

**THE PILGRIMAGE OF
ETHERIA. TRANSLATIONS OF
CHRISTIAN LITERATURE.
SERIES III. LITURGICAL TEXTS**

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The pilgrimage of Etheria. Translations of christian literature. Series III. Liturgical texts by M. L. McClure & C. L. Feltoe

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M. L. MCCLURE & C. L. FELTOE

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TRANSLATIONS OF CHRISTIAN
LITERATURE, SERIES III
LITURGICAL TEXTS

THE
PILGRIMAGE OF
ETHERIA

By M. L. McCLURE
and C. L. FELTOE, D.D.

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INTRODUCTION

1. THE NARRATIVE AND ITS AUTHORSHIP

THIS book was discovered by Signor Gamurrini in a MS. of the eleventh century at Arezzo, and he published it first in 1887 and again, in a correcter edition, in 1888. Three years later an English translation with text and notes, by Dr. J. H. Bernard, and an appendix on the topography by Sir C. W. Wilson, appeared under the auspices of the Palestine Pilgrims Text Society. In 1895 Dom Cabrol issued a treatise of some importance entitled *Les Églises de Jérusalem*. Then came M. Paul Geyer's edition in vol. xxxix. of the Vienna *Corpus Script. Eccl. Lat.*, who still further emended and elucidated the text. Up till that time Signor Gamurrini's conjecture that the authoress was Silvia of Aquitaine, sister of the Emperor Theodosius's minister Rufinus had been considered plausible, but had not been either corroborated or disproved.¹ But in 1903 Dom Férotin (*Revue des questions historiques*, vol. lxxiv.) sought to identify her with the virgin named Etheria, mentioned

¹ Another conjecture was put forward by Köhler (*Bibliothèque des chartes*, xlv. p. 141 ff.) in 1884 that she was Galla Placidia, daughter of Theodosius, who is said to have visited Jerusalem from Constantinople about 423; but this pilgrimage rests on an untrustworthy tradition, and the conjecture has never met with much acceptance from others.

by Valerius in a letter to the religious brethren of the Vierzo in N.-W. Spain, and his arguments have met with very general acceptance. In 1909, however, a detailed and determined attack upon his views was made by Karl Meister in the *Rheinisches Museum*, so far as the date and nationality of the pilgrim are concerned; but his arguments were in Monseigneur Duchesne's opinion¹ successfully met and answered by the Abbé Deconinck (*Revue Biblique*, 1910) and others. No one probably now adheres to the theory that Silvia was the pilgrim. Meister himself agrees with the other scholars already mentioned who have identified her with the abbess named Etheria,² to whom Valerius refers; he only disputes her date and nationality.

Dom Férotin's theory, amounting almost to a certainty, was that she was a fellow-countrywoman of Valerius, who had visited the East towards the end of the fourth century, *i. e.* in the reign of Theodosius († 395). Valerius himself lived in the second half of the seventh century, and is chiefly known as the biographer of his contemporary S. Fructuosus, bishop of Braga. He was abbat of the *monasterium Rufianense*, near Astorga, in the mountainous district of Gallaecia, now called the Vierzo. In the letter mentioned above he speaks of Etheria as *extremo occidui maris Oceani littore exorta* (sprung from the farthest shore of the western sea, the Ocean), chap. iv, while a doubtful phrase, where the true

¹ See his *Christian Worship*, p. 541: S.P.C.K.

² It may, however, be mentioned that *Eucheria* or *Egeria* has been suggested as the correct form of the name, but Duchesne still (1918) definitely pronounces in favour of Etheria.

reading is uncertain, in chap. i., seems, nevertheless, almost necessarily to connect Etheria with the *extremitas huius occiduæ plagæ* (the farthest part of this western coast). If *huius* occurred in the first of these two expressions, the inference that she was from Gallaecia would be certain: as it is, the phrases are so similar that very little doubt can be entertained that she was.¹

Meister, however, maintains that they do not of necessity indicate this district, and that, *inter alia*, as her language exhibits no trace of the Spanish dialect, but distinct traces of that of *Gallia Narbonensis*, and as she refers to the river Rhone (on p. 31) as if it were familiar both to herself and her readers,² she came from S.-E. Gaul,³ and that her monastery was perhaps at Marseilles or Arles, where there were well-known religious houses in the sixth century, to which he assigns her pilgrimage, viz. in the first half of the reign of Justinian († 565).

A considerable portion of Meister's argument rests upon the language used by Etheria. He goes into minute details over her usages, and the upshot of his examination is that she was not unlearned, but was familiar with the Scriptures, to the language of which

¹ We may compare the bishop of Edessa's remark (p. 42), that she had taken the trouble to come *de extremis porro terris*.

² This is practically the only reference to European topography in the extant portions of the narrative, and certainly implies acquaintance with the Rhone, but can hardly outweigh the expressions of Valerius quoted. It is not unlikely that she crossed the Rhone at some point in her journey to the East.

³ These were among the arguments which had weighed with the earlier editors, who sought to identify the pilgrim with S. Silvia of Aquitaine.

her own is similar, her phrases being often suggested by, or formed from, the same: this seems to him to point to a later date and a different nationality¹ than the one we have accepted. We, too, do not think she was for her time and country badly educated and unlearned nor unfamiliar with the Scriptures: no one could think that. But, making all possible allowances for the inaccuracies of the scribe² to whom we owe our knowledge of her narrative—and they are probably serious and frequent—yet the fact remains that she wrote a very slipshod Latin: her deficiencies cannot all be due to the carelessness or ignorance of the copyist. And this is the more surprising because, though she does not appear to have picked up any Syriac or other native tongue in her journeys, yet she is by no means without knowledge of Greek: for she uses quite a large number of Greek words and phrases³ and transliterates them as a rule with accuracy. (See list on p. xlviij f.) Besides that she displays great intelligence and exercises great powers of observation and appreciation of what she sees and hears wherever she goes. And this makes her narrative always lively

¹ Dom Férotin has also gone briefly into the question of language in footnote 2 on pp. 26 f., and comes to the conclusion that there are several definite traces of the *Spanish* dialect. This serves to show how risky such investigations and conclusions usually are!

² Gamurrini held that he belonged to the great Benedictine house of Monte Cassino in the eleventh century.

³ Mrs. McClure has given two examples out of many in her note on p. 10, where Etheria's titles for her sisters find interesting parallels in the Greek and Coptic Ostraca and Letters, as published in Crum's *Coptic Ostraca* and Hall's *Coptic and Greek Texts*, but no great stress can be laid on that point, as similar forms of address are not infrequent in Patristic writings generally.