was given to the Russian Orthodox Church of Vienna in 1946 when the Red Army was in the city.

The next year a bell was installed at Niagara Falls, Canada, with an inscription which caused some consternation when first seen. It read, "To God's Glory and in grateful memory of our nations' Leaders, Winston Spencer Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt". The bell was at the border of the U.S.A., and had been paid for by quasi public funds equally from Canada and the United States. The inscription was composed during World War II when the Churchill-Roosevelt co-operation was at its height; but by the time the bell was hung, public emotion over this had passed off. The objection in Canada was that Churchill, great as he was, was neither a Canadian nor elected by Canadians, and in the United States that, while Roosevelt was an American,

he did not represent that large portion of his people who had opposed him politically.

Another postwar bell inscription, which this time was met with indifference rather than opposition, was the *Freedom Bell* (*Die Freiheitsglocke*) installed in Schoeneberg Town Hall in West Berlin in 1950. It was paid for by Americans, who also chose the inscription. Like the Niagara Falls bell it is solely for secular use, yet it contains in its inscription—as in that of the Niagara bell and in most of those since the Middle Ages that we have examined—a vestige of the religious, carried over from the mediaeval concept of the bell as a magico-sacred object. This is the mention of the name of God. The inscription on the *Freedom Bell* is from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address: "That this world, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom". German indifference was due, not to the source of the inscription, but to departure from the long tradition of composing bell inscriptions in Germany, and the ancient rise of the free cities there. The Germans felt that they should have been invited to turn to their own sources for an inscription on a bell whose ringing was constantly to remind them of freedom.

One more aspect of western European bell inscriptions since mediaeval times remains to be observed. This is the great cataract of personal names that is showered upon us. The humble donor of the early Middle Ages is lost in the later downpour of godfathers and godmothers; the abbot who orders the bell is showered under by a long roster of ecclesiastical or lay dignitaries who existed at the time the bell was cast. These people, many of them wrapped in titles which would make them appear immortal, form a dismal necrology up out of sight, like Mohammed's coffin, between heaven and earth. Most of them (and almost all of them forgotten) were put there between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, long after the time when Lucifer and the angels fought for dominion over the tops of the churches, so that they have only the birds for company. But occasionally an archeologist wanders up among them; and he makes a discovery—a name here, a title there, or an attitude towards a certain person recorded in another tower—and he brings down this fragment of knowledge and fits it with others, to help us to understand ourselves better.