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U M B E R T O E C O

THE NAME OF THE ROSE

Translated from the Italian by William Weaver
Including the Author's Postscript

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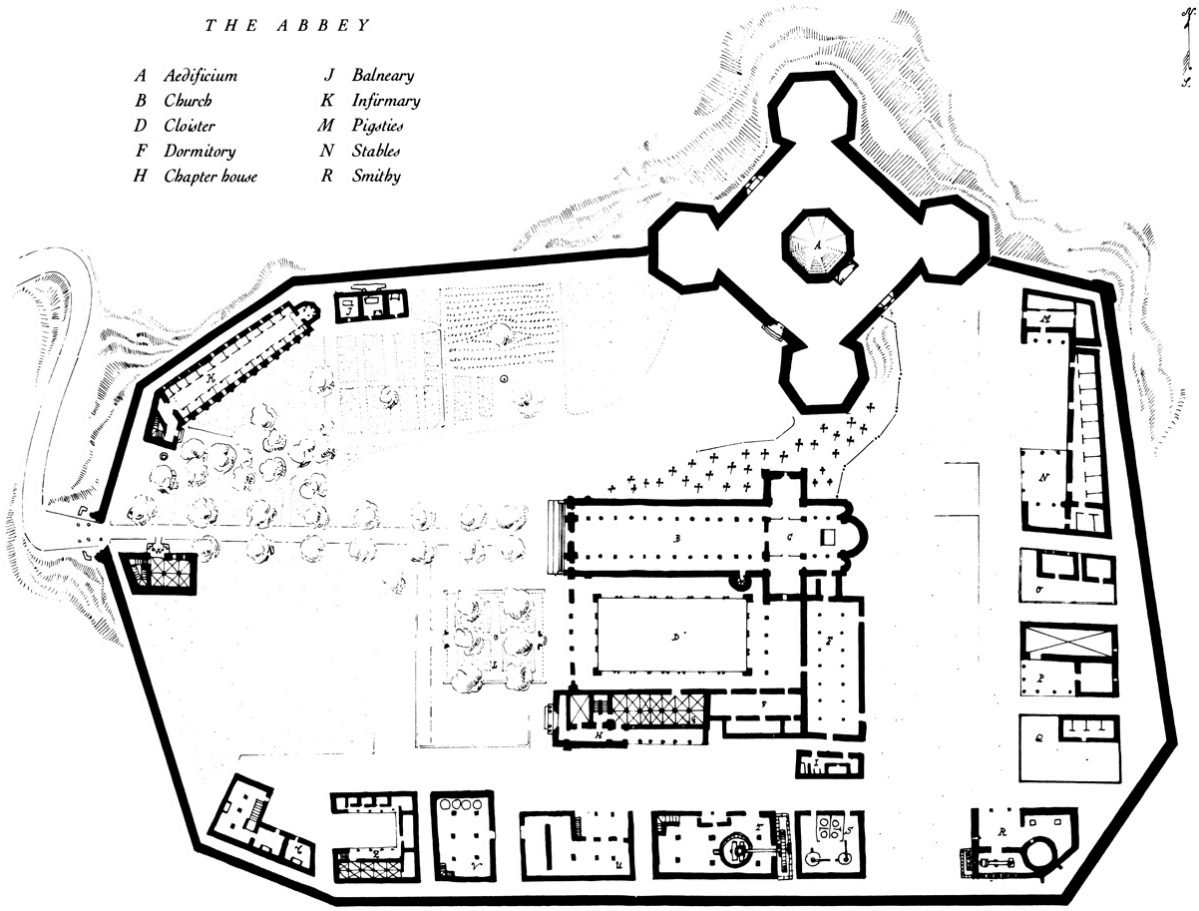
THE ABBEY

A Aedificium
B Church
D Cloister
F Dormitory
H Chapter house
J Balneary
K Infirmary
M Pigsties
N Stables
R Smithy



Naturally, a Manuscript

ON AUGUST 16, 1968, I WAS HANDED A BOOK WRITTEN BY A CERTAIN Abbé Vallet, *Le Manuscrit de Dom Adson de Melk, traduit en français d'après l'édition de Dom J. Mabillon* (Aux Presses de l'Abbaye de la Source, Paris, 1842). Supplemented by historical information that was actually quite scant, the book claimed to reproduce faithfully a fourteenth-century manuscript that, in its turn, had been found in the monastery of Melk by the great eighteenth-century man of learning, to whom we owe so much information about the history of the Benedictine order. The scholarly discovery (I mean mine, the third in chronological order) entertained me while I was in Prague, waiting for a dear friend. Six days later Soviet troops invaded that unhappy city. I managed, not without adventure, to reach the Austrian border at Linz, and from there I journeyed to Vienna, where I met my beloved, and together we sailed up the Danube.

In a state of intellectual excitement, I read with fascination the terrible story of Adso of Melk, and I allowed myself to be so absorbed by it that, almost in a single burst of energy, I completed a translation, using some of those large notebooks from the Papeterie Joseph Gibert in which it is so pleasant to write if you use a felt-tip pen. And as I was writing, we reached the vicinity of Melk, where, perched over a bend in the river, the handsome Stift stands to this day, after several restorations during the course of the centuries. As the reader must have guessed, in the monastery library I found no trace of Adso's manuscript.

Before we reached Salzburg, one tragic night in a little hotel on the shores of the Mondsee, my traveling-companionship was abruptly interrupted, and the person with whom I was traveling disappeared—taking Abbé Vallet's book, not out of spite, but because of the abrupt and untidy way in which our relationship ended. And so I was left with a number of manuscript notebooks in my hand, and a great emptiness in my heart.

A few months later, in Paris, I decided to get to the bottom of my research. Among the few pieces of information I had derived from the French book, I still had the reference to its source, exceptionally detailed and precise:

VETERA ANALECTA, *Sive* COLLECTIO VETERUM ALIQUOT OPERUM & Opusculorum omnis generis, Carminum, Epistolarum, Diplomatum, Epitaphiorum, & CUM ITINERE GERMANICO, Adnotationibus & aliquot disquisitionibus R.P.D. Joannis Mabillon, Presbiteri ac Monachi Ord. Sancti Benedicti e Congregatione S. Mauri.—NOVA EDITIO, Cui accessere MABILONII Vita & aliquot opuscula, scilicet Dissertatio de PANE EUCHARISTICO, AZYMO ET FERMENTATO, ad Eminentiss. Cardinalem BONA. Subjungitur opusculum ELDEFONSI Hispaniensis Episcopi de eodem argumento ET EUSEBII ROMANI ad THEOPHILUM Gallum epistola, DE CULTU SANCTORUM IGNOTORUM. Parisiis, apud Levesque, ad Pontem S. Michaelis, MDCCXXI, cum privilegio Regis.

I quickly found the *Vetera analecta* at the Bibliothèque Sainte Geneviève, but to my great surprise the edition I came upon differed from the description in two details: first, the publisher, who was given here as "Montalant, ad Ripam P.P. Augustinianorum (prope Pontem S. Michaelis)," and also the date, which was two years later. I needn't add that these analecta did not comprehend any manuscript of Adso or Adson of Melk; on the contrary, as anyone interested can check, they are a collection of brief or medium-length texts, whereas the story transcribed by Vallet ran to several hundred pages. At the same time, I consulted illustrious medievalists such as the dear and unforgettable Étienne Gilson, but it was evident that the only *Vetera analecta* were those I had seen at Sainte Geneviève. A quick trip to the Abbaye de la Source, in the vicinity of Passy, and a conversation with my friend Dom Arne Lahnestedt further convinced me that no Abbé Vallet had published books on the abbey's presses (for that matter, nonexistent). French scholars are notoriously careless about furnishing reliable bibliographical information, but this case went beyond all reasonable pessimism. I began to think I had encountered a forgery. By now the Vallet volume itself could not be recovered (or at least I didn't dare go and ask it back from the person who had taken it from me). I had only my notes left, and I was beginning to have doubts about them.

There are magic moments, involving great physical fatigue and intense motor excitement, that produce visions of people known in the past ("en me retraçant ces détails, j'en suis à me demander s'ils sont réels, ou bien si je les ai rêvés"). As I learned later from the delightful little book of the Abbé de Bucquoy, there are also visions of books as yet unwritten.

If something new had not occurred, I would still be wondering where the story of Adso of Melk originated; but then, in 1970, in Buenos Aires, as I was browsing among the shelves of a little antiquarian bookseller on Corrientes, not far from the more illustrious Patio del Tango of that great street, I came upon the Castilian version of a little work by Milo Temesvar, *On the Use of Mirrors in the Game of Chess.* It was an Italian translation of the original, which, now impossible to find, was in Georgian (Tbilisi, 1934); and here, to my great surprise, I read copious quotations from Adso's manuscript, though the source was neither Vallet nor Mabillon; it was Father Athanasius Kircher (but which work?). A scholar—whom I prefer not to name—later assured me that (and he quoted indexes from memory) the great Jesuit never mentioned Adso of Melk. But Temesvar's pages were before my eyes, and the episodes he cited were the same as those of the Vallet manuscript (the description of the labyrinth in particular left no room for doubt).

I concluded that Adso's memoirs appropriately share the nature of the events he narrates: shrouded in many, shadowy mysteries, beginning with the identity of the author and ending with the abbey's location, about which Adso is stubbornly, scrupulously silent. Conjecture allows us to designate a vague area between Pomposa and Conques, with reasonable likelihood that the community was somewhere along the central ridge of the Apennines, between Piedmont, Liguria, and France. As for the period in which the events described take place, we are at the end of November 1327; the date of the author's writing, on the other hand, is uncertain. Inasmuch as he describes himself as a novice in 1327 and says he is close to death as he writes his memoirs, we can calculate roughly that the manuscript was written in the last or next-to-last decade of the fourteenth century.

On sober reflection, I find few reasons for publishing my Italian version of the obscure, neo-Gothic French version of a seventeenth-century Latin edition of a work written in Latin by a German monk toward the end of the fourteenth century.

First of all, what style should I employ? The temptation to follow Italian models of the period had to be rejected as totally unjustified: not only does Adso write in Latin, but it is also clear from the whole development of the text that his culture (or the culture of the abbey, which clearly influences him) dates back even further; it is manifestly a summation, over several centuries, of learning and stylistic quirks that can be linked with the late-

medieval Latin tradition. Adso thinks and writes like a monk who has remained impervious to the revolution of the vernacular, still bound to the pages housed in the library he tells about, educated on patristic-scholastic texts; and his story (apart from the fourteenth-century references and events, which Adso reports with countless perplexities and always by hearsay) could have been written, as far as the language and the learned quotations go, in the twelfth or thirteenth century.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that, in translating Adso's Latin into his own neo-Gothic French, Vallet took some liberties, and not only stylistic liberties. For example, the characters speak sometimes of the properties of herbs, clearly referring to the book of secrets attributed to Albertus Magnus, which underwent countless revisions over the centuries. It is certain that Adso knew the work, but the fact remains that passages he quotes from it echo too literally both formulas of Paracelsus and obvious interpolations from an edition of Albertus unquestionably dating from the Tudor period.[1] However, I discovered later that during the time when Vallet was transcribing (?) the manuscript of Adso, eighteenth-century editions of the *Grand* and the *Petit Albert,*[2] now irreparably corrupt, were circulating in Paris. In any case, how could I be sure that the text known to Adso or the monks whose discussions he recorded did not also contain, among glosses, scholia, and various appendices, annotations that would go on to enrich subsequent scholarship?

Finally, was I to retain in Latin the passages that Abbé Vallet himself did not feel it opportune to translate, perhaps to preserve the ambience of the period? There were no particular reasons to do so, except a perhaps misplaced sense of fidelity to my source. . . . I have eliminated excesses, but I have retained a certain amount. And I fear that I have imitated those bad novelists who, introducing a French character, make him exclaim "Parbleu!" and "La femme, ah! la femme!"

In short, I am full of doubts. I really don't know why I have decided to pluck up my courage and present, as if it were authentic, the manuscript of Adso of Melk. Let us say it is an act of love. Or, if you like, a way of ridding myself of numerous, persistent obsessions.

I transcribe my text with no concern for timeliness. In the years when I discovered the Abbé Vallet volume, there was a widespread conviction that one should write only out of a commitment to the present, in order to change the world. Now, after ten years or more, the man of letters (restored

to his loftiest dignity) can happily write out of pure love of writing. And so I now feel free to tell, for sheer narrative pleasure, the story of Adso of Melk, and I am comforted and consoled in finding it immeasurably remote in time (now that the waking of reason has dispelled all the monsters that its sleep had generated), gloriously lacking in any relevance for our day, atemporally alien to our hopes and our certainties.

For it is a tale of books, not of everyday worries, and reading it can lead us to recite, with à Kempis, the great imitator: "In omnibus requiem quaesivi, et nusquam inveni nisi in angulo cum libro."

January 5, 1980

Note

ADSO'S MANUSCRIPT IS DIVIDED INTO SEVEN DAYS, AND EACH DAY into periods corresponding to the liturgical hours. The subtitles, in the third person, were probably added by Vallet. But since they are helpful in orienting the reader, and since this usage is also not unknown to much of the vernacular literature of the period, I did not feel it necessary to eliminate them.

Adso's references to the canonical hours caused me some puzzlement, because their meaning varied according to the place and the season; moreover, it is entirely probable that in the fourteenth century the instructions given by Saint Benedict in the Rule were not observed with absolute precision.

Nevertheless, as a guide to the reader, the following schedule is, I believe, credible. It is partly deduced from the text and partly based on a comparison of the original Rule with the description of monastic life given by Édouard Schneider in *Les Heures bénédictines* (Paris, Grasset, 1925).

Matins: (which Adso sometimes refers to by the older expression "Vigiliae") Between 2:30 and 3:00 in the morning.
Lauds: (which in the most ancient tradition were called "Matutini" or "Matins") Between 5:00 and 6:00 in the morning, in order to end at dawn.
Prime: Around 7:30, shortly before daybreak.
Terce: Around 9:00.
Sext: Noon (in a monastery where the monks did not work in the fields, it was also the hour of the midday meal in winter).
Nones: Between 2:00 and 3:00 in the afternoon.
Vespers: Around 4:30, at sunset (the Rule prescribes eating supper before dark).
Compline: Around 6:00 (before 7:00, the monks go to bed).

The calculation is based on the fact that in northern Italy at the end of November, the sun rises around 7:30 A.M. and sets around 4:40 P.M.

Prologue

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This was beginning with God and the duty of every faithful monk would be to repeat every day with chanting humility the one never-changing event whose incontrovertible truth can be asserted. But we see now through a glass darkly, and the truth, before it is revealed to all, face to face, we see in fragments (alas, how illegible) in the error of the world, so we must spell out its faithful signals even when they seem obscure to us and as if amalgamated with a will wholly bent on evil.

Having reached the end of my poor sinner's life, my hair now white, I grow old as the world does, waiting to be lost in the bottomless pit of silent and deserted divinity, sharing in the light of angelic intelligences; confined now with my heavy, ailing body in this cell in the dear monastery of Melk, I prepare to leave on this parchment my testimony as to the wondrous and terrible events that I happened to observe in my youth, now repeating all that I saw and heard, without venturing to seek a design, as if to leave to those who will come after (if the Antichrist has not come first) signs of signs, so that the prayer of deciphering may be exercised on them.

May the Lord grant me the grace to be the transparent witness of the occurrences that took place in the abbey whose name it is only right and pious now to omit, toward the end of the year of our Lord 1327, when the Emperor Louis came down into Italy to restore the dignity of the Holy Roman Empire, in keeping with the designs of the Almighty and to the confusion of the wicked usurper, simoniac, and heresiarch who in Avignon brought shame on the holy name of the apostle (I refer to the sinful soul of Jacques of Cahors, whom the impious revered as John XXII).

Perhaps, to make more comprehensible the events in which I found myself involved, I should recall what was happening in those last years of the century, as I understood it then, living through it, and as I remember it now, complemented by other stories I heard afterward—if my memory still proves capable of connecting the threads of happenings so many and confused.

In the early years of that century Pope Clement V had moved the apostolic seat to Avignon, leaving Rome prey to the ambitions of the local

overlords: and gradually the holy city of Christianity had been transformed into a circus, or into a brothel, riven by the struggles among its leaders; though called a republic, it was not one, and it was assailed by armed bands, subjected to violence and looting. Ecclesiastics, eluding secular jurisdiction, commanded groups of malefactors and robbed, sword in hand, transgressing and organizing evil commerce. How was it possible to prevent the Caput Mundi from becoming again, and rightly, the goal of the man who wanted to assume the crown of the Holy Roman Empire and restore the dignity of that temporal dominion that had belonged to the Caesars?

Thus in 1314 five German princes in Frankfurt elected Louis the Bavarian supreme ruler of the empire. But that same day, on the opposite shore of the Main, the Count Palatine of the Rhine and the Archbishop of Cologne elected Frederick of Austria to the same high rank. Two emperors for a single throne and a single pope for two: a situation that, truly, fomented great disorder. . . .

Two years later, in Avignon, the new Pope was elected, Jacques of Cahors, an old man of seventy-two who took, as I have said, the name of John XXII, and heaven grant that no pontiff take again a name now so distasteful to the righteous. A Frenchman, devoted to the King of France (the men of that corrupt land are always inclined to foster the interests of their own people, and are unable to look upon the whole world as their spiritual home), he had supported Philip the Fair against the Knights Templars, whom the King accused (I believe unjustly) of the most shameful crimes so that he could seize their possessions with the complicity of that renegade ecclesiastic.

In 1322 Louis the Bavarian defeated his rival Frederick. Fearing a single emperor even more than he had feared two, John excommunicated the victor, who in return denounced the Pope as a heretic. I must also recall how, that very year, the chapter of the Franciscans was convened in Perugia, and the minister general, Michael of Cesena, accepting the entreaties of the Spirituals (of whom I will have occasion to speak), proclaimed as a matter of faith and doctrine the poverty of Christ, who, if he owned something with his apostles, possessed it only as usus facti. A worthy resolution, meant to safeguard the virtue and purity of the order, it highly displeased the Pope, who perhaps discerned in it a principle that would jeopardize the very claims that he, as head of the church, had made, denying the empire the right to elect bishops, and asserting on the contrary that the papal throne

had the right to invest the emperor. Moved by these or other reasons, John condemned the Franciscan propositions in 1323 with the decretal *Cum inter nonnullos.*

It was at this point, I imagine, that Louis saw the Franciscans, now the Pope's enemies, as his potential allies. By affirming the poverty of Christ, they were somehow strengthening the ideas of the imperial theologians, namely Marsilius of Padua and John of Jandun. And finally, not many months before the events I am narrating, Louis came to an agreement with the defeated Frederick, descended into Italy, and was crowned in Milan.

This was the situation when I—a young Benedictine novice in the monastery of Melk—was removed from the peace of the cloister by my father, fighting in Louis's train, not least among his barons. He thought it wise to take me with him so that I might know the wonders of Italy and be present when the Emperor was crowned in Rome. But the siege of Pisa then absorbed him in military concerns. Left to myself, I roamed among the cities of Tuscany, partly out of idleness and partly out of a desire to learn. But this undisciplined freedom, my parents thought, was not suitable for an adolescent devoted to a contemplative life. And on the advice of Marsilius, who had taken a liking to me, they decided to place me under the direction of a learned Franciscan, Brother William of Baskerville, about to undertake a mission that would lead him to famous cities and ancient abbeys. Thus I became William's scribe and disciple at the same time, nor did I ever regret it, because with him I was witness to events worthy of being handed down, as I am now doing, to those who will come after us.

I did not then know what Brother William was seeking, and to tell the truth, I still do not know today, and I presume he himself did not know, moved as he was solely by the desire for truth, and by the suspicion—which I could see he always harbored—that the truth was not what was appearing to him at that moment. And perhaps during those years he had been distracted from his beloved studies by secular duties. The mission with which William had been charged remained unknown to me while we were on our journey, or, rather, he never spoke to me about it. It was only by overhearing bits of his conversations with the abbots of the monasteries where we stopped along the way that I formed some idea of the nature of this assignment. But I did not understand it fully until we reached our destination.

Our destination was to the north, but our journey did not follow a straight line, and we rested at various abbeys. Thus it happened that we turned westward (though we ought to have been going east), almost following the line of mountains that from Pisa leads in the direction of the pilgrim's way to Santiago, pausing in a place which, due to what occurred there, it is better that I do not name, but whose lords were liege to the empire, and where the abbots of our order, all in agreement, opposed the heretical, corrupt Pope. Our journey lasted two weeks, amid various vicissitudes, and during that time I had the opportunity to know (never enough, I remain convinced) my new master.

In the pages to follow I shall not indulge in descriptions of persons—except when a facial expression, or a gesture, appears as a sign of a mute but eloquent language—because, as Boethius says, nothing is more fleeting than external form, which withers and alters like the flowers of the field at the appearance of autumn; and what would be the point of saying today that the abbot Abo had a stern eye and pale cheeks, when by now he and those around him are dust and their bodies have the mortal grayness of dust (only their souls, God grant, shining with a light that will never be extinguished)? But I would like to describe William at least once, because his singular features struck me, and it is characteristic of the young to become bound to an older and wiser man not only by the spell of his words and the sharpness of his mind, but also by the superficial form of his body, which proves very dear, like the figure of a father, whose gestures we study and whose frowns, whose smile we observe—without a shadow of lust to pollute this form (perhaps the only that is truly pure) of corporal love.

In the past men were handsome and great (now they are children and dwarfs), but this is merely one of the many facts that demonstrate the disaster of an aging world. The young no longer want to study anything, learning is in decline, the whole world walks on its head, blind men lead others equally blind and cause them to plunge into the abyss, birds leave the nest before they can fly, the jackass plays the lyre, oxen dance. Mary no longer loves the contemplative life and Martha no longer loves the active life, Leah is sterile, Rachel has a carnal eye, Cato visits brothels. Everything is diverted from its proper course. In those days, thank God, I acquired from my master the desire to learn and a sense of the straight way, which remains even when the path is tortuous.

Brother William was larger in stature than a normal man and so thin that he seemed still taller. His eyes were sharp and penetrating; his thin and slightly beaky nose gave his countenance the expression of a man on the lookout, even if his long freckle-covered face—such as I often saw among those born between Hibernia and Northumbria—could occasionally express hesitation and puzzlement. In time I realized that what seemed a lack of confidence was only curiosity, but at the beginning I knew little of this virtue, which I thought, rather, a passion of the covetous spirit. I believed instead that the rational spirit should not indulge such passion, but feed only on the Truth, which (I thought) one knows from the outset.

William might perhaps have seen fifty springs and was therefore already very old, but his tireless body moved with an agility I myself often lacked. His energy seemed inexhaustible when a burst of activity overwhelmed him. But from time to time, as if his vital spirit had something of the crayfish, he moved backward in moments of inertia, and I watched him lie for hours on my pallet in my cell, uttering barely a few monosyllables, without contracting a single muscle of his face. On those occasions a vacant, absent expression appeared in his eyes, and I would have suspected he was in the power of some vegetal substance capable of producing visions if the obvious temperance of his life had not led me to reject this thought. I will not deny, however, that in the course of the journey, he sometimes stopped at the edge of a meadow, at the entrance to a forest, to gather some herb (always the same one, I believe): and he would then chew it with an absorbed look. He kept some of it with him, and ate it in the moments of greatest tension (and we had a number of them at the abbey!). Once, when I asked him what it was, he said laughing that a good Christian can sometimes learn also from the infidels, and when I asked him to let me taste it, he replied that herbs that are good for an old Franciscan are not good for a young Benedictine.

During our time together we did not have occasion to lead a very regular life: even at the abbey we remained up at night and collapsed wearily during the day, nor did we take part regularly in the holy offices. On our journey, however, he seldom stayed awake after compline, and his habits were frugal. Sometimes, also at the abbey, he would spend the whole day walking in the vegetable garden, examining the plants as if they were chrysoprases or emeralds; and I saw him roaming about the treasure crypt, looking at a coffer studded with emeralds and chrysoprases as if it were a

clump of thorn apple. At other times he would pass an entire day in the great hall of the library, leafing through manuscripts as if seeking nothing but his own enjoyment (while, around us, the corpses of monks, horribly murdered, were multiplying). One day I found him strolling in the flower garden without any apparent aim, as if he did not have to account to God for his works. In my order they had taught me quite a different way of expending my time, and I said so to him. And he answered that the beauty of the cosmos derives not only from unity in variety, but also from variety in unity. This seemed to me an answer dictated by crude common sense, but I learned subsequently that the men of his land often define things in ways in which it seems that the enlightening power of reason has scant function.

During our period at the abbey his hands were always covered with the dust of books, the gold of still-fresh illumination, or with yellowish substances he touched in Severinus's infirmary. He seemed unable to think save with his hands, an attribute I considered then worthier of a mechanic: but even when his hands touched pages worn by time and friable as unleavened bread, he possessed, it seemed to me, an extraordinarily delicate touch, the same that he used in handling his machines. I will tell, in fact, how this strange man carried with him, in his bag, instruments that I had never seen before then, which he called his "wondrous machines." Machines, he said, are an effect of art, which is nature's ape, and they reproduce not its forms but the operation itself. He explained to me thus the wonders of the clock, the astrolabe, and the magnet. But at the beginning I feared it was witchcraft, and I pretended to sleep on certain clear nights when he (with a strange triangle in his hand) stood watching the stars. The Franciscans I had known in Italy and in my own land were simple men, often illiterate, and I expressed to him my amazement at his learning. But he said to me, smiling, that the Franciscans of his island were cast in another mold: "Roger Bacon, whom I venerate as my master, teaches that the divine plan will one day encompass the science of machines, which is natural and healthy magic. And one day it will be possible, by exploiting the power of nature, to create instruments of navigation by which ships will proceed unico homine regente, and far more rapid than those propelled by sails or oars; and there will be wagons that move without animals to pull them, and flying vehicles guided by a man who will flap their wings as if they were those of a bird. And tiny contraptions that lift infinite weights, and small boats that float on the bottom of the sea."

When I asked him where these machines were, he told me that they had already been made in ancient times, and some even in our own time: "Except the flying instrument, which I haven't seen, but I know of a learned man who has conceived it. And bridges can be built across rivers without columns or other support, and other unheard-of machines are possible. But you must not worry if they do not yet exist, because that does not mean they will not exist later. And I say to you that God wishes them to be, and certainly they already are in His mind, even if my friend from Occam denies that ideas exist in such a way; and I do not say this because we can determine the divine nature but precisely because we cannot set any limit to it." Nor was this the only contradictory proposition I heard him utter; but even now, when I am old and wiser than I was then, I have not yet understood how he could have such faith in his friend from Occam and at the same time swear by the words of Bacon. It is also true that in those dark times a wise man had to believe things that were in contradiction among themselves.

There, of Brother William I have perhaps said things without sense, as if to collect from the very beginning the disjointed impressions of him that I had then. Who he was, and what he was doing, my good reader, you will perhaps deduce better from what he did in the days we spent in the abbey. Nor do I promise you an accomplished design, but, rather, a tale of events (those, yes) wondrous and awful.

And so, after I had come to know my master day by day, and spent the many hours of our journey in long conversations which I will recount, if appropriate, we reached the foot of the hill on which the abbey stood. And it is time for my story to approach it, as we did then, and may my hand remain steady as I prepare to tell what happened.

FIRST DAY

Prime

In which the foot of the abbey is reached, and William demonstrates his great acumen.

It was a beautiful morning at the end of November. During the night it had snowed, but only a little, and the earth was covered with a cool blanket no more than three fingers high. In the darkness, immediately after lauds, we heard Mass in a village in the valley. Then, as the sun first appeared, we set off toward the mountains.

While we toiled up the steep path that wound around the mountain, I saw the abbey. I was amazed, not by the walls that girded it on every side, similar to others to be seen in all the Christian world, but by the bulk of what I later learned was the Aedificium. This was an octagonal construction that from a distance seemed a tetragon (a perfect form, which expresses the sturdiness and impregnability of the City of God), whose southern sides stood on the plateau of the abbey, while the northern ones seemed to grow from the steep side of the mountain, a sheer drop, to which they were bound. I might say that from below, at certain points, the cliff seemed to extend, reaching up toward the heavens, with the rock's same colors and material, which at a certain point became keep and tower (work of giants who had great familiarity with earth and sky). Three rows of windows proclaimed the triune rhythm of its elevation, so that what was physically squared on the earth was spiritually triangular in the sky. As we came closer, we realized that the quadrangular form included, at each of its corners, a heptagonal tower, five sides of which were visible on the outside —four of the eight sides, then, of the greater octagon producing four minor heptagons, which from the outside appeared as pentagons. And thus anyone can see the admirable concord of so many holy numbers, each revealing a subtle spiritual significance. Eight, the number of perfection for every tetragon; four, the number of the Gospels; five, the number of the zones of the world; seven, the number of the gifts of the Holy Ghost. In its bulk and in its form, the Aedificium resembled Castel Ursino or Castel del Monte, which I was to see later in the south of the Italian peninsula, but its inaccessible position made it more awesome than those, and capable of

inspiring fear in the traveler who approached it gradually. And it was fortunate that, since it was a very clear winter morning, I did not first see the building as it appears on stormy days.

I will not say, in any case, that it prompted feelings of jollity. I felt fear, and a subtle uneasiness. God knows these were not phantoms of my immature spirit, and I was rightly interpreting indubitable omens inscribed in the stone the day that the giants began their work, and before the deluded determination of the monks dared consecrate the building to the preservation of the divine word.

As our little mules strove up the last curve of the mountain, where the main path divided into three, producing two side paths, my master stopped for a while, to look around: at the sides of the road, at the road itself, and above the road, where, for a brief stretch, a series of evergreen pines formed a natural roof, white with snow.

"A rich abbey," he said. "The abbot likes a great display on public occasions."

Accustomed as I was to hear him make the most unusual declarations, I did not question him. This was also because, after another bit of road, we heard some noises, and at the next turn an agitated band of monks and servants appeared. One of them, seeing us, came toward us with great cordiality. "Welcome, sir," he said, "and do not be surprised if I can guess who you are, because we have been advised of your visit. I am Remigio of Varagine, the cellarer of the monastery. And if you, as I believe, are Brother William of Baskerville, the abbot must be informed. You"—he commanded one of his party—"go up and tell them that our visitor is about to come inside the walls."

"I thank you, Brother Cellarer," my master replied politely, "and I appreciate your courtesy all the more since, in order to greet me, you have interrupted your search. But don't worry. The horse came this way and took the path to the right. He will not get far, because he will have to stop when he reaches the dungheap. He is too intelligent to plunge down that precipitous slope. . . ."

"When did you see him?" the cellarer asked.

"We haven't seen him at all, have we, Adso?" William said, turning toward me with an amused look. "But if you are hunting for Brunellus, the horse can only be where I have said."

The cellarer hesitated. He looked at William, then at the path, and finally asked, “Brunellus? How did you know?”

“Come, come,” William said, “it is obvious you are hunting for Brunellus, the abbot’s favorite horse, fifteen hands, the fastest in your stables, with a dark coat, a full tail, small round hoofs, but a very steady gait; small head, sharp ears, big eyes. He went to the right, as I said, but you should hurry, in any case.”

The cellarer hesitated for a moment longer, then gestured to his men and rushed off along the path to the right, while our mules resumed their climb. My curiosity aroused, I was about to question William, but he motioned me to wait: in fact, a few minutes later we heard cries of rejoicing, and at the turn of the path, monks and servants reappeared, leading the horse by its halter. They passed by us, all glancing at us with some amazement, then preceded us toward the abbey. I believe William also slowed the pace of his mount to give them time to tell what had happened. I had already realized that my master, in every respect a man of the highest virtue, succumbed to the vice of vanity when it was a matter of demonstrating his acumen; and having learned to appreciate his gifts as a subtle diplomatist, I understood that he wanted to reach his destination preceded by a firm reputation as a man of knowledge.

“And now tell me”—in the end I could not restrain myself—“how did you manage to know?”

“My good Adso,” my master said, “during our whole journey I have been teaching you to recognize the evidence through which the world speaks to us like a great book. Alanus de Insulis said that

omnis mundi creatura
quasi liber et pictura
nobis est in speculum

and he was thinking of the endless array of symbols with which God, through His creatures, speaks to us of the eternal life. But the universe is even more talkative than Alanus thought, and it speaks not only of the ultimate things (which it does always in an obscure fashion) but also of closer things, and then it speaks quite clearly. I am almost embarrassed to repeat to you what you should know. At the crossroads, on the still-fresh snow, a horse’s hoofprints stood out very neatly, heading for the path to our

left. Neatly spaced, those marks said that the hoof was small and round, and the gallop quite regular—and so I deduced the nature of the horse, and the fact that it was not running wildly like a crazed animal. At the point where the pines formed a natural roof, some twigs had been freshly broken off at a height of five feet. One of the blackberry bushes where the animal must have turned to take the path to his right, proudly switching his handsome tail, still held some long black horsehairs in its brambles. . . . You will not say, finally, that you do not know that path leads to the dungheap, because as we passed the lower curve we saw the spill of waste down the sheer cliff below the great east tower, staining the snow; and from the situation of the crossroads, the path could only lead in that direction."

"Yes," I said, "but what about the small head, the sharp ears, the big eyes . . . ?"

"I am not sure he has those features, but no doubt the monks firmly believe he does. As Isidore of Seville said, the beauty of a horse requires 'that the head be small, siccum prope pelle ossibus adhaerente, short and pointed ears, big eyes, flaring nostrils, erect neck, thick mane and tail, round and solid hoofs.' If the horse whose passing I inferred had not really been the finest of the stables, stableboys would have been out chasing him, but instead, the cellarer in person had undertaken the search. And a monk who considers a horse excellent, whatever his natural forms, can only see him as the auctoritates have described him, especially if"—and here he smiled slyly in my direction—"the describer is a learned Benedictine."

"All right," I said, "but why Brunellus?"

"May the Holy Ghost sharpen your mind, son!" my master exclaimed. "What other name could he possibly have? Why, even the great Buridan, who is about to become rector in Paris, when he wants to use a horse in one of his logical examples, always calls it Brunellus."

This was my master's way. He not only knew how to read the great book of nature, but also knew the way monks read the books of Scripture, and how they thought through them. A gift that, as we shall see, was to prove useful to him in the days to come. His explanation, moreover, seemed to me at that point so obvious that my humiliation at not having discovered it by myself was surpassed only by my pride at now being a sharer in it, and I was almost congratulating myself on my insight. Such is the power of the truth that, like good, it is its own propagator. And praised be the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ for this splendid revelation I was granted.

But resume your course, O my story, for this aging monk is lingering too long over marginalia. Tell, rather, how we arrived at the great gate of the abbey, and on the threshold stood the abbot, beside whom two novices held a golden basin filled with water. When we had dismounted, he washed William's hands, then embraced him, kissing him on the mouth and giving him a holy welcome.

"Thank you, Abo," William said. "It is a great joy for me to set foot in Your Magnificence's monastery, whose fame has traveled beyond these mountains. I come as a pilgrim in the name of our Lord, and as such you have honored me. But I come also in the name of our lord on this earth, as the letter I now give you will tell you, and in his name also I thank you for your welcome."

The abbot accepted the letter with the imperial seals and replied that William's arrival had in any event been preceded by other missives from his brothers (it is difficult, I said to myself with a certain pride, to take a Benedictine abbot by surprise); then he asked the cellarer to take us to our lodgings, as the grooms led our mules away. The abbot was looking forward to visiting us later, when we were refreshed, and we entered the great courtyard where the abbey buildings extended all about the gentle plain that blunted in a soft bowl—or alp—the peak of the mountain.

I shall have occasion to discuss the layout of the abbey more than once, and in greater detail. After the gate (which was the only opening in the outer walls) a tree-lined avenue led to the abbatial church. To the left of the avenue there stretched a vast area of vegetable gardens and, as I later learned, the botanical garden, around the two buildings of the balneary and the infirmary and herbarium, following the curve of the walls. Behind, to the left of the church, rose the Aedificium, separated from the church by a yard scattered with graves. The north door of the church faced the south tower of the Aedificium, which offered, frontally, its west tower to the arriving visitor's eyes; then, to the left, the building joined the walls and seemed to plunge, from its towers, toward the abyss, over which the north tower, seen obliquely, projected. To the right of the church there were some buildings, sheltering in its lee, and others around the cloister: the dormitory, no doubt, the abbot's house, and the pilgrims' hospice, where we were heading. We reached it after crossing a handsome flower garden. On the right side, beyond a broad lawn, along the south walls and continuing

eastward behind the church, a series of peasants' quarters, stables, mills, oil presses, granaries, and cellars, and what seemed to me to be the novices' house. The regular terrain, only slightly rolling, had allowed the ancient builders of that holy place to respect the rules of orientation, better than Honorius Augustoduniensis or Guillaume Durant could have demanded. From the position of the sun at that hour of the day, I noticed that the main church door opened perfectly westward, so choir and altar were facing east; and the good morning sun, in rising, could directly wake the monks in the dormitory and the animals in the stables. I never saw an abbey more beautiful or better oriented, even though subsequently I saw St. Gall, and Cluny, and Fontenay, and others still, perhaps larger but less well proportioned. Unlike the others, this one was remarkable for the exceptional size of the Aedificium. I did not possess the experience of a master builder, but I immediately realized it was much older than the buildings surrounding it. Perhaps it had originated for some other purposes, and the abbey's compound had been laid out around it at a later time, but in such a way that the orientation of the huge building should conform with that of the church, and the church's with its. For architecture, among all the arts, is the one that most boldly tries to reproduce in its rhythm the order of the universe, which the ancients called "kosmos," that is to say ornate, since it is like a great animal on whom there shine the perfection and the proportion of all its members. And praised be our Creator who, as the Scriptures say, has decreed all things in number, weight, and measure.