

St. Louis-Marie de Montfort



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St. Louis-Marie de Montfort

1673-1716

A SMALL VOLUME TO COMMEMORATE THE
CANONIZATION OF BLESSED DE MONTFORT
AND TO PROPAGATE THE REIGN OF JESUS
THROUGH MARY

Editor

REV. RONALD LLOYD, S.M.M.

"QUEEN AND MOTHER"

THE MONTFORT FATHERS, ST. JOSEPH'S, COLBURY, TOTTON, HANTS.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This volume has been compiled to commemorate the canonization of Blessed Grignion de Montfort and to propagate his ardent devotion to Our Blessed Lady which he developed in his now famous book *The Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*.

The compiler is deeply indebted to His Grace, the Apostolic Delegate, the Most Reverend William Godfrey, D.D., Ph.D., to whom gratitude is due for the Foreword ; to the Rev. Joseph Redmond, S.M.M., for his invaluable help and advice ; to the Rev. Peter Kelly, S.M.M., for the map illustrations and artistic cover design, and to all contributors who so generously offered their pen to proclaim the glory of Montfort and his teaching.

THE EDITOR.

CUM PERMISSU SUPERIORUM

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CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword : <i>The Most Rev. William Godfrey, Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain</i> ...	4
Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort <i>Rev. Edward Bolger, S.M.M.</i>	8
The Company of Mary <i>Rev. C. Bennett, S.M.M.</i>	16
The Shire Mission, Nyasaland <i>Rev. Peter Kelly, S.M.M.</i>	24
The Congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom	28
The Miraculous Cure of Sister Gerard	35
The Religious Situation in France at the Time of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. <i>Rev. Joseph Redmond, S.M.M.</i>	38
The Spirituality of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort <i>Rev. Wilfred Jukka, S.M.M.</i>	44
Montfort, Apostle of the Cross <i>Rev. Joseph Redmond, S.M.M.</i>	49
England and the “True Devotion” <i>Rev. Stephen Rigby</i>	54
The Legion of Mary <i>Rev. W. Y. Stibbs</i>	59
The Miraculous Cure of Sister Marie Theresa	65
The Company of Mary in England <i>Rev. Gerard Hanna, S.M.M.</i>	67
The Daughters of Wisdom in England	73
The Significance of Montfort <i>C. J. Woollen</i>	77
Priests and the Canonization of Blessed Grignon de Montfort <i>Rev. Patrick O’Carroll, C.S.Sp.</i>	80
“The Latter Times” <i>Rev. George Burns, SJ.</i>	84
Archconfraternity of Mary, Queen of Our Hearts	iii cover

FOREWORD

I AM very glad to write a few lines for your magazine "Queen and Mother," which is commemorating the Canonization of Blessed Grignon de Montfort. I share in the joy which this happy event has given to all the children of Our Blessed Lady throughout the world, and particularly to those who are in those Congregations and Societies which are dedicated in a special way to her service.

Mary is always the "Virgo Praedicanda," and it is a privilege for both priests and lay-folk to sing her praises, and to proclaim her glory to the world. In this Island, which rejoices in the beautiful name of the "Dowry of Mary," the canonization of a great servant of Our Lady will, we pray, be a new inspiration to us to use every effort to bring our fellow countrymen to the knowledge of the true Faith, and to lead them back to the love of Mary's Son and of Holy Church.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, who gave birth to the God-Man, Christ Our Lord, is described in the Sacred Liturgy as the destroyer of heresies, and she faces the enemies of God strong and "terrible as an army set in battle array." She is a "tower of ivory" set up in the midst of God's Church to be our strength and protection, but she is more than that, for she is the Mother of all her children, of all the brethren of Christ, redeemed by His Precious Blood.

When, during the war, the present Holy Father gave to the world his Encyclical on the Mystical Body, and, moreover, consecrated the world to the immaculate heart of Mary, at a time when the children of God were sorely afflicted with all the horrors of war, it seemed to us as though the Vicar of Christ was repeating the words of Our Lord Himself, and saying to us : "Behold thy Mother."

The power of prayer, undreamt of by many, has a more salutary influence on world affairs than the actions or conferences of rulers or statesmen, however useful these may sometimes be. It is chiefly in the power of God that we place our trust, and we know that our hope will not be confounded.

Our new Saint, St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, will, we trust, by his intercession, lead the world to an ever greater love of the Blessed Mother, whom he served with such devotion. There can be no doubt that an increased love of Our Blessed Lady throughout the world will lead to a greater love of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, of Whose birth and upbringing she was the divinely chosen instrument, to whom was given so conspicuous a part in the redemption of the human race.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "W. Godfrey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

*Archbishop of Cius,
Apostolic Delegate.*

54 PARKSIDE,
LONDON, S.W. 19.
15th May, 1947.

St. Louis-Marie de Montfort

1673-1716



POPE LEO XIII

SAINT LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT died at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre, a small village of Vendée (France), in the year 1716. In a flash, the news of his decease spread throughout all the district. Crowds gathered to venerate his remains and to touch his body with their crucifixes, medals and rosaries.

The will which this devout servant of the Blessed Virgin had made on the eve of his death begins thus : “I, the undersigned, the greatest of sinners, desire that my body should be placed in the cemetery and my heart beneath the steps of the altar of the Blessed Virgin.” It was decided, however, that not only the heart but the entire body of the tireless apostle of the Mother of God had merited the honour of being interred beneath the altar of her whom

Montfort had always called his “good Mother.”

He was buried the day after his death, 29th April. The number of faithful assisting at his funeral was calculated to be about 10,000.

But it was only in 1829, more than a century after the death of the Servant of God, that a tribunal was set up at Luçon to start the episcopal discussion on the virtues and miracles of Montfort. On September 7th, 1838, Pope Gregory XVI bestowed on Montfort the title of Venerable and authorized the Congregation of Rites to proceed with the process of beatification. On January 22nd, 1888, during the pontificate of Leo XIII, Montfort was beatified. The present Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, issued the " De Tuto " decree on May 21st, 1945, and later on announced the date of the canonization — July 20th, 1947.

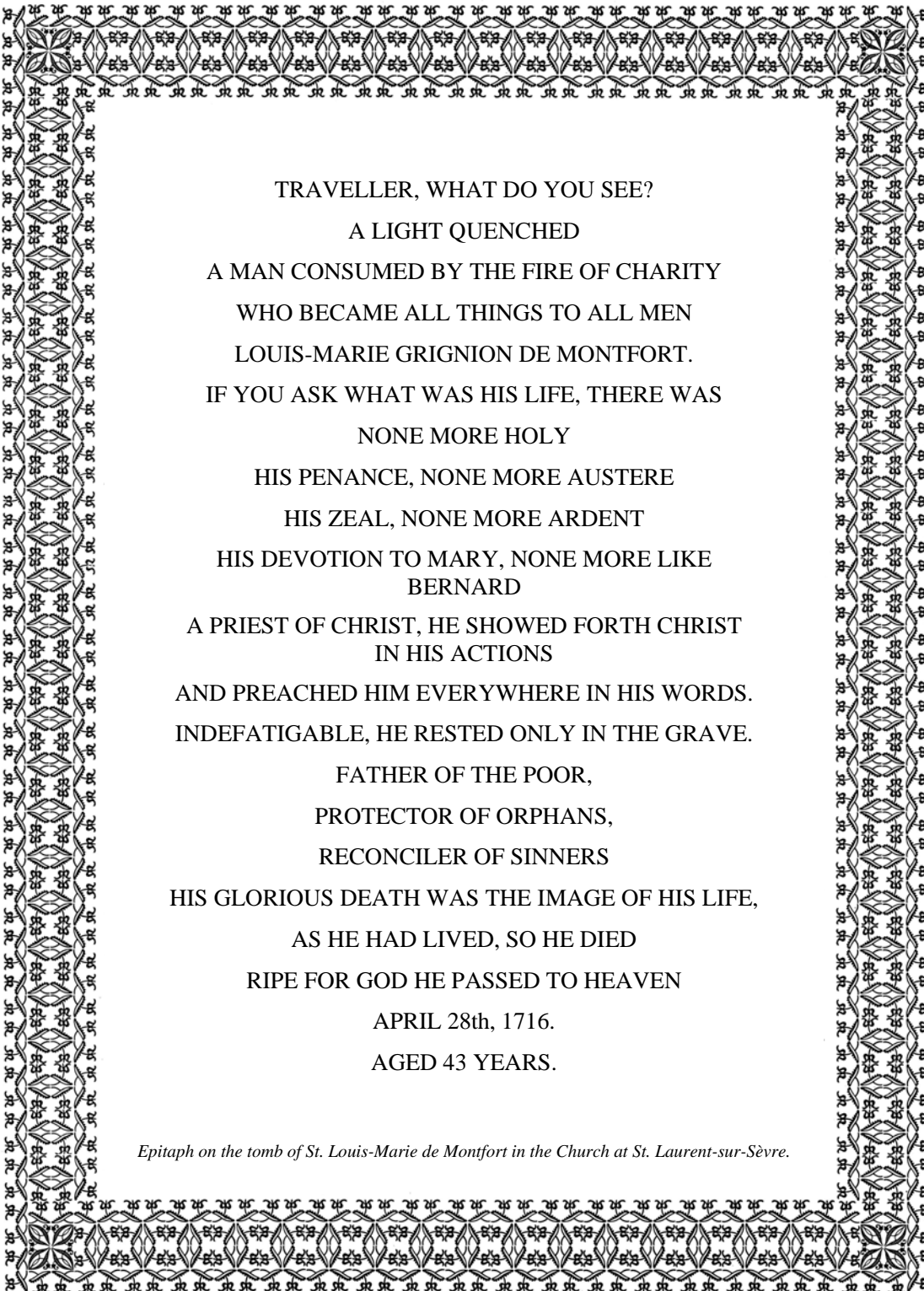


POPE PIUS XII



[Facsimile of the
Saint's signature]

Louis marie de montfort yignon



TRAVELLER, WHAT DO YOU SEE?
A LIGHT QUENCHED
A MAN CONSUMED BY THE FIRE OF CHARITY
WHO BECAME ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN
LOUIS-MARIE GRIGNION DE MONTFORT.
IF YOU ASK WHAT WAS HIS LIFE, THERE WAS
NONE MORE HOLY
HIS PENANCE, NONE MORE AUSTERE
HIS ZEAL, NONE MORE ARDENT
HIS DEVOTION TO MARY, NONE MORE LIKE
BERNARD
A PRIEST OF CHRIST, HE SHOWED FORTH CHRIST
IN HIS ACTIONS
AND PREACHED HIM EVERYWHERE IN HIS WORDS.
INDEFATIGABLE, HE RESTED ONLY IN THE GRAVE.
FATHER OF THE POOR,
PROTECTOR OF ORPHANS,
RECONCILER OF SINNERS
HIS GLORIOUS DEATH WAS THE IMAGE OF HIS LIFE,
AS HE HAD LIVED, SO HE DIED
RIPE FOR GOD HE PASSED TO HEAVEN
APRIL 28th, 1716.
AGED 43 YEARS.

Epitaph on the tomb of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort in the Church at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre.

Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort

By Rev. EDWARD BOLGER, S.M.M.

SAINTE LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT . . . a man who sought obscurity and nothingness, a man who seemed to ignore himself, so completely was he caught up in the service of his Redeemer and His Blessed Mother, and yet a man who despite himself was one of the most talked of, most criticised priests of his day.

He despised himself, thought himself capable of any infamy, hid away periodically in one or other of his many hermitages, only to emerge into the full light of day like one of the prophets of old, thundering, denouncing, shaking the complacency of many; by sheer eloquence and sanctity driving crowds back to the feet of God. His humility urged him to remain hidden, his indignation with those who slighted God drove him to the market place.

As a boy he had been unusual. Gifted by nature with the strength and tirelessness with which Brittany endows so many of her sons, he found no interest in boyish sports and pastimes, though so marvellously fitted for them. He saw too much of the difficulties which existed at home: a large family, little money, a difficult father, and a patient hardworking mother. With an intelligence and sense of responsibility far beyond his years he did what he could to make that little mother's life easier.

His father, John Baptiste Grignon, squire of the Bachelleraie, lawyer in the bailiwick of Montfort, like so many other Breton gentlemen was well endowed with titles but with very little money. His family was large, eighteen children in all, of whom ten were girls and eight boys. Of these, however, ten died in infancy. It is scarcely surprising therefore that his temper was volcanic and his mind much given to the importance of money, even though he always remained a staunch Catholic.

When you speak of Louis-Marie de Montfort you automatically think of Our Blessed Lady; she was his guiding star, and, next to God, his greatest love. As a child he took all his troubles to her, all his doubts and difficulties. When he had spoken to her he knew no swerving and no compromise ; he was her servant and slave and her wishes were law. This devotion he inherited in part from his pious, hard-working little mother, but it was more than that. We must see in his extraordinary confidence in Mary a special grace given by her Son Who, in every age, raised up champions of His Mother to take for a while His own place in her defence.

When he was twelve years of age his father sent him to the Jesuit college at Rennes, a vast establishment of between two and three thousand students. During the years he spent there he learned two lessons that he never forgot. The first was humility, given by Father Gilbert. This saintly old priest was far too gentle to keep in hand his class of two hundred pupils. Jeers, mockery and practical jokes were his daily lot, but he never lost his temper, and by his gentle patience succeeded in bringing out the best in many a proud, impatient character. Louis was of an exactly contrary temperament, inclined by nature to be violent in the extreme, to crush opposition ruthlessly; he already had himself well in hand, but Father Gilbert's example must have been very useful to him later in life when he would have so much to suffer from self-important little people.

The second example was practical charity. Father Bellier, chaplain of the hospital, persuaded some of the students to give up their free days to visiting the sick. Saint Louis-Marie went one further, he visited the homes of the sick and the poor and begged from his friends and acquaintances to obtain money for their relief.

During his study of Philosophy Louis decided that his vocation was for the priesthood. At first it seemed as if the financial difficulties were insuperable, but a friend of the family intervened and sent him to a seminary attached to St. Sulpice. He made the journey to Paris on foot, after having given away his money, his new clothes, and having changed suits with a beggar. It was at the beginning of this journey that he made his vow never to possess anything of his own. Shortly after his arrival at the seminary his benefactress stopped paying his fees and he was obliged to earn his keep by night watching beside the dead. As this took place two or three times a week and was invariably followed by a full day of hard work on very little food, he needed all his native strength to keep going. A year later the Superior of the Seminary died, and it was disbanded. Louis was taken into another in the Rue des Sept-Voies. This was even poorer than the one he had just left, and his constant mortifications coupled with the starvation diet cooked by the students themselves speedily took toll of his already undermined constitution. He collapsed one day whilst working in the kitchen and was carried to hospital in a critical condition. In spite of frequent bleeding—the classic remedy of those days—he recovered, and as a result of the impression that his sanctity had produced on the Sisters at the Hospital found himself admitted to St. Sulpice itself.

His coming was celebrated by the singing of the Te Deum, but it was not long before his trials began anew. He was so unusual and direct in his approach to all problems that he was suspected of pride, and his Superior and spiritual director did their utmost to bring it to the surface. He was treated with the utmost contempt, laughed at as a fool, humiliated in front of fellow students, but never a sign did he give that his feelings had been outraged. Certainly he was proud by nature, very proud, but he was complete master of himself and never allowed his temperament to override his will. The years he spent at St. Sulpice were not happy ones, though he himself never complains; it is from friends who knew him during this period that the information has been gleaned. He lived in an atmosphere of suspicion and saw his every move misinterpreted; fortunately he was a saint, and so far from souring him this treatment brought out all his potentialities for charity and suffering.

While still at the Seminary he began his life-work and formed an association of the Slaves of Mary. This title was adversely criticised by some, so it was referred to the judgment of M. Tronson, one of the most learned and holiest priests of his day. He favoured the idea, but recommended the title of “Slaves of Jesus in Mary.”

After ordination he stayed a while in a mission house at Nantes, but as there was no work to do he readily accepted the offer of a chaplaincy made him by the directors of the poor-house of Poitiers. In a short while he revolutionised the house, bringing in new ideas of hygiene, feeding, and care of the poor. When supplies were insufficient he would go the rounds of shopkeepers and the well-to-do begging for food and money. His ideas of law and order for the paupers, and hard work and honesty for the staff did not meet with everyone’s approval, so it was not long before he found himself in difficulties. The advent of a plague in the poor-house granted him a temporary reprieve, for it carried off his chief adversaries and brought into striking relief his own heroism in the face of disease.

While he was here Montfort laid the foundations of a Congregation destined to nurse the sick and care for the poor. A young girl named Marie-Louise Trichet one day went to him to make her confession and confided to him her desire to become a nun. He recognised in her a gift from God and advised her to wait a while. Later she was admitted to the poor-house as assistant to the director and when Montfort finally left this charitable institution she agreed to follow his advice to stay there for ten years to find out God’s will. This she faithfully did, and had the



BIRTHPLACE OF ST. LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT



CALVARY OF PONTCHÂTEAU

happiness before her death of seeing Montfort's Congregation—the Sisters of La Sagesse—growing steadily and giving an example to the world of love for the poor and the sick.

From Poitiers he went to Paris and worked for a time in the hospital of the Salpêtrière, but once again his ideas of what was due to the poor made him unpopular, and he found himself requested to leave. Nothing daunted, he lived like St. Alexis under a stair-case, emerging only to restore peace and harmony to the monastery of Mont Valérien; this he did not by an exercise of authority, but simply by living the life of the solitaries and showing them how beautiful it was. He left to them a peace that was to endure many years.

Wherever he went he was followed by calumny and misrepresentation. His missions in and around Poitiers met with unheard of success, but influential people combined to make the Bishop expel him from the diocese. This coming on top of his difficulties with the hospitals and the harsh treatment he had received from his former masters during his last visit to Paris, decided him to seek advice from the fountain head of Christ's church on earth—the Pope. He knew that his doctrine was sound, that he gave no scandal, but just to assure himself that he was on the right path he chose to make the pilgrimage to Rome.

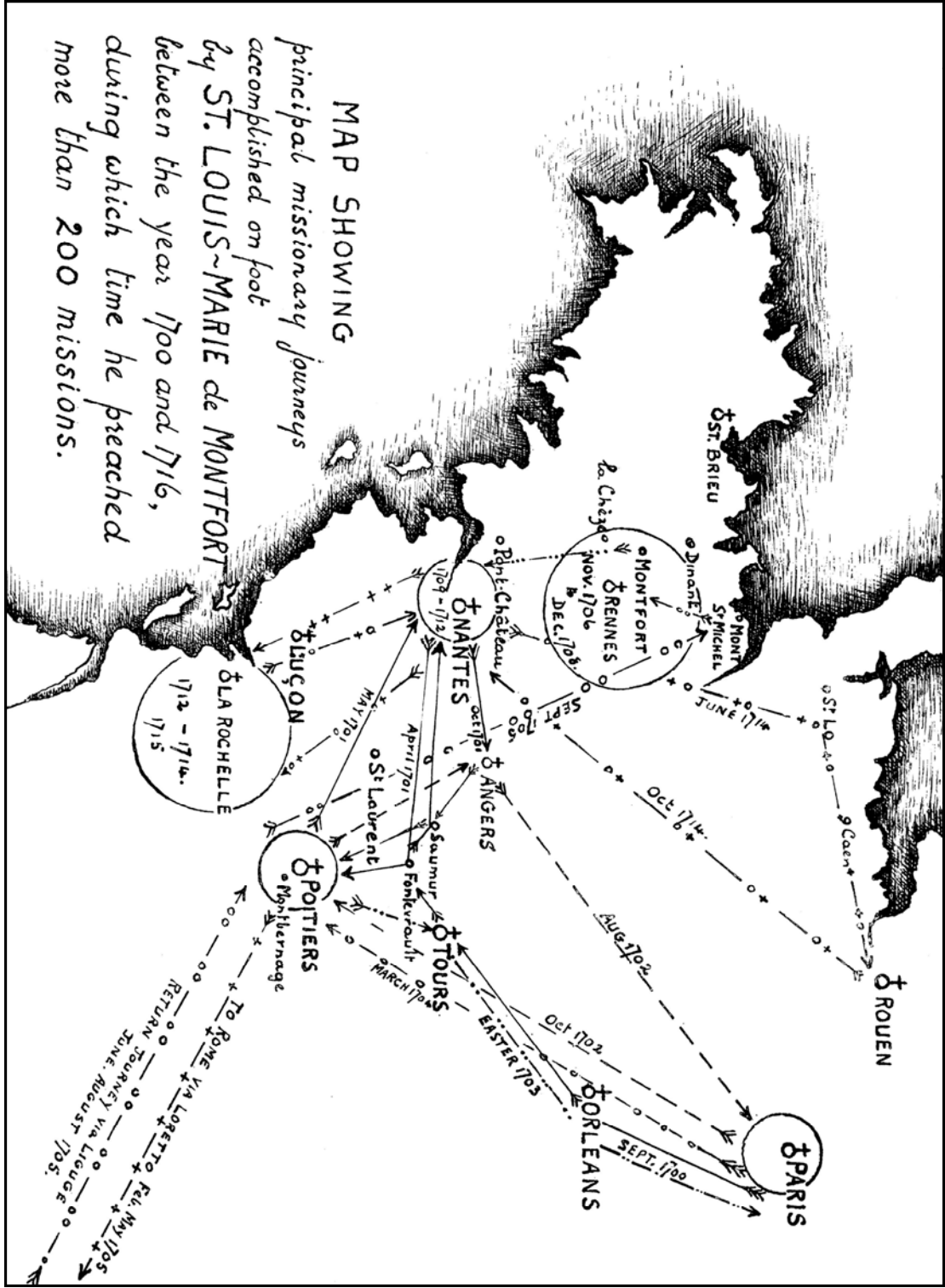
Rome was far away, and he could not afford to make the journey by coach or on horse-back, so he walked the whole distance, taking with him only his Breviary and his Rosary, relying on Providence for his daily needs.

His audience with the Pope resulted in his being named Apostolic Missioner. Clement told him to cast aside his idea of working in the foreign missions as there was more than enough work for him to do in his own country. He also told him to work always in submission to the French Bishops.

Together with M. Leuduger, the famous Breton missionary, he worked for eight months evangelising the northern provinces of Brittany, but his successes made him enemies even among those with whom he laboured, and the day came when Leuduger also ordered him to leave his company. But he evidently recognised Montfort's worth, for a few years later when ill-health and old age obliged him to give up his work he wrote to Montfort asking him to take over the direction of his missionaries. By that time it was too late, for Louis was already fully occupied with his missions in La Vendée.

A request from M. Barrin, Vicar General of Nantes, decided him to give missions in that diocese, and for once he was supported by a powerful friend. He met with his usual success, bringing multitudes back to God, feeding hosts of paupers though he had never a penny in his pocket. At the town of Pontchâteau he began to build an enormous Calvary. After every mission he had made a point of erecting crosses, we might almost say they were the milestones of his life; Vendée and Brittany abound in such wayside Calvaries, but the one he built at Pontchâteau was immense. For eighteen months thousands of people worked at it daily, digging, levelling, carving; fine ladies stepped down from their carriages and thought it an honour to be allowed to push a barrow or shoulder a hod; people came from all over France, and even from beyond her borders eager to take part in this vast declaration of faith. But temporal success was not for Montfort; he had antagonised the Seneschal of the town and that worthy Christian responded by raising a cry of alarm. He pretended to believe that the vast Calvary could be used as a fortress by the English, with whom the French were then at war. The fact that if this were true it would have made an equally admirable stronghold for the French seems to have escaped both him and the eminent military leaders to whom he communicated his alarm. On the eve of the day fixed for the blessing the Bishop sent orders forbidding it; he had no alternative, for already news had reached him from Versailles that the King had issued instructions to have it totally destroyed. As

MAP SHOWING
 principal missionary journeys
 accomplished on foot
 by ST. LOUIS-MARIE de MONTFORT
 between the year 1700 and 1716,
 during which time he preached
 more than 200 missions.



a refinement of cruelty five hundred of the peasants who had laboured so hard to build it were commandeered to destroy it.

The catastrophe left Montfort unmoved. He had done his best to work for God's greater glory, but God preferred the homage offered by broken hearts, His servant was quite content. Not so the Bishop, he found that it would be more prudent to expel from his diocese a man who was so very much out of favour with the King, though in doing so he seems to have completely forgotten that he himself authorised Montfort to erect the Calvary.

At last Montfort found a diocese where he could work in peace. The Bishop of La Rochelle, Stephen de Champflour, was a determined opponent of both Jansenism and Gallicanism. The former of these heresies was a species of Calvinism which denied that Christ had died for all men, whilst the latter exalted the power of the King of France over that of the Pope. Montfort had struggled against them for years and in doing so had made himself many enemies, for although they had no official standing they were covertly supported by many men of influence. It is probably for this reason that Mgr. de Champflour invited him to work in his diocese.

From then onwards Montfort gave an almost unbroken succession of missions. He laboured chiefly in La Vendée and it was in no small measure due to him that nearly a hundred years later the peasants of La Vendée rose in revolt against the government of Robespierre and time after time hurled back the armies of the Terror. Yet when Montfort first came among them they were far from being the champions of the Faith that they were later to become: ignorance, drunkenness, immorality were rife among them; in a few short years he changed them completely, leaving in his steps love of the Sacred Heart and devotion to the daily Rosary.

One of his first missions in the diocese was in the town of La Rochelle. Since the days of Richelieu it had been a stronghold of Calvinism, so it was confidently expected that this fiery missionary would soon be involved in violent controversies; such an idea, however, sprang from rumours founded on a complete misconception of his character. He knew very well that men cannot be driven to belief in the Catholic Church, that violence and hatred breed violence and hatred. The mission was, of course, primarily for Catholics, but those Calvinists who did attend were pleasantly surprised to find that he presented to them the reasonableness of the Church's claims, and afforded solid proof for all his statements, avoiding all trace of controversial spirit. His methods were successful . . . too successful for some fanatics, who avenged the numerous conversions he had made from their ranks by poisoning him. Fortunately the poison was discovered almost as soon as he had drunk it and an antidote saved his life, but his health was seriously undermined and never again would he be the man of iron who could tramp from parish to parish without a sign of fatigue.

This was not the first attempt on his life; on one occasion he had been ambushed by a band of students but had succeeded in scattering them before help arrived; twice plots had been laid to kill him, but had been fortunately overheard in time. The reason for these attempts is not far to seek; Montfort reclaimed many sinners, but in doing so he also broke up many sinful associations, leaving the partners in sin extremely resentful and in some cases ready for murder. This he knew, and, like St. John the Baptist, he was quite ready to become a martyr in the cause of chastity.

When he went to preach a mission at the Island of Yeu, Calvinists betrayed the sailing time of his boat to English privateers, but once again he was warned in time, and succeeded in making the voyage from Sables d'Olonne, though had the wind not changed in response to his prayers there is no doubt that he would have been taken prisoner by two British vessels patrolling

the coast.

In the service of God, Montfort knew no fear. He preached against blasphemy and drunkenness, but he did not content himself with preaching; when he thought direct action was called for he had no hesitation in using it. Sometimes it would take the form of active interference, such as bursting into an estaminet and driving out the drinkers by sheer physical strength, at others he would go into the middle of a group of drunkards or blasphemers, fall on his knees, and invite them to say the Rosary with him. Sometimes, when he judged the case to be hopeless, he would announce the coming of great misfortune, and it invariably followed; one inn which he had laid under a curse was shunned for years after the terrible misfortunes that suddenly struck its proprietor and his family, and it was only after the new building that rose from its ruins had been blessed that a new tenant could be found. But when the Saint had recourse to such terrible extremes it was only to bring souls back to God; he did it through no motive of revenge, and the temporal misfortune that he laid upon certain men and women almost invariably resulted in their spiritual welfare terminating in a happy death.

Those who knew Montfort only from a distance formed ridiculous ideas concerning him; he was represented as a charlatan, an actor, a fool who had not the sense to know what was good for him. True, another totally different picture of him spread also—that of the “kind Father de Montfort,” the man who worked miracles to feed and to cure the poor, the man who was so terribly hard on himself and so wonderfully thoughtful for others; but unfortunately the holders of the former opinion were also the possessors of the loudest voices. Consequently Montfort had to fight against prejudice whenever he broke fresh ground.

When he went to preach a mission at Sallertaine the town turned out to protest against his coming. They even went to the length of locking the church. Yet after three days they venerated him as a saint, and when the time came for him to leave them men and women wept, and escorted him in procession to the scene of his next mission.

He preached a retreat in a convent at La Rochelle, but it soon developed into another general mission. One young lady, knowing him only through the foolish word-pictures of people who had never met him, made a bet that she would make a fool of him during one of his sermons. She went to the chapel accompanied by a crowd of elegant friends, placed herself in a pew that commanded a direct view of the pulpit, and then, when he began to preach, forgot the purpose for which she had come. Long after the congregation had left the church she remained kneeling there, and after an interview with Montfort, she went straight home to set her affairs in order. The following day saw her at the Convent of the Poor Clares, begging admittance.

A certain M. d’Orville thought Montfort a maniac; that was before he knew him. After making his acquaintance he begged Montfort to advise him on spiritual matters, and it was not long before this important magistrate knelt in the road outside his house every evening, saying the Rosary in the middle of a group of humble fellow Christians.

Madame d’Orion was also badly prejudiced against him. Only her sense of responsibility towards her peasantry sent her to the mission at Villiers-en-Plaine. At the most she hoped to be able to pick up some amusing anecdotes to tell her friends. She also changed as soon as she discovered the real Montfort; she attempted to scandalise him by humming light songs and indulging in very unspiritual conversation but she succeeded only in making him smile as one would smile at the irresponsible behaviour of a child. In the confessional she found him like an angel from Heaven. This was the man whom rumour had represented as dishonest, narrow-minded, and a complete fool.

These are but a few cases among many. Wherever he went he encountered opposition,

but those who came in contact with him could never keep their prejudices for long; never, that is, unless they chose to close their ears to his teaching and to cling to evil habits.

The greatest desire of Montfort's life was to found a congregation of priests who would carry on his own work of evangelising the poor. He had thought about it almost at the beginning of his priestly life and the idea never left him. On several occasions he endeavoured to recruit former fellow students for this work but almost until the end of his life he was unsuccessful. Fourteen months before his death he met his first recruit. It was Father Vatel, a young priest who was on his way to the foreign missions. When Montfort suggested to him that they should work together, he was at first most unwilling, there were too many obstacles in the way, but one by one they disappeared, and he found himself free to work with the great missionary of Brittany and La Vendée.

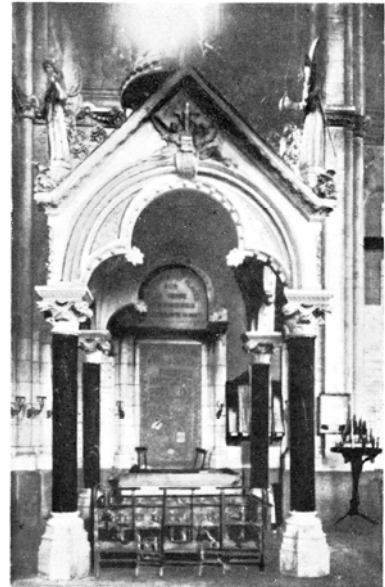
The second and last recruit during Montfort's lifetime was an even more difficult case. Father René Mulot was half paralysed and suffered from lung trouble. He pointed out to Montfort that he would be more of a hindrance than a help, and that although he was very willing he could not undertake the strenuous life of a missionary. Montfort's answer was to send him straight off to preach at a nearby parish. With his first sermon he was completely cured, and never again did his health trouble him.

On April 5th, 1716, Montfort began his last mission. It was at Saint Laurent-sur-Sèvre, a place ever since associated with his memory. The mission was a success, but Montfort's health grew steadily worse. He was only forty years of age, but privations, travel, poison, and insufficient nourishment had left their mark on him. Towards the end of the mission he contracted pleurisy, but insisted on continuing his work. The last sermon of all was given before the Bishop of La Rochelle. When it was over Montfort was taken down from the pulpit to die. He wanted to be laid on straw instead of a bed, but at the voice of his confessor he meekly consented to a mattress.

The news of his illness spread rapidly and from far and near people began to surround the little house where he lay dying; he heard the murmur of their voices, and learning that they had come for news of him, he insisted that they should be brought into the room in groups; he had come to the town to give a mission, and while there was breath in his body he would do what he could. When they asked for his blessing, he grew embarrassed, he thought himself too great a sinner to give blessings, he would far sooner receive them. At the word of Father Mulot, however, he raised in blessing the little ivory crucifix given him by Clement XI.

When the people had gone he lay quiet for a while, but something must have been going on in his mind, for suddenly he roused himself and cried in tones of command: "You attack me in vain, I stand between Jesus and Mary. I have finished my course. I shall sin no more."

Thus died Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, apostle of the Cross and the Rosary: a man who sought nothing in this life for himself, and who died as he had lived, rich only in the love of God.



TOMB OF ST. LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT

The Company of Mary

By Rev. CHRISTOPHER BENNETT, S.M.M.

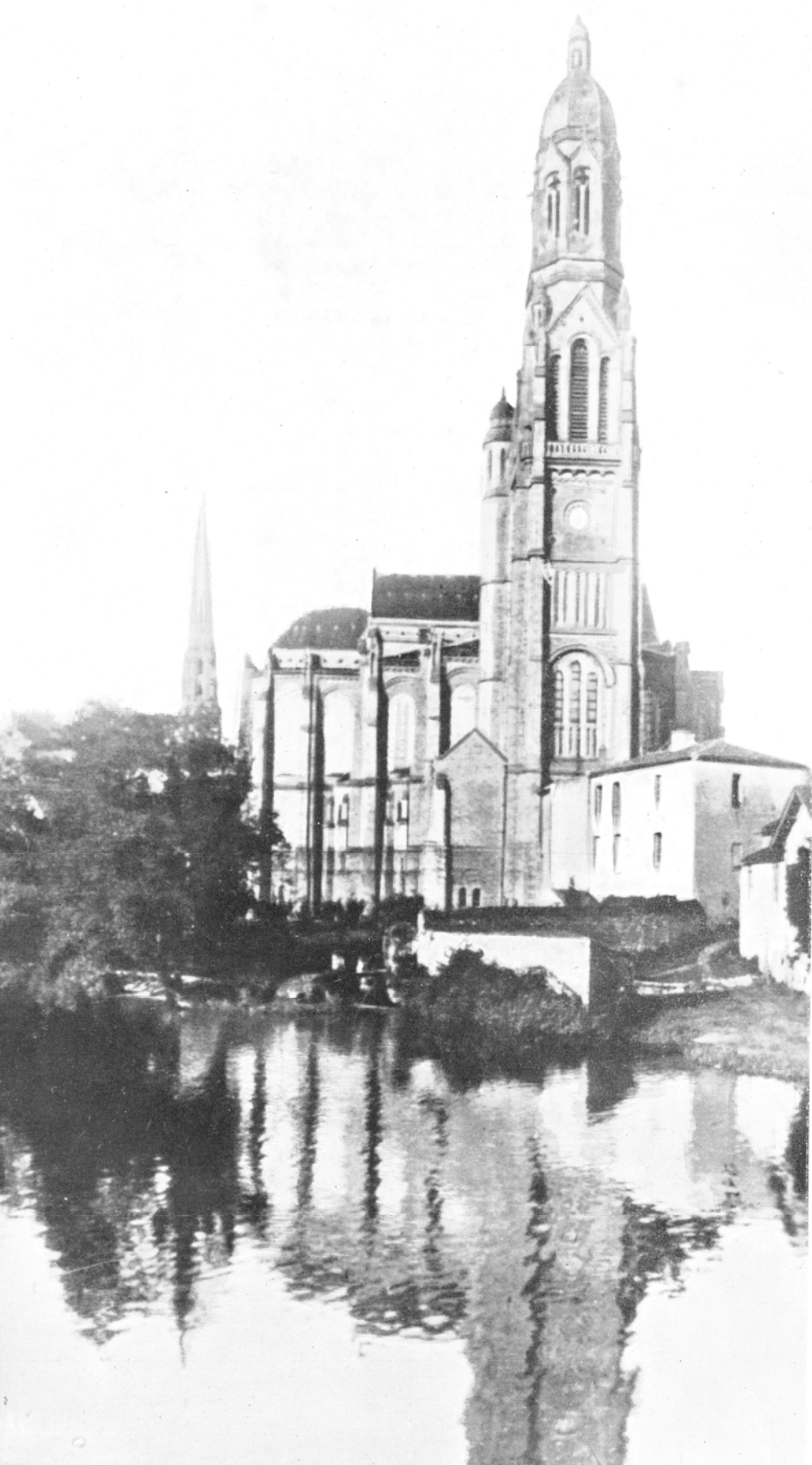
“WHEN I see the needs of the Church, I cannot refrain from continually praying, with many sighs, for a small and poor company of good priests under the standard and patronage of the Blessed Virgin.” Thus had the great saint of God expressed the longing of his heart to his director five months after ordination ; a desire which was re-echoed throughout his life in the most sublime and earnest pleadings with the Almighty : “Give Thy Mother children, priests, slaves of Thy love . . . but free with Thine own freedom, and on fire with the Spirit of Thy love.”—But it was not until the year 1715, fourteen months before his death, that Montfort saw the beginning of his heart’s desire.

The first attempts of Montfort to gather together a small band of priests who would work with him in evangelising the masses, met with repeated failure. Several good priests did come forward and offer their services, but they found Montfort’s way of living much too austere for them. Finally, he sought the help of Fr. Poulard Desplaces, the Rector of the Seminary of the Holy Ghost in Paris and founder of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost. The latter told Montfort he could have any student from his seminary who desired to join his congregation. Several expressed the desire but only two entered and actually only one, Fr. Vatel, worked with the Saint. But even Fr. Vatel was bent on taking another course. This good man, after his ordination, resolved to evangelise the New World and took ship for Canada. The ship left Rouen, but put in at La Rochelle. Fr. Vatel went ashore and providentially entered the very church where Montfort was preaching. The Saint, on seeing him, stopped short. “Someone in the congregation is resisting me,” he said. This put an end to Fr. Vatel’s proposed voyage on the high seas; henceforth he was to be a disciple of Montfort.

Fr. Mulot was the second priest to join Montfort in his missionary crusade, and his entry into the Congregation, like that of Fr. Vatel, was marked by a direct intervention of Divine Providence. He was weak and infirm and on account of this lived with his brother, a priest, at St. Pompain. The time had come for a mission to be held in this parish and, as Fr. de Montfort was in the vicinity, Fr. Mulot went over to see him to enlist his services. “I shall go,” answered the man of God, “if you consent to join me in my work. If you do you shall be cured of your infirmity.” Fr. Mulot fell in with the desires of Montfort; his paralysis disappeared, his chest trouble ceased.

Having laid the foundation stone for a congregation of priests, Montfort next turned his thoughts to Brothers, and, as in the case of the Fathers, he displayed the same instinctive certitude in detecting the vocation of the first Brother. Montfort saw a young man (the future Brother Maturin) making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the Church of the Penitents, and was deeply impressed by his fervour. He went up to him and said, “Follow me.” Without questioning, the young man obeyed. Thenceforth he was to labour unceasingly with Montfort and his successors.

Fr. Vatel and Fr. Mulot were able auxiliaries of the great missionary of Western France, but it seems that their work was confined to the confessional. They were timid and apprehensive, even at the sight of a pulpit, and evidently were not the type to launch a missionary campaign. When Montfort died, their courage gave out. “I shall pray for you,” were the Saint’s last words to them. For nearly two years the priests lived in retirement at St. Pompain, humbly awaiting a sign from Divine Providence to give them a line of action. This came towards the end of Lent,



BASILICA OF
ST. LOUIS-MARIE
DE MONTFORT,
ST. LAURENT-SUR-SÈVRE

1718, when a neighbouring parish priest invited them to his parish. They were under the impression that their only duty would be to hear confessions, and they willingly accepted the invitation. To their great astonishment and profound dismay, they learnt that the parish priest had publicly announced the opening of a mission to be preached by the successors of Montfort. Finding themselves in such a quandary, they decided to take a book up into the pulpit and to give a simple commentary on what they read. Strange to say, this unorthodox procedure, which in ordinary circumstances would have been a complete failure, was a startling success. No doubt it was due to the saintly virtue of these humble fathers whose lives were living copies of what they professed.

Providence continued to guide them and eventually led them to St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre, the town where St. Louis-Marie breathed his last. One of the local gentry, a great friend of Montfort, bought them a small house. By this time the Sisters of La Sagesse had already settled down in the town. In 1722, the few Fathers of the newly-founded congregation came together to choose their Superior-General. Father Mulot was elected, and his first function was to receive the vows of the Fathers and Brothers.

At this early stage of development it was very difficult for the Fathers to lead a regular community life. They were never long together in residence, but toured the countryside preaching the word of God. Their fiery zeal drew the crowds from many surrounding parishes and every mission was concluded by the public consecration to Our Lady, the reparation ceremony and the renewal of the Baptismal vows. Invariably the missionaries established the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary and of the Holy Slavery, and erected imposing Calvaries which in time became centres of pilgrimage. To quote the author of *The Religious History of the French Revolution*: “The missionaries arrived in the parish bringing with them, after the manner of their founder, standards, banners, statues, portable altars, boxes of rosaries, medals and decorations. Regardless of their own comfort they held their church services in early morning or late evening so that work in the fields would not be interrupted. They worked relentlessly in parish after parish, envied by none, accessible to all, loved by the people . . . concerned with nothing else save the salvation of souls.”

Fr. Mulot died at Questembert whilst giving a mission. All who knew him regarded him as a saint. At the time of his death there were twelve priests and six or seven brothers in the Congregation. He was succeeded by Fr. Audubon, who, during his term of government, strove very hard, but in vain, to obtain the royal approbation for the Congregation—a necessary requisite in those days. In 1755, Fr. Besnard was elected Superior-General. He held office for 33 years and it was he who obtained the coveted royal assent enabling the Congregation to enjoy a legal status. Part of the present mother-house of the Sisters of La Sagesse, and the whole of the building which is now the mother-house of the Company of Mary, owe their origin to his initiative. Among other good works, he collected documents and traditions relating to his holy founder and wrote his life in manuscript.

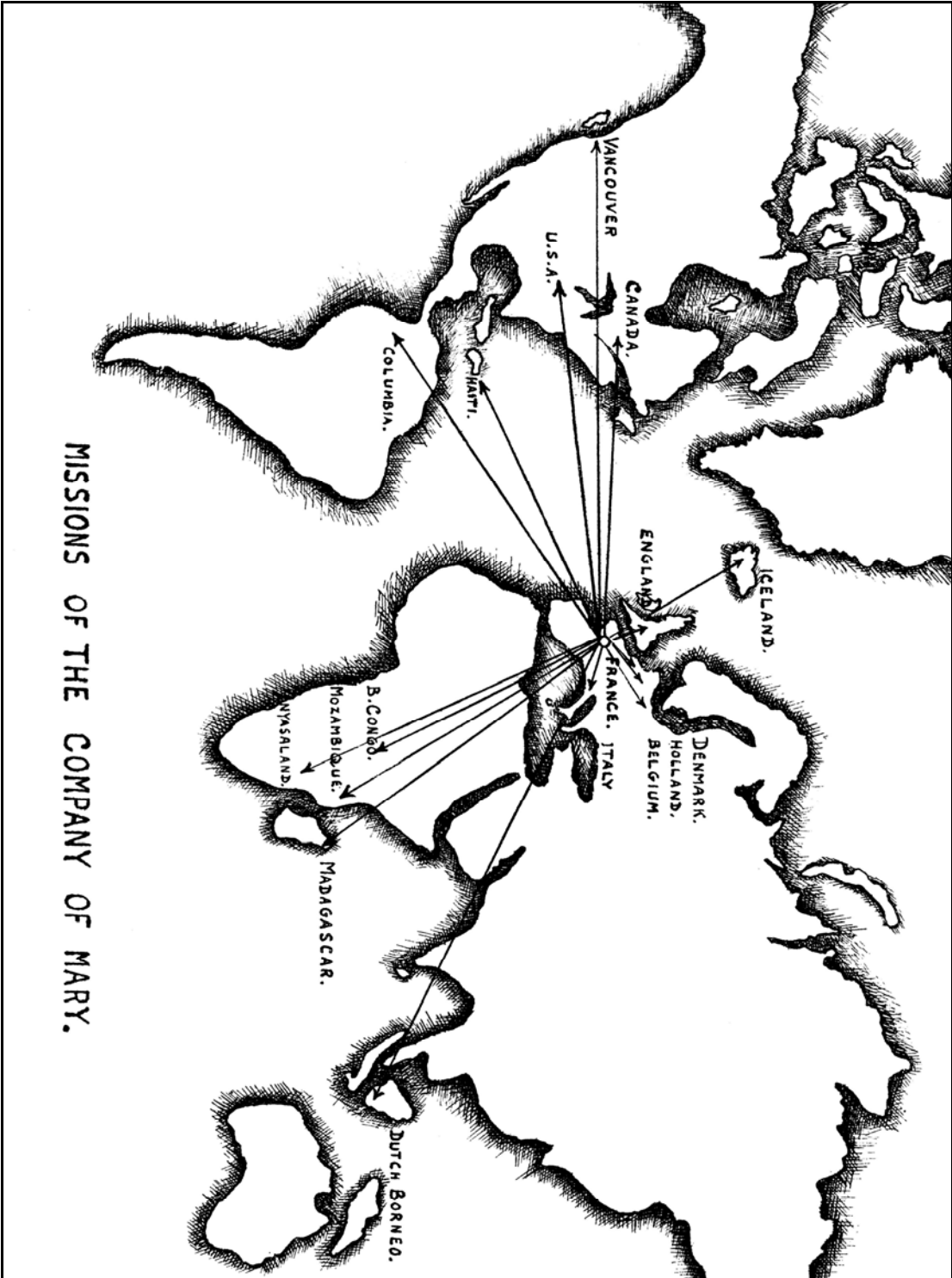
When Fr. Micquignon succeeded Fr. Besnard, in 1788, the sky was overcast with heavy war clouds foreboding the oncoming French Revolution. With paternal solicitude, the Superior-General warned his subjects against the prevalent false ideas and, thanks to him, the Congregation emerged from the moral chaos free from contagion. Vendée, the county where St. Laurent is situated, was a centre of fidelity to God and king. As the Council of Bishops of the Province of Bordeaux testified: “The Montfort Fathers, by their preaching and example, gave the people that religious sense which was their arm against tyranny.” Fr. Micquignon died in 1792, when times were fast becoming turbulent. The National Assembly published a decree

proscribing all Religious Congregations, and the Company of Mary and the Daughters of Wisdom had the honour of being named in the first article. They were compelled, at least exteriorly, to submit to *force majeure*; consequently the religious habit and community life were abandoned. Forbidden to preach, the undaunted missionaries found an outlet for their zeal in writing books. From their house at St. Laurent came a steady flow of literature and very soon the whole countryside was littered, so to speak, with pamphlets urging the clergy not to put their names to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and calling on the faithful to ignore the commands of the renegade priests.

During this period of bitter persecution, Fr. Supiot, then Superior-General, and several of the Fathers remained in the vicinity of St. Laurent, always in hiding, going from farm to farm and ministering to the faithful in secret. But this only served to infuriate the revolutionaries who, advancing on St. Laurent, ransacked the two houses of the Fathers and the Sisters, massacred two Sisters and took a number away with them, several of whom died in prison. Four Brothers were put to death. It was also about this time that two Fathers set out for Spain to look for accommodation for the Sisters. At La Rochelle they fell into the hands of the rabble and were cut to pieces on the quayside. Even those responsible for the wholesale massacres that went on admitted that the Fathers were held in high esteem by one and all and were “venerated as saints.”

Fr. Supiot guided the Congregation during these very difficult times and after his death, in 1818, was succeeded by Fr. Duchesne. The Company gradually found its feet again and missions were resumed. About this time two of its members received special commissions from the Holy See. In 1820, Fr. Couperie left France to carry the light of faith to Babylon and later became Bishop there. In 1832, Fr. Hilléreau was named Apostolic Visitor of Smyrna and was subsequently raised to the dignity of Archbishop and Vicar-Patriarch of Constantinople. After three years of office, Fr. Duchesne’s health broke down, and he resorted to an unusual procedure to ensure his successor. He made a direct appeal to Fr. Deshayes, Vicar-General of Vannes, to take over the leadership of the Congregation. This holy priest had already rendered eminent service to his diocese and had actually founded several congregations of Sisters and Brothers, which, interesting to relate, are still flourishing today. Under his capable guidance, the Company greatly prospered. He journeyed to Rome to obtain from the Holy See the formal approbation of both Congregations founded by Montfort and at the same time enquired about the possibility of introducing the process of beatification of the Servant of God. Everywhere in the Holy City he found support for the cause, and immediately on his return to France besought the Bishops to open the necessary tribunals to examine the miracles. They willingly acceded and the findings were favourably received in Rome by Pope Gregory XVI.

Fr. Dalin was next chosen to govern the Congregation and became Superior-General in 1842. The Company of Mary was now over a hundred years old, but numbered only eighteen Fathers. Fr. Dalin laboured assiduously to further the cause of beatification, and for that purpose visited Rome three times between the years 1843 and 1853. On May 12th, 1853, the writings of Montfort were approved by the Church and the two Congregations founded by him formally sanctioned. By this time there were twenty-eight priests, twenty novices and students, and eighteen Brothers. During Fr. Dalin’s term of office, three new missionary residences were opened: one at Angoulême, another at Orléans, and the third at Tourcoing. In 1856, he was succeeded by Fr. Denis who undertook the extension of the mother-house of La Sagesse and built its magnificent Gothic chapel (see page 17) which is considered one of the finest edifices in the West of France.



MISSIONS OF THE COMPANY OF MARY.



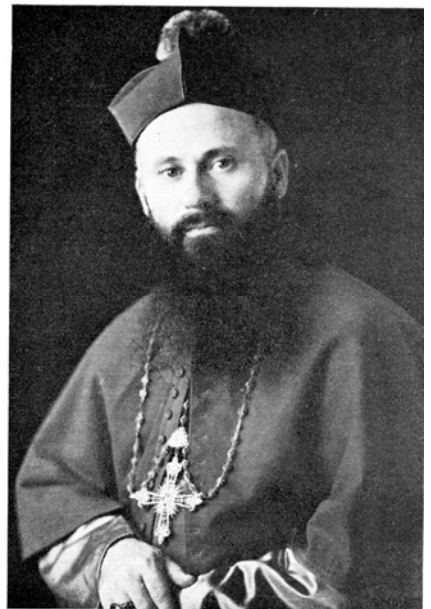
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Vicar Apostolic of Iceland



The Rt. Rev. A. GUIOT, S.M.M.
Vicar Apostolic of Haiti



The Rt. Rev. A. LE BRETON, S.M.M.
Vicar Apostolic of Tamatave, Madagascar



The Rt. Rev. F. J. BRULS, S.M.M.
Vicar Apostolic of Columbia

About this time the question of future vocations was being given much consideration. St. Louis-Marie de Montfort had laid down in his rule that his institute should depend for its vocations on priests who, having been trained in the seminaries, were desirous of joining the Company he had founded. But this method of recruiting was most precarious and jeopardised the very existence of the Congregation. In fact, during the period of the revolution, the little Company would never have survived had it not been for Divine assistance. Hence the pressing need for schools to educate the future members of the Congregation; a proposal which was approved by the Holy See in 1872.

Fr. Deshayes and Fr. Dalin had made unsuccessful attempts to establish a junior seminary, but it was not until 1871, in quite exceptional circumstances, that this plan materialised. In this year, Monsignor Guilloux, Archbishop of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, appealed to Fr. Denis for priests to labour in his mission. After some hesitation the request was granted and three Fathers were sent out. Soon afterwards the same prelate negotiated with the Congregation for the establishment of a seminary, which would be run by the Fathers of the Company of Mary and which would provide priests for the mission of Haiti. This led to the opening of a junior seminary at Pontchâteau in the Loire Inférieure. After a few years circumstances changed and the building became the property of the Congregation. However, its work was not destined to run smoothly. In 1880, the Church was oppressed by anti-clerical laws and it was then decided to send the students abroad . . . a decision of such far-reaching effects that it can be considered the turning point in the history of the Company of Mary. A Novitiate was opened at Schimmert, in Holland, and as time went on a junior Seminary was begun for Dutch students; the senior students being sent to Canada. The situation in France grew steadily worse and, in 1891, the whole school at Pontchâteau had to evacuate, first to Santbergen and then to Montfort College, Romsey, in 1910.

In the meantime, the process of Beatification had made good progress. On January 22nd, 1888, Father de Montfort was solemnly declared Blessed by Pope Leo XIII. To celebrate the occasion a solemn triduum, attended by Cardinal Place of Rennes, fourteen bishops and 2,000 priests, was held at St. Laurent-sur-Sevre on the 4th, 5th and 6th of June.

Between 1888 and 1903—as a result of persecution—the Company of Mary had opened houses in Denmark, Iceland, the United States, Africa and Rome. In 1903, Fr. Lhoumeau became Superior-General. He was a true son of Montfort, imbued with the Saint's spirit and zeal, and animated with a great love for the Blessed Virgin. He possessed a very keen, versatile mind which made him an accomplished writer of spiritual treatises and a musician of achievement. Under his direction, the surge of expansion went on unrelentingly but never to the detriment of the spirit of the rule as laid down by St. Louis-Marie. In 1916, Pope Benedict XV in a brief to the Superior-General, on the occasion of the second centenary of the death of St. Louis-Marie, praised the spirit of the Congregation. "Your labours," he wrote, "have brought forth no ordinary fruits."

The remainder of the history of the Company of Mary is but a succession of new foundations. Seminaries were opened in several countries and, by 1913, the number of members had increased to 523—Fathers, Scholastics and Brothers. In recognition of missionary work already accomplished, two territories, entrusted to the care of the Montfort Missionaries, were raised to the dignity of Apostolic Vicariates: one in Nyasaland and the other in Spanish Columbia.

Fr. Lhoumeau relinquished the Superior-Generalship in 1918 and was succeeded by Fr. Richard, a priest of tremendous drive and energy. He had the unpleasant task of directing the

Congregation during the difficult post-war years.

At the present day the Company of Mary has 1,280 members and is divided into three Provinces: France, Holland and Canada. There are six Provincial Vicariates: England, Italy, Spanish Columbia, Nyasaland and Haiti; besides flourishing missions in Dutch Borneo, the Belgian Congo, Portuguese East Africa and Iceland.

Such is a brief account of the life and development of the "little flock" for whom St. Louis-Marie had so ardently prayed: "Remember, Lord Jesus, to give Thy Mother a new Company, to renew through her all things, and to finish through Mary the years of grace as through her Thou didst begin them"; the "little flock" whom he had encouraged: "Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Heavenly Father to give you a kingdom"; and whose final triumph in Jesus Christ he had prophesied shortly before his death.

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Shire Mission, Nyasaland

By Rev. PETER KELLY, S.M.M.

THESE pages would not be complete without an attempt being made to put on record St. Louis-Marie de Montfort's attitude towards the all-important work of foreign missions, and the efforts of his spiritual sons and daughters in this field of action. Anyone who is conversant with the Saint's life must indeed have been struck by the continual promptings of his apostolic zeal, ever urging his thoughts and desires of apostolate towards the heathen populations whose plight he so greatly pitied: "My heart bleeds when I think of the incalculable number of souls which are lost because of their ignorance of the true God and of the benefits of Christian religion." Did he not once confide to his friend, M. de Bastières: "I shall not die content unless, like the incomparable missionary of Japan, St. Francis Xavier, I breathe my last at the foot of a tree." Also was it only after having acquainted Pope Clement XI with this longing and sought his advice in the matter that St. Louis-Marie finally settled down to preach within the frontiers of his own native land. Divine Providence, however, some centuries later, brought about the realisation of his cherished dream in the person of his missionary offspring, and today this name is well in evidence on the map of the Propagation of the Faith. In no less than four continents—Europe, Africa, America and Asia—the Montfort missions spread out over vast and varied territories. One can imagine the Saint, from Heaven, looking down on these lands and following with special interest the progress of their Christianisation. His powerful intercessions to Almighty God on their behalf must undoubtedly herald new and abundant graces of conversion. In his honour then, and as a tribute to his missionary sons and daughters, let us rapidly survey the history and development of the Apostolic Vicariate of Shire, Nyasaland.

This mission field is situated between the thirteenth and seventeenth degrees of South latitude. Its northern borders are formed by the beautiful Loukoulezi Valley and the great Lake Nyasa, whose southernmost waters actually bathe the mission territory. On the other three sides it is surrounded by the Portuguese possession known as Mozambique Territory. Politically, the mission is in the British Protectorate of Nyasaland, but in order to distinguish it ecclesiastically from its northern neighbour, the Nyasa Vicariate of the White Fathers, it is known as the Shire Vicariate, from the river of that name which flows through it carrying the waters of Lake Nyasa down to the great Zambesi. One of the first to explore this enchanting region of Africa was the intrepid David Livingstone in his now famous expedition up the Zambesi and the Shire Rivers and on to Lake Nyasa, between the years 1859 and 1864. In justice, however, it must be admitted that the Portuguese had for many years been only too well aware of the existence of these countries. They had long nursed ideas of conquest with a view to linking up their possessions from east to west, Mozambique to Angola. England, however, had other ideas about Nyasaland and did not fail to make them known to Portugal. During the ensuing discussions between the two countries, a Portuguese soldier, Lieutenant Coutinho, at the head of an armed force, entered the country with warlike intentions and hurled himself against the British flag. The solution was a rapid one. An ultimatum from England to Portugal and the irresistible argument of the British fleet in front of Lisbon quickly settled the difference, and finally, on the 14th May, 1891, Nyasaland was officially proclaimed British Territory by Sir Harry Johnston.

Some ten years later, on the 24th May, 1901, three missionaries of the Company of Mary, renewing the gesture of their holy founder, St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, knelt at the foot of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII, and, receiving his blessing, started out for their new mission where they arrived the following July. Their first action on this African soil which was to yield such a magnificent harvest of souls is truly Montfortian. At Port Herald, under the burning sun of the plain, they nail to the trunk of an enormous baobab tree a medal of Our Blessed Lady to whom they consecrate their future labours. And from that moment Mary has continually shown her power in the rapid and solid establishing of the Reign of her Divine Son in the minds and hearts of these sons of Africa. A vast territory of over 25,000 square miles and more than 800,000 natives, members of the great Bantu family, Angurus, Anyanjas, Angonis and Yaos each speaking their own tongue, but professing broadly the same beliefs and subject to the same tribal customs, generally speaking, docile, intelligent and hard-working.

What a wonderful theatre of action! It is not without good reason that Nyasaland has been called “Darkest Africa in Fairest Mood”! It is a land of mountains, rivers and lakes. The rich tropical vegetation of the plains gives way, on the higher plateaux, to the magnificent cedars and the lofty scented gum trees, while every kind of wild beast, from the elephant and the lion down to the smallest springer of the antelope family, make of it a hunter’s paradise. The missionary, however, is first and foremost a hunter of souls. His first care is to set about breaking down the barriers which separate him from the natives. They speak a different tongue; he must learn it. He must become acquainted with all their tribal laws and customs, with their inbred beliefs and superstitions. Much could be written of how these first missionaries and their successors, after a careful study of the native beliefs and customs, ingeniously made use of them as a basis upon which to transplant the dogmas and practices of our holy Faith. Already among them there exists the notion of a God—all Powerful and Creator of all things. They are now taught the existence of the True God—Creator, Redeemer, Remunerator, Head of the human race and, therefore, having the right to impose His commandments just as the native chief does in his own village. From their conception and belief in the spirit “Mizimou,” the notion of the human soul, spiritual and immortal is easily arrived at. That there should be reward or punishment for good or evil actions is part of the native creed and so the idea of moral responsibility, the notion of heaven, hell, virtue and sin is made familiar to them. Their idea of a sacrifice consisting of solid foods and liquids, sacrifice in which the natives themselves take part in order to placate the “spirits” lends itself admirably to the teaching of the dogma of the Sacrifice of the Mass and of the Holy Eucharist. In this way Christianity takes root and grows—truth enlightens the mind, grace purifies the heart of these pagans of yesterday, and the Reign of Christ is little by little established.

In all their apostolic labours the Montfort Fathers never for one moment lost sight of the principal means of success. Jesus will always remain the Blessed Fruit of Mary. He will grow and develop only in as much as His Blessed Mother is known and loved. The very special

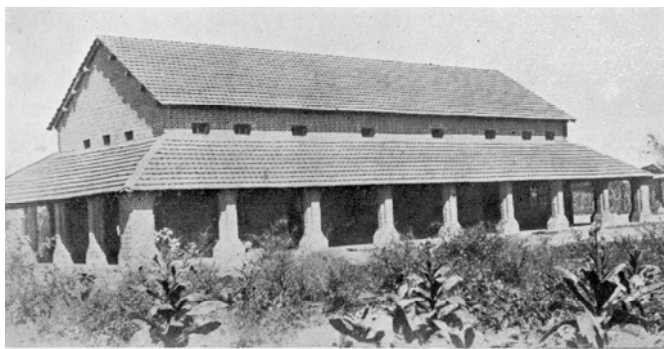


Bishop AUNEAU, S.M.M.
Vicar Apostolic

affection of the African for his mother and the profound veneration in which he holds the mother of the tribal chief were of great help in the fostering of the Company's special devotion to Our Blessed Lady. And so, through Mary to her Divine Son, they flocked in their thousands. Like all spiritual enterprises of any value, the Shire mission grew and developed under the sign of the Cross. Many and varied were its holy visitations. Fire and cyclone, sickness and death, persecution and rebellion, the mission experienced them all and emerged each time more beautiful and more vigorous from the ordeal. Under the intelligent and compelling influence of Bishop Auneau, S.M.M., the Vicar Apostolic, the mission becomes year by year more important. New missionaries arrive regularly as the spreading circle of the Faith shows the need for new and bigger foundations. One of the many glories of his fruitful episcopate will, no doubt, be the setting up of new mission centres at every strategic point of the territory, each with its own big church, central school and residence for three or four missionaries, not to speak of the numerous chapels-of-ease and smaller schools dependent upon each one of them. One after another they spring up with amazing regularity, some in the torrid regions of the plain: Utale, Chikwawa, Port Herald, Palombe; others in the more salubrious climate of the plateaux: Nzama, Neno, Mwanza, Nankunda; some near the principal towns of Zomba, Limbe and Blantyre; others far removed in the savage jungle: Mpiri, Nsipe. Today eighteen such centres exist and one hundred and seventy thousand Catholics are ministered to by fifty-six European missionaries and eleven native priests. Would that I could unfold to the reader all the beauty, all the poetry, all the wonderful effects of grace underlying these strange names, and the eloquence of these figures! In speaking of the establishment of these various mission centres, I have mentioned the question of schools. But no mere mention is enough. As every missionary knows, schools are the condition *sine qua non* of a mission's prosperity. Only by schools, in fact, can a pagan race be permanently Christianised, and it is mainly through their influence that begins and is carried on the Christian and social uplifting of the pagan populations. Mindful of these principles, and in the face of untold difficulties, the Montfort Fathers never spared their efforts in the field of education. For many years, not only did they plan and supervise the building of these schools, but they were also obliged to compose their own text-books in the native language and to spend long hours themselves teaching. In this land where strong Protestant missions were established long before the arrival of the Catholic missionary, epic battles were fought before the false practice of creating so-called "spheres of influence" for the various denominations was finally wiped out. And the mission's success in this sphere is a certain indication of the efficacy of their other missionary labours. Today more than one thousand schools, ranging from the Secondary School and the Central School down to the self-supporting and more modest bush-school, dispense the benefits of a Catholic education to upwards of fifty thousand pupils.

In this all-important work, the missionary receives invaluable help from the native teachers educated in our own Normal Training School at Nguludi of more than one hundred pupils. These highly trained men, chosen as much for their apostolic qualities as for their academical achievements, besides teaching, act as excellent liaison agents between the widely scattered natives and the missionaries. Truly Catholic Action indeed! Candidates are also prepared for the African Universities at an efficient Secondary School with about fifty students, not far from the capital, Zomba. Also in this same healthy district, nestling on the side of a mountain at about 5,000 feet above sea-level and overlooking the vast plain of Utale with its luxuriant vegetation and teeming animal life, stands the native Seminary of the Child Jesus, Nankunda. Here about seventy students receive the normal classical education before going on to a higher seminary in Tanganyika. Already there are a dozen native priests at work in Nyasaland,

one after a brilliant career at the Pontifical University of Propaganda in Rome. Alongside the education of the male population, and following a similar plan, the women of Nyasaland, under the expert care and guidance of our sister congregation, the Daughters of Wisdom, prepare themselves for their task in life. If I have saved until now the mention of the work of the Daughters of Wisdom, it is only to single them out for special praise. From the first



ST. JOSEPH'S LEPER HOSPITAL, UTALE

years of the mission their intelligent and devoted co-operation has been invaluable to the Shire mission. Besides their Normal Training School, their Domestic Training Centres and their many other activities, one must mention the Leper Colony at Utale, where in the true spirit of Montfort they minister to scores of these suffering members of Christ. And once again to the honour of the Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Auneau, one must mention the foundation of two religious congregations for natives ; the Servants of Mary for African women and the Oblates of Mary for African men. It was surely not without good reason that he chose for his motto the phrase of St. Bernard: "Look to the Star, call upon Mary." How that Star has guided him, how Mary has answered his prayers, we have tried to show in this article. May St. Louis-Marie de Montfort from his heavenly throne continue to protect and favour the Shire Mission!

"If I knew that my guilty blood could serve to engrave upon the heart of the reader the truths that I write in honour of my dear Mother and Sovereign Mistress, of whose children and slaves I am the least, I would use it instead of ink to trace these words, in the hope of finding noble souls, who by their fidelity to the practices I teach, will make amends to my dear Mother and Mistress for the losses which she has suffered through my ingratitude and infidelity."—St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, speaking of his "Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin."

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MANY readers are already acquainted with the life of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. In his biography, they note that he founded two religious congregations; we propose to sketch in rapid outline the history of the one for women during its 242 years of existence.

On February 2nd, 1703, Father de Montfort gave the religious habit to a young lady of Poitiers, who had spent a year under his guidance. The first interview of these two saintly souls was striking. Hardly had the new penitent fallen on her knees in the confessional, when the priest told her: "Daughter, it is Our Lady herself who has sent you to me."

The name of the first Daughter of Wisdom was Marie Louise Trichet. Her father was a barrister attached to the law courts of Poitiers. Her spiritual director begins by placing her in a group of pious girls chosen from among the crippled inmates of the poorhouse of Poitiers. These girls form a sort of rudimentary noviciate where Montfort tries out his first sketch of a religious rule. After two months, the little community is disbanded, and Marie Louise finds herself isolated. For twelve long years she alone will practice the Rule of La Sagesse; she alone will wear the habit, the appearance of which has caused such a stir in the town—to the intense disgust of her mother, Madame Trichet, and to the astonishment of the somewhat scandalized public; the coarse grey material of the habit being the same as that supplied to the inmates of the poorhouse.

Montfort gave Marie Louise a rigorous religious training. For eighteen months he subjected her to many severe penances in order to conquer her natural inclinations. She was invariably pliant and submissive under this austere treatment. Meanwhile, both Director and penitent worked hard at a thankless task—that of reforming an establishment badly governed by a matron and staff devoid of talents or training.

In 1705, St. Louis-Marie, now Almoner at the poorhouse, harassed by jealousy, contradicted at all points in his efforts to obtain order, is forced to abandon the post. He sets out for Rome and is there encouraged by the Pope to take up the career of an itinerant missionary and preach throughout Western France. His success in the pulpit and confessional, the striking conversions and even miracles he obtains, arouse the enthusiasm of the populace, while the solidity of his doctrine and the holiness of his life gain many upholders. Nevertheless, the Saint is the object of constant and terrible persecutions. Misunderstood, mocked and derided, he goes hither and thither and compares himself to "a ball in a game of tennis."

And Marie Louise is always alone in the poorhouse. She, too, is "a sign that is contradicted." Jealousy, meanness, pin-prick annoyances are the price she must pay for the unlimited confidence which her conduct gains her on the part of His Lordship, the Bishop of Poitiers, and the Board of Guardians in charge of the poorhouse, also the grateful affection of the inmates whom she tends, feeds, excuses and endures patiently, whom, in



MARIE LOUISE OF JESUS

* Also known as the Sisters of La Sagesse

short, she loves as a tender mother might do. Although she holds the office of Bursar, and is thereby obliged to direct and supervise a thousand and one administrative details, she finds time to nurse the sick, and to supply in the absence of an assistant. A mysterious epidemic, which decimates the inmates and terrifies the whole town, finds her alone ready to risk death and tend the sick whom no one else dares approach.

She is alone! Montfort, who certainly never forgets her and constantly prays for her, is on the highways going from town to town and village to village. How can she reach him?

Eight years go by without bringing any change. Troubled and upset Marie Louise seriously thinks of entering an enclosed order. But Montfort suddenly returns, encourages his spiritual daughter and shows her the approaching end of her solitude. A first companion is given her in the person of the lively and sparkingly witty Catherine Brunet, who will always keep a good temper while leading a really crucified life.

Thanks to Jansenist influence, the diocese of Poitiers remains closed against Montfort; but he is strongly upheld in the diocese and city of La Rochelle. A year later, he summons his two daughters thither. At La Rochelle the Congregation can be definitely organised. A newly-founded school awaits the sisters—they will take up hospital work again later. The Sisters leave Poitiers after a rigorous resistance by the administration of the poorhouse, and also by the Trichet family. All this is heartbreaking for Marie Louise, who, in spite of all difficulties, was doing an immense amount of good. But religious obedience carries the day against both her reason and her affections.

The Sisters arrive at La Rochelle. They are quite novices in the art of managing a school and find themselves face to face with a horde of utterly undisciplined children. The direst poverty welcomes them. They are in temporary quarters; in fact the school will make four moves in eighteen months. The premises are too small, and for the first months their resources are very uncertain. The opening term is extremely fatiguing. The school has to be organised; religious and technical formation must be given to a few novices; money difficulties go, now and then, to the length of leaving them without bread—while for three months Marie Louise and Catherine attempt to sleep in coffins, a rude form of penance which makes the Superior thoroughly ill and obliges Montfort to give up imposing such beds on his religious. Then a novice, without vocation, causes endless unpleasantness, and unfortunately influences her companion, who, though an excellent young girl, follows the other's lead and both leave the Congregation.

But what a memorable term! It is in the country, amid the rustic scenery of a farmyard, that Montfort confirms the appointment of Marie Louise as Superior, a charge which he had already given her by letter, but from which her humility recoils. "It is the will of God," said Montfort—an unanswerable argument for Marie Louise. Then comes the final drawing up of the Rule. Montfort writes it out in one of the rooms of the school building in order to consult her who has so long carried it out.

On the 1st of August, 1715, the Rule of La Sagesse received the episcopal approbation of His Lordship, Monsignor de Champflour, Bishop of La Rochelle. He had handed it over to the Rector of the Jesuits to have it carefully examined. The latter had exclaimed: "Whoever keeps



MARIE LOUISE RECEIVES THE HABIT

this Rule will be an angel!” In the same year, at La Rochelle, two novices were clothed, and after this ceremony the saintly Founder set out again on his missionary tours. He was never to return. On April 28th, 1716, he died, while preaching a mission in the locality of St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre.

The Sisters received the news a few days later. It was as though they had been struck by a thunderbolt. Never had they found themselves in such straits. Their school seemed destined to perish, for the landlord flatly refused the lease of the property held on a yearly tenure. The death of Father de Montfort was a heavy blow, but Marie Louise was firmly resolved to carry on the work he had begun and in the way he had pointed out.

How and where should she ever find the house of religious formation for future Sisters of the Congregation? She had not the faintest idea, but trusted in Divine Providence to guide her in all her enterprises. A few months later the horizon cleared, at least as far as the school was concerned. A fine, vast school, arranged on Montfort’s plan, opened its doors to 400 pupils. A great deal of good was being done for the rough, young feminine population of the poor neighbourhood. The mistresses, under the direction of Sister Marie Louise de Jesus, as Marie Louise Trichet was now called, showed remarkable aptitude for dealing with them.

But still there seemed no possibility of establishing a Mother-house. Furthermore, the prospects are not very bright: after three years she has recruited only one novice!

Towards the end of 1719, Providence comes to her aid. The poorhouse of Poitiers has relapsed into a state of confusion and disorder. The Guardians in despair appeal to their former Bursar. They send an embassy led by Madame Trichet, to offer Marie Louise the most attractive terms. “Come back to Poitiers, the poorhouse will be your headquarters, your house of formation. You shall be Superior and everything shall be done to facilitate your task.”

After much hesitation she decides to leave, but not without many sincere regrets and amid all kinds of difficulties. First, two of the five Sisters, both natives of La Rochelle, ask to remain in their own province. Marie Louise leaves with the two others only. They arrive at Poitiers to receive a tremendous disappointment. The administration of the poorhouse has inserted two unacceptable clauses in the contract, articles which would tie the hands of the Superior and those of her successors, and prevent both her freedom of action and the development of the Congregation.

The Bishop proposes a way out of the difficulty. He himself will become their Superior, and the Sisters shall make their vow of obedience to him. Marie Louise at once detects in this complete opposition to the Founder’s intentions, and to her own ideas. The Congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom is not intended to be tied down to a single diocese. She refuses to sign the contract, and is plunged into the darkest perplexity. She takes up the direction of the poorhouse, but not as Superior. Meanwhile she has recourse to prayer. It is in a poor suburb of Poitiers, called Montbernage, that she is enlightened. Father de Montfort had established a shrine in honour of Our Lady at Montbernage, and had entrusted the care of it to an excellent, though very poor man. Most unexpectedly, this man advises her to go to St. Laurent-sur-Sevre, the place where the Saint had died and where, already, miracles were worked at his tomb. Accordingly, Marie Louise decides to establish the Mother-house at St. Laurent.

In 1724, four years from the commencement of the noviciate, the era of foundations begins. Marie Louise takes charge personally of all foundations, until 1750, which means an uninterrupted series of fatigues, worries and journeys. After 1750 she never leaves St. Laurent, but supervises the work and prepares the voluminous book of regulations and customs interpreting the Constitutions. Finally, on April 28th, 1759, after a life of prayer and self-denial, worn out by hard work and the most austere mortifications, Mother Marie Louise dies. By a

strange coincidence it is on the same day, at the same hour and in the same place, as the Founder she so deeply venerated. Her tomb, which adjoins that of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort in the chapel of Our Lady, was blessed by the priest who had officiated at the Saint's funeral.

Under the energetic direction of Father Besnard, who succeeded Fr. Audubon as Superior-General, the Congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom develops rapidly. In the provinces of Aunis, Saintonge, Anjou and Normandy, hospitals, schools, houses of charity beg for the Sisters of La Sagesse. In 1773, the Government officially recognises the two Congregations founded by Montfort and permits the erection of a suitable Mother-house.

It is built in seemingly vast proportions, but it is soon found to be insufficient, and from time to time we see additions and transformations which give a somewhat muddled effect to the fine, regular building erected by Father Besnard. This building was finished in 1782 and the work crowned by the dedication of the chapel, used nowadays as a community room.

The year 1789 sees the outbreak of the great French Revolution. Sacrilegious hands are laid on the Mother-house of La Sagesse, built at the cost of so many sacrifices, and attempts are made to destroy this religious family, zealous for the glory of God. The Revolution is too often resumed under the single date of 1793. The terrible Year II of the Republic (1793-1794) certainly brings to our minds the most frightful part of this enormous upheaval. But there was an uninterrupted series of events, more or less tragic, of bloody persecutions, of civil and foreign wars which, for ten long years, made all attempts at reorganisation impossible for religious orders. The revolutionary theories, resulting from a false philosophy and coloured by the seductive charms of the idealist poet, Jean Jacques Rousseau, were not wanting in attraction for generous souls; here and there they contained shreds of truth; many upright men were deceived by them, especially at the beginning. The Revolution was looked upon as the dawn of new times, the end of misery for the people and of the crying abuses which were only too real.

The children of Montfort had the great privilege of avoiding the dangerous mirage; it was not in vain that they had cast their anchor in the still waters of Rome.

The teaching Sisters were the first victims; everywhere they were driven from their schools as unworthy to teach, and for having refused to submit to the law. The Sisters in the hospitals, whom the Government saw no way of replacing, were not disturbed quite so soon. However, anti-clerical fanaticism got the better of common sense and a law passed in 1793 affected them. Summoned in their turn to take the oath, many were incarcerated as "suspects" because of their refusal to do so. Those, too, and in goodly numbers, who had helped priests who refused the oath by finding hiding places for them, and enabling them to say Mass and administer the Sacraments clandestinely were imprisoned.

At Nantes the Sisters were shut up in an attic of the old poorhouse (Sanitat). There they were mingled with a very large number of prisoners, many of them religious belonging to various Orders. They suffered dreadfully from hunger and every sort of discomfort, awaiting with patient resignation their turn to appear before the dreaded tribunal. Most of them were ignorant of the reason for their arrest and of the fate that awaited them.

The greatest privation these good Sisters endured was their inability to receive Holy Communion. According to Sister St. Michel, of noble and holy memory, a man of venerable aspect one day entered the wretched attic. No one had seen him come in, though heaven knows that the door was well guarded, for at any moment one or other of the captives might be summoned. The unknown visitor held a box of precious metal. At once he called to the prisoners: "Prepare yourselves for Holy Communion; no need for Confession." They knelt down at once, and reverently received the Blessed Sacrament. The unknown personage disappeared as

mysteriously as he had entered, without anyone seeing him go, and all were convinced that an angel had been sent from Heaven to strengthen and comfort them.

When a barbarous and senseless decree ordered the destruction of La Vendée, guilty of having risen as one man to acclaim its priests and to avenge its King, the religious communities of St. Laurent were pointed out as “a centre of fanaticism.” Since the beginning of the trouble they had been suspected, although they had done nothing to foment the revolt of the population; but had contented themselves with spreading a spirit of Christian charity through the countryside. Boucret’s troops came to St. Laurent. They perpetrated all sorts of horrors, set fire to the houses and carried off thirty-five Sisters into captivity. A few others managed to escape and hide in the neighbourhood.

The troops did not lay hands on any of the Sisters present at the Mother-house, but they plundered everywhere, smashing or throwing out of windows whatever they could not carry away, and showing themselves to the Sisters dressed up in the vestments stolen from the sacristy. During their sacrilegious follies, one of the soldiers wanted to seize the Ciborium (for the generals had orders to take all gold and silver things and send them to the Mint). Thinking himself alone in the chapel, he forced open the tabernacle. Sister Dorothee, a soul consumed by an ardent love of God, saw this. She was courageous enough to follow the man, crying after him: “Citizen, give me back my Master.” The thief was alarmed and dropped the Ciborium in a ditch just beyond the garden. The Sister threw herself on her knees to form a guard of reparation and love. She managed to send a message to the Superior-General, who came as soon as it was dark to take the Blessed Sacrament and put It in a place of safety.

Two victims suffered death outside the house. Sister Gorgonie, who had prepared supper for the soldiers, had been horrified by their blasphemies and their odious dressing up. She had gone back quite ill to the house of a person where she lodged at night. The next day she was dragged out of bed, savagely slaughtered and her body drawn through the streets. Sister Eustache was the second victim. Seeing that her Sisters were being bound with ropes, she had slipped out of the house. But hardly was she outside than she fell into the hands of the soldiery and was massacred.

The guillotine claimed four Sisters: two at Rennes and two at Nantes, when the Reign of Terror was at its height. All four were condemned on the accusation of having joined in the revolt at La Vendée, but the real reason was that they were very firmly attached to the Roman faith. Very little is known of the first two, except that Sister Veronique had been denounced to the judges by the fury of her own mother.

Besides the two Sisters murdered at St. Laurent, seven others suffered the same fate: two on the road to Le Mans; two in their little house at Coron; two in the hamlet of Longeron. One Sister, trying to get from St. Jean de l’Hyversay to St. Laurent, was seen by some soldiers while she was sitting on a gravestone in a cemetery eating an apple to satisfy her hunger. She was slaughtered like the others. Several Sisters died in prison, thirteen in Nantes alone. In all, twenty-six fell victims to violence or ill treatment.

All this is sufficient to show that the Sisters of La Sagesse had a large share in the expiatory suffering which was to counterbalance so many public and private crimes and prepare national reconstruction. But we must add that during the Revolution Father de Montfort’s Congregations were specially watched over by Providence and were often the object of miraculous preservations.

The Noviciate, closed in 1792, cautiously re-opened at the beginning of 1795, and professions took place in secret, presided over by a Superior.

After the Revolutionary period, drawing to a close in 1800, comes a time of great trial. Everything in France must make a fresh start. Young Napoleon Bonaparte will employ his iron will and his immense genius to that end. But while, on the one hand, he is pacifying and organising, on the other he is spreading disorder by his continual wars.

He re-opens the churches, gives back to the faithful clergy their rights; but imposes his personal and frequently erroneous views and decisions on Catholics.

The Sisters of La Sagesse, however, could congratulate themselves on Napoleon's intelligent protection of Orders and Congregations engaged in hospital work, especially if they had manifested their ability in military hospitals. He fully appreciated the work of the Congregation of which the "Minister of Marine" and the authorities of the Port of Brest spoke in terms of unstinted praise. Furthermore, he insisted on having Sisters of La Sagesse in the Naval hospitals of Toulon, Boulogne, Cherbourg and Antwerp.

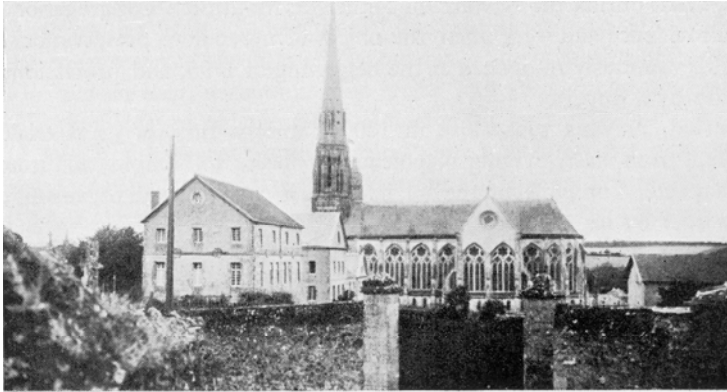
The schools receive no direct protection but no hindrances are put in the way. They suffer from want of resources and staff; but religious education, always carried on in secret during the Revolution, is now able to emerge into the open. Fr. Deshayes, the Superior-General, does a great deal, both for the schools and their staffs. Fresh works were offered to the zeal of the Sisters of La Sagesse. As early as 1812 the parish priest of Auray, in Brittany, had asked for Sisters of La Sagesse to undertake the education of deaf and dumb children. Father Deshayes put his great heart and his clever and practical mind to this work of educating the deaf and dumb, a form of apostleship which filled him with enthusiasm. By his care a new method of teaching the deaf and dumb was perfected, and this made the establishments confided to La Sagesse models of their kind.

There was yet another good work of which Father Deshayes saw but the beginning—the instruction of the blind. A young Sister, named Sister Gilbert, whose candour, piety, patience and innocent charm edified everybody, suddenly went blind. The surprising thing was that, one day, she took up her pencil and brushes and began, not only to write but to draw and even paint. The result, though perhaps not very artistic, was bold and clearly outlined. Sister Gilbert died in 1840, and a year later the Sisters in charge of the institution at Lille were ready to add to their work for the deaf and dumb, further efforts to help the blind.

Up to the year 1870, Belgium, where a house had been opened in 1846, was the only theatre of action outside France for the Daughters of Wisdom. In 1871, the Company of Mary began its first overseas mission in the island of Haiti in the West Indies. The Fathers begged for Sisters to ensure its success. Schools for girls were needed, also Sisters to nurse the sick whom the natives could trust. Enthusiastic volunteers were not wanting at La Sagesse; there were many who only waited for a sign from their Superior to fly to this far-off mission field. The first convoy, due to set out in 1872, was put off several times. Finally they set sail in 1875, in the month of October. The mission of Haiti has greatly prospered since then, and many and important are the establishments set up by the Congregation, both hospitals and schools. But this first Montfortian conquest was bought at a great price. Crosses and difficulties of all sorts lay before the missionaries, and very long was the list of the first victims who fell there.

The political persecution of 1880 forced the Fathers of the Company of Mary to go into exile. A few Sisters of La Sagesse settled in the little Dutch town whither the Fathers had gone with their students. The Sisters did their cooking, mended their linen, and accomplished the thousand and one things for which feminine intervention is required. A small boarding school for girls was opened there, and, until 1903, this was the only house of La Sagesse in Holland.

In 1884 the Sisters set out for Canada, where they were asked to look after the small boys



CHAPEL OF THE SISTERS OF LA SAGESSE, ST. LAURENT-SUR-SÈVRE

of a rural orphanage of which the Fathers had undertaken the direction. In the nineteenth century the Congregation spread far and wide. The opening years of the twentieth century saw another anti-clerical outburst. A number of unjust laws were voted in rapid succession. Religious congregations were forbidden to teach. But this was an occasion for further development and expansion for the Sisters of La Sagesse.

They settled down in England, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Switzerland and Denmark.

The two World Wars offered the Sisters many opportunities of doing good. The overcrowded hospitals called for them; the refugees begged their assistance. The last war saw the death of twenty-eight Sisters of La Sagesse by bombardment. At Nantes, St. Nazaire and Lorient they saved many lives by their cool courage.

The noviciate of La Sagesse each year receives a good number of aspirants. England, Canada, Holland, Italy, Columbia and Haiti, all have houses of formation. In all these countries, as in France, Belgium, Denmark and Switzerland, in the missions of Africa and America, the Sisters of La Sagesse pursue their apostolic work. They earnestly propagate the doctrine of their holy Founder, prolong and develop the work begun by Mother Marie Louise de Jesus. Saint Louis-Marie de Montfort, canonized by our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, must smile on the Congregations which he so painfully founded and which uphold their lofty ideal by striving to gain more and more souls for Jesus through and by Mary.

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The Miraculous Cure of Sister Gerard

The following account of Sister Gerard's remarkable cure is taken from the official records. It is one of the miracles submitted in the Apostolic Process for the Canonization of Blessed de Montfort.

SISTER Gerard of Calvary, whose name in the world was Margaret Ann Cottom, was born of Protestant parents at Croston, Lancashire, on the 2nd of January, 1899. She became a Catholic at the age of eighteen and in October, 1922, sought admission to the Congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom, founded by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort.

At the beginning of her novitiate the Sister began to experience intestinal pains, and she suffered unceasingly from them until her Profession. In September, 1924, she developed a severe cough.

Sister Gerard arrived at Romsey, Hampshire, on the 11th of September, 1924, three days after her Profession. From that date until the 5th of February, 1925, she was unable to undertake any duties on account of the pains she suffered and her weak state. Tonics were given her to strengthen her, for it was known that an operation would be necessary.

On February 5th, 1925, she was operated upon at Romsey Nursing Home by Dr. Cowan, chief surgeon of the South Hampshire Hospital at Southampton, assisted by Dr. Van Someren. The doctor had diagnosed tubercular salpingitis, and the operation consisted in removing the tumour.

After the operation the Sister remained very weak, with the abdomen greatly swollen. Dr. Van Someren said to the Reverend Mother: "She is not absolutely saved. She has at the most two or three years to wait, for the disease will necessarily spread."

After leaving the hospital on March 3rd, 1925, Sister Gerard followed no treatment, except that hot poultices were frequently applied to her stomach to ease her pain. These abdominal pains were more or less constant, at times very acute and always followed by discharges of pus. The Sister felt continually tired and had no appetite; her digestion was painful and any intestinal movement redoubled the pain for several hours.

In October, 1926, her state grew rapidly worse, her weakness increased with loss of weight, her pain became constant, and, in December, she frequently fainted. Dr. Van Someren, who at that time often visited Sister Gerard, declared that he could do nothing for her. Tubercular peritonitis was general and the intestines were definitely affected.

In December, 1926, the middle finger of the Sister's right hand began to suppurate and decay. Remedies were successful in closing the wound, but the finger remained livid, stiff and lifeless. According to Dr. Van Someren, it was a case of tubercular inflammation of the finger.

Sister Gerard had no other tubercular wound, except the large cut that had been made for her operation. This had not healed, and was always swollen and inflamed, and discharged pus.

The Sister, energetic in spite of her sufferings, used to get up on about two days each week from Christmas, 1926, until March 31st, 1927, the date of the first crisis which compelled her to keep definitely to her bed.

The frequent and violent crises that followed caused those about her to fear that the end was near. These symptoms were remarked: her temperature was always below normal. At the beginning of each crisis the Sister seemed to be sleeping. Suddenly, her eyes would turn, her mouth twisted and she groaned; her pulse became feeble and intermittent; she lost consciousness and seemed to be struggling with terrible convulsions. At such times it was hard to hold her down. Some of these crises lasted for three-quarters of an hour, some for an hour or more. To all appearances Sister Gerard was sinking.

On Passion Sunday, April 3rd, 1927, after graver and more frequent crises, it was deemed prudent to administer the Last Sacraments.

Dr. Van Someren visited the Sister on April 7th following, and declared that there was nothing else to be done. He spoke of giving her an injection of morphia to calm her pain, but refrained from doing so on seeing that it was contrary to the desires of the attendant Sisters.

On April 8th, 1927, throughout the day until evening, it was evident that Sister Gerard was dying. Her tongue was dry and cracked, her pulse imperceptible, her breathing “Cheynes stoke”; her feet and hands were cold and discoloured, her eyes were sunken. It was impossible for her to swallow—for three days and nights she had been unable to swallow anything, not even a drop of milk. Her abdomen was greatly swollen and her body gave off an overpowering odour.

Before the operation on February 5th, 1925, novenas had been begun in honour of Blessed de Montfort, to obtain Sister Gerard’s cure, and they had been continued except for short intervals. Some novenas were also made to St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, but immediately afterwards the novenas to Blessed de Montfort were recommenced. The novena in progress when Sister Gerard’s condition became critical was one to Blessed de Montfort, with public prayers in his honour.

On April 8th, 1927, the Feast of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows, and the last day of the novena to Blessed de Montfort for the sick Sister, the Mother Provincial of the Daughters of Wisdom, who had come to visit Sister Gerard, judging that the end was near, prepared her to make her perpetual vows. Before the little ceremony she had a relic of Blessed de Montfort brought into the room and gave it to the dying Sister to kiss, afterwards putting it under her pillow. Sister Gerard uttered her vows in a voice that was scarcely audible in the presence of the whole Community gathered in the infirmary. Rev. Mother Provincial then said in a loud voice: “Blessed Father, this is the last appeal that we address to you on behalf of one of your daughters. From your place in heaven deign to look down on her and cure her.” Then three Hail Marys and three invocations to Blessed de Montfort were said.

Afterwards the Community went to the chapel for the Stations of the Cross and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Mother Provincial left the sick Sister alone for a few minutes while she went to assist at Benediction.

While Sister Gerard was thus alone, her pains grew more violent, so she had recourse to Blessed de Montfort and took hold of his relic from under her pillow, murmuring: “If the others must suffer from my death, I am ready to stay on earth, if it be God’s will.”

All at once, Sister Gerard, being in full possession of her senses, saw a cloud of incense as it were at the foot of her bed, and in this cloud she perceived very clearly the figure of Our Blessed Lady, all radiant with light. She could not make out clearly the expression of Our Lady’s face, but she distinctly heard a voice say: “Child, what has it to be?”

Unable to speak, Sister Gerard replied by a murmur, and immediately, turning her head to the right, she saw Blessed de Montfort, near her bed and outside of the cloud. His figure was quite clear, and she recognised him at once by the habit of the Montfort Missionaries that he was wearing and by his long hair, like that which is given him in pictures. He smiled at her—a calm smile that was not of this world. As soon as she saw him, she said: “Father, give me your blessing.”

Thereupon, she closed her eyes, made the sign of the cross with the relic and applied it to the spot where the pain was most severe.

On opening her eyes, Sister Gerard felt that the pain had gone and saw that she was alone. At the spot where she had seen the Blessed Virgin, there remained only a light cloud which vanished about a minute afterwards.

Mother Provincial left the chapel before the Laudate Dominum at the end of Benediction and returned to the sick room, from which she had been absent only ten minutes. She found the Sister sitting up with her feet out of the bed, praying in a loud voice and crying: "*I am cured! I am cured!*" Rev. Mother Provincial at once called Mother Superior, who embraced the Sister with effusion. Four other Sisters had followed her to the infirmary, and the emotion of all was plainly visible.

When she had told Mother Provincial how she had been cured, Sister Gerard exclaimed all of a sudden: "Oh, Reverend Mother, my finger is cured too! Look! I can bend it as easily as the others."

The Sister then asked to get up, but Mother Provincial, although convinced of the cure, thought it indispensable for the legal verification that the Sister should not move, and told her to await the doctor's visit. Sister Gerard also asked for something to drink, and drank, without stopping, a bowl of milk and then a glass of cream.

After supper, all the Sisters who were present in the Community went up to the infirmary to see Sister Gerard, and all remarked that the disagreeable odour had completely disappeared.

The Sister Infirmarian, who had until then watched beside her each night, stayed in her room again that night. From time to time she got up to see Sister Gerard, and each time she found her resting peacefully.

Next day Sister Gerard breakfasted heartily on eggs and bacon, and even declared she could eat more. Since the doctor was unable to come that day, because his assistant was away and he had numerous patients to attend to, the Sister was allowed to get up and walk about the house and gardens.

On April 10th, Palm Sunday, Sister Gerard was present at High Mass and remained standing throughout the reading of the Passion. She also received Holy Communion.

The next day, she was given the main corridor of the Convent and two classrooms to sweep and polish. The rest of the day she spent studying in preparation for a University examination. That same day Dr. Van Someren came and learnt that Sister Gerard was busy working, and, considering her cure to be evident, he did not even visit her. He simply remarked: "Since our Saviour worked such great miracles during His life on earth, why should He not still work them now?"

After her cure, on April 8th, Sister Gerard received no treatment whatsoever.

On May 5th, 1927, Dr. Van Someren visited her and he then ascertained that the wound caused by the operation, that had never properly closed, was completely healed.

He wrote to the Rev. Mother Superior on the 27th of the same month, in reply to her request for a certificate: "With regard to our conversation of a few days ago concerning Sister Gerard's cure, I certainly consider her recovery as being above nature. The sudden change from the state of illness to physical health was not the work of nature, but of a force working rather against nature, for, according to the ordinary course of things, the Sister was dying. This change, which we may say was instantaneous, was something unexpected, although we are all glad to note this change."

Since the 8th of April, 1927, Sister Gerard has suffered no relapse. She rapidly gained her normal weight (12 lbs. in the first fortnight) and has maintained it. She has since followed the holy rule and applied herself to her task like the other Sisters.

In 1934 Sister Gerard left England for the Shire Mission, Nyasaland, happy that her desire to work for the conversion of souls had at last been granted. She is still living and full of health.

The Religious Situation in France at the time of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort

By Rev. JOSEPH REDMOND, S.M.M.

BORN on the 31st of January, 1673, St. Louis-Marie was ordained priest on the 5th of June, 1700. He died, while giving a mission at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre, on the 28th of April, 1716. His apostolate, therefore, lay between the years 1700 and 1716. During this time the religious situation of his fatherland seemed apparently to be brilliant. There were, in reality, many sad defects—it is evident that the religious ignorance of the people, the Jansenist heresy and Gallicanism, were serious evils casting shadows of gloom and despair over the whole country and calling for strenuous counter-attack. But nevertheless, there was much that might excuse a feeling of optimistic security—the Church was undoubtedly passing through a period of expansive progress and outstanding virtue and talent.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century there were 130 Bishops in France, more than a thousand Abbeys of monks and nuns, as well as a veritable galaxy of lesser Monasteries, male and female. The great Orders vied with one another in rapid expansion throughout the country: the Dominicans made up three different Congregations; and the Franciscans, sub-divided into several branches, could muster in one branch alone (that of the Capuchins) fifteen provinces and 423 houses. Carmelites, Augustinians, Minimi, were all in an equally prosperous state of development.

Alongside these ancient Orders, there were the more recently-born “religious congregations.” The seventeenth century had brought into being 19 male and 33 female congregations, and all, without any practical exception, were flourishing in the year of Montfort’s ordination.

It is hard to realise that within Paris alone there were to be found 46 parishes, 10 seminaries, 3 Abbeys and 42 communities of men, 8 Abbeys and 44 communities of women, as well as 15 non-cloistered communities and 26 hospitals (religious). Such was the Paris of 1700 with a population of 500,000 souls.

Altogether in France there were at least 100,000 ecclesiastics. But the Church was not only remarkable for its numbers, contemporary talent and virtue were also brilliant. Remember that the saintly influence of Cardinal de Bérulle, Père de Condren, St. Vincent de Paul, St. John Eudes and M. Olier was still in full vigour. The eloquence of the great Catholic orators was also at its highest peak: Bossuet and Bourdaloue were to die only in 1704; Flechier in 1710, Fénelon in 1715, and Massillon in 1745. Literature too, in all its aspects, shone with dazzling brilliance and moreover took its inspiration mainly from Christian sources.

At the head of the State was the luminous example of King Louis XIV who had always fundamentally adhered to his religion; even throughout the years of his moral disorders, he had said his rosary each day, and was forever about the conversion of Protestants and the destruction of the Jansenists. True he had flouted the authority of the Pope, but he retracted in 1697. Converted from his irregular life in 1680 he shone thenceforth as a great Catholic King, protector of the Oriental Catholics and bestowing his favours with royal largesse on the missions.

So much for the brilliant externals of French religious life in the year of Montfort’s ordination. But, as a young priest, he was not blinded into passive composure by such a dazzling spectacle. Rather was his zeal fanned into devouring flame by the sad sight of the religious ignorance of so many, the demoralising effects of widespread Jansenism and the heretical tendencies of the Gallican party.

The ignorance of the vast majority of the people was indeed terrifying. This was due in the first instance to the poor training of the clergy who, for the most part, never had sufficient seminary formation. The full seminary training as we know it today was only to come later; in the meantime priests could easily be found for the more lucrative positions and for the towns, but there were not enough to cater for the poorer country folk. Montfort makes frequent allusions to this religious ignorance; hence his burning sympathy and zeal for the instruction of the poorer people. "I desire . . . especially to teach the catechism to the poor—this is my greatest attraction." "I feel a great desire . . . to go in simplicity and poverty to teach the catechism to the poor peasants." These are extracts from a letter written to his director on the 6th November, 1700. In 1701, he says that he had been sent to "a poor country parish, rather abandoned. During the ten days I stayed there I taught catechism to the children twice each day and preached three sermons . . ." Later in the same year: "Teaching the catechism to the poor of the town and country is my element." "For almost a fortnight I have been catechising beggars throughout the town." And the following year: "I taught the catechism for almost two months to all the beggars of the town—I went about looking for them in the streets. I taught them at first in a poor chapel of St. Nicholas; later, because of the crowds of them, in the open marketplace . . ."

"When I consider the needs of the Church, I cannot but sigh and ask constantly for a small and poor company of good priests who, under the banner and protection of the Blessed Virgin, should go from parish to parish teaching the poor peasants . . ."—thus he had written but a few months after ordination; and he will always, to the end of his life, hold fast to his firm belief in the value of the catechism during missions. When, towards the end of his life, he wrote the Rules for his missionaries, he declared quite plainly that "the work of the catechism is the most important of the mission."

There was a more insidious evil abroad in 1700, a more subtle poison which was to infect the Catholic blood of France for more than a century, weakening souls strangely, sapping their energy and drugging them into dangerous spiritual apathy. Jansenism was the most extraordinary heresy the Church had ever witnessed. "All others withdrew from her communion and even gloried in their secession from her. But Jansenism refused to admit any separation from the universal Church. It composed entire volumes, vindicating the indispensable necessity of union with Rome. It maintained without shame or fear that it was a member of the Church by which it was anathematised. It had the unbelievable pretention to be of the Catholic Church, in spite of the Catholic Church. It proved that Rome did not know her own children, was ignorant of her own dogmas, could not even read. It mocked her decisions; appealed from them to higher authority; trampled them underfoot; at the same time proving to other heretics that she was infallible and that they, therefore, were inexcusable." In these piercing words of de Maistre we see portrayed the diabolical cunning of the Jansenists who never went as far as formal schism, but whose heresy was nevertheless declared and open.

In its beginnings it was without reproach. The first phase of Jansenism brought it into light as a theological school opened on the doctrinal issues of grace and predestination. Animated with incontestable zeal for Catholic reform a number of intellectuals had thought fit to set about this meritorious task by resurrecting the penitential customs of the first centuries which, somehow or other, they connected with St. Augustine. Their theories were first presented in the pages of the "Augustinus" and their devotional practices were popularised with rare talent in the book on frequent Communion.

The "Augustinus" was the posthumous work of Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, appearing at Louvain in 1640. The Abbot of Saint-Cyran, Duvergier de Hauranne, had largely incited

Jansenius, greatly helped him in the actual composition of the work and, by his intrigues, had prepared the contemporary mind to welcome it. In prison at the time of its publication he called it “the devotional book of the latter days.” Still the controversies it provoked remained mainly within the ranks of the theologians : it could have little influence on the ordinary folk. Moreover, it had been condemned by Rome in 1641.

But popularisation was not slow to follow. Saint-Cyran had composed a small treatise entitled “Familiar Theology,” which treated in particular of Penance and the Eucharist. It appeared in 1642 and was passed from hand to hand in the so-called “pious circles.” A Jesuit, Père de Sesmaisons, to offset its influence, wrote an “Instruction,” which he had circulated in the same way. In 1643, the Cardinal of Paris condemned the work of Saint-Cyran but later withdrew his condemnation. It was in the same year that Antoine Arnauld, to defend his master, Saint-Cyran, published his work “On Frequent Communion, wherein are faithfully expounded the sentiments of the Fathers, the Popes and the Councils with regard to the use of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.”

This book, admirably written, had immense success and did almost parallel harm. Rightly did St. Alphonsus say of it: “Be careful of Antoine Arnauld who makes a fine show of sanctity and seems only to seek purity and perfection for receiving Holy Communion, whereas his only intention is to turn the faithful away from the Sacrament.” Penetrating judgment for, in point of fact, St. Vincent de Paul, writing only five years after the publication of the “Frequent Communion,” could say: “Several parish priests of Paris complain that they have far less Communion than in past years. St. Sulpice has 3,000 less. At St. Nicholas’s, 1,500 parishioners have not made their Easter Duties. Hardly anyone at all receives Holy Communion on the first Sundays and the Feast Days.” (25th June, 1648.) And yet he spoke only of those parishes whose priests were opposed to Jansenism . . . what, then, must have been the state of affairs in others? Every year, at Beauvais, “some seminarians omitted their Easter Duties as an example to the laity” . . . and this custom was only too widespread. Furthermore, the age for First Communion was retarded to twenty or thirty years; and the Jansenists would even allow the faithful to die without the Sacraments.

Another work had been inspired by the Jansenists and spread amongst the people by every conceivable means. It was a book of Adam Winderfeldt, jurist of Cologne, and was entitled “Salutary advice of the Blessed Virgin Mary to her indiscreet devotees.” It appeared in 1673, only a few months after the birth of St. Louis-Marie. Inspired by the Jansenists, it contained “all the venom of their desolating doctrines.” It bitterly attacked every practice of the devotion of the faithful towards their heavenly Mother and endeavoured to destroy the very principles underlying these practices. The work was condemned in 1674 and although Winderfeldt wrote again to defend himself, his apologia, too, was condemned a year later.

Jansenism, unfortunately, had at hand many a powerful ally in the ranks of the Gallican party: this was the third cloud overshadowing the religious situation of France in the time of Montfort. Gallicanism, if it had been followed to its logical conclusion and allowed to run its course unhampered, would have completely done away with the authority of the Pope, undermined the very foundation of the structure of the Church, and would eventually have worked for the total destruction of the Faith.

According to the Gallican theory, the Bishops of the Church had, in all matters relating to faith and religion, exactly the same power to judge as the Roman Pontiff. As successors of the Apostles, they judged on an equal footing with the Pope even in general councils. If a Roman decision should forestall the judgment of the Bishops, then they too, by virtue of their own

proper power, had just as much right to pronounce judgment as he. They admitted that, considered as a public teacher, the Doctor of the Churches, the Pope, was infallible when speaking “*ex cathedra*.” But they had their own interpretation for these words : according to them, “*ex cathedra*” meant “with the consent and approval of the Church.” Their fundamental thesis was built upon this point. “Although the Pope has the principal part in matters of faith, although his decrees bind all the Churches and each Church in particular, nevertheless his judgment is not immutable, unless the consent of the Church is given.” “It is to the whole Church, to the Church taken in common that Christ gave the privilege of infallibility and not to Peter alone nor to any other man.” (Tournely.) And, therefore, Councils are above the Pope.

Thus, when five propositions of Jansenius were condemned, the French Bishops, according to a Gallican theologian, did not receive the decision of the Pope with blind obedience. They were not merely executors of his judgment—they were themselves judges. They did not judge the judgment of the Pope but, just as much as he, they, too, pronounced sentence on the question already settled by him.

Political Gallicanism based itself on these principles and from them drew disastrous conclusions. The temporal power of the State was said to be absolutely independent of any other power and in no case whatever could it be directly or indirectly impugned. As a consequence, the canons and rulings which the Church had the right to make became laws of the State only in as much as they were authorised by the King. (Parlement de Paris, 1731.)

According to these so-called principles, let us suppose that a condemnation has been issued by Rome. Immediately the bishops of each metropolitan district would meet to examine the text published by Rome, in order to judge after the Pope and with the Pope. If it were found to conform to the Gallican “liberties,” it would be presented to Parliament and only after having received the royal “*placet*,” the “*exequatur*,” could it be published in the kingdom . . . With such theories, each bishop, being infallible with the Pope, could examine and judge every pontifical document before accepting it . . . But the point is: were all the bishops orthodox? How many, for instance, in the time of Montfort, had been won over to Jansenism. It was only to be expected that they would protest against “the abuse of power by Rome” and appeal to a Council . . . And yet, all these people, in open revolt as they were, still claimed to be sound Catholics!

Evidently Jansenism found in Gallicanism a precious ally to help it tremendously in its hypocritical propaganda. It was Gallicanism which allowed the Jansenists, condemned by Rome, to elude their sentences on the plea that these had not received the assent of the whole episcopate. It was in the name of Gallicanism that the kings of France prevented the publication of papal instructions and forbade the bishops to write against Jansenism. Alleging the “liberties” of the Gallican church, the French parliaments admitted appeals against the decisions of bishops whose only crime was that of condemning Jansenism. On the same principle they caused pastoral letters to be burned by the common executioner. And they imprisoned or exiled priests for daring to refuse the Sacraments and Christian burial to Jansenists who were in open revolt against the solemn pronouncements of the Holy See. Consequently, the jurisdiction and the discipline of the Church were almost entirely in the hands of the civil power. Fénelon gave a fair idea of this when he wrote: “in practice, the king (of France) is more our head than the Pope.”

From all this it is easy to form an idea of the sad plight of the Church in France when Montfort appeared on the scene. Immediately he threw himself into the fray, a zealous supporter of Papal supremacy and a declared enemy of all that Jansenism stood for. An “ardent defender of the Catholic faith” and “fearless champion of truth”—thus was he styled later—he frequently came to grips with Gallican bishops who immediately withdrew his faculties or cast him out of

their dioceses. It was in opposition to them and in proof of his childlike devotion to the Vicar of Christ that he set out on a pilgrimage to Rome, in 1706, in order to learn from the lips of Peter's successor the will of God in his regard. "My son," replied the Pope, stretching out his hand towards France, "you have in your own country a field large enough for your zeal." Then the Holy Father pointed out to him that the object of his mission should be to combat the errors of Jansenism, which he himself had condemned, and to do this by thoroughly teaching Christian doctrine to the people.

No one knew better than Clement XI the real state of France; how the poisonous errors he had just condemned were spreading far and wide among the faithful. He knew, too, that among the theologians and bishops there was a lack of submission to the dogmatic decrees of the Holy See. Here, then, was a man sent by God, a man after God's own heart, loyal to the heart's core to the Vicar of Christ and to the decisions of the Holy See, ready to preach a crusade against these errors and already engaged in preaching it by the very means he himself would have chosen and approved. Truly this was the finger of God.

Montfort, on his part, was full of joy. The Pope could hardly have spoken more welcome words than those in which he set the Apostolic seal upon what the devoted missionary had hitherto done for God, and upon his favourite means of action—the familiar instruction of little children and the poor. Henceforward, it was for him to work with redoubled zeal now that the Vicar of Christ had blessed his work, for to this man of faith to hear the voice of Clement was to hear that of the Divine Saviour. His word would be forever graven upon his heart.

And so he returned to France with new, untapped sources of energy and zeal. Following the recommendation of the Pope, he laboured always in perfect submission to the bishops of the dioceses into which he was called, but that did not curb his enthusiastic zeal, his heart's desire to flay the Jansenistic creed with the lash of fiery tongue and eloquent pen.

In direct opposition to the Jansenists, he set about the task of calling the faithful to frequent Communion. Nothing is more typical than his attitude at the time of the foundation of La Sagesse. He had Marie Louise of Jesus receive Holy Communion every day—and with her, the poor girls of the hostel whom he had grouped into an association. Complaints were soon made and the Bishop at first ruled that they should receive the Blessed Sacrament only once a week. He came back on this decision very quickly, however, and gave Montfort full latitude so that he was thenceforth left free to lead souls frequently to the Eucharist. In his retreats and missions he always insisted on Holy Communion and we have a convincing proof of his loving zeal for the Eucharistic Christ in the multitude of hymns he composed in His honour.

Montfort was equally vigorous in opposing the Jansenist theories on devotion to the Mother of God. Indeed, the favourite themes of his preaching were the Holy Rosary and the True Devotion to Mary, and by these means he worked to establish in the hearts of the faithful that loving, childlike confidence in her which was so hateful to the Jansenists. How frequently does he not allude to the Jansenists in the "True Devotion" itself—when he speaks of "Catholics, and even of Doctors among them, who, professing to teach truth to others, know neither Thee nor Thy Holy Mother, except in a speculative, dry, sterile and indifferent manner . . . They cry out against him (the devout servant of Mary) and put before him a thousand false reasons by way of proving that . . . there are in this devotion great abuses" (No. 64); and when he rejects the "critical devotees—proud scholars, strong-minded and self-sufficient people . . . who criticise nearly all practices of devotion to her (Mary) . . . just because such practices are not according to their own fancy." (No. 93.)

Of course Montfort did not expect them to receive his thundering denunciations on

bended knee, to lower their heads in shame when he assailed them with the lash of his fiery eloquence. He knew they would have their revenge. But like his Master he was glad to suffer in the cause of justice. He rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus and to fight against implacable foes under the banner of Her whom he so confidently called “the Destroyer of heresies and of the powers of Hell.” And She whom he had followed with such untiring energy and boundless courage, now leads him to his triumphal glorification, to the final honours of canonisation: “Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

IRISH PRIESTS IN FRANCE AT THE TIME OF ST. LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT.

While engaged in evangelising the country-parts round la Rochelle, St. Louis-Marie de Montfort received a pressing invitation from the parish-priest of la Séguinière, a parish not far from Cholet, but at that time forming part of the diocese of La Rochelle. It is interesting to know that this parish-priest was an Irishman of the name of Kantin, or more probably Canty, for, owing to ceaseless religious persecution, a good number of Irish priests had made their way over to France and had joined the French clergy. This priest was so greatly esteemed by St. Louis-Marie that the latter was wont to call him the “Curé after his own heart.”

But he was not the only Irish priest whom the Saint must have come across. In September, 1710, Dr. Cornelius O’Keeffe, afterwards Bishop of Limerick (1720), was made parish-priest of Saint-Similien, Nantes. In this church there was an ancient statue of Notre Dame de Bon Secours, greatly honoured both by the people of Nantes and the exiled Irish. Dr. O’Keeffe, therefore, must have been appointed parish-priest of Saint-Similien not only in the same year, but also in the very month that witnessed the humiliation of the Saint at Ponchâteau. (See p. 11.) He must also have been there when St. Louis-Marie established in that parish (1710-1711) the association of the Friends of the Cross, and seeing that the Confraternity could not have been erected without leave of the parish-priest, Dr. O’Keeffe must have necessarily been brought into contact with the Saint of God.

“Just as in natural and corporal generation, there is a father and a mother, so in the supernatural and spiritual generation there is a Father, who is God, and a Mother, who is Mary. All true children of God, the predestinate, have God for their Father and Mary for their Mother ; and he who has not Mary for his Mother has not God for his Father.” St. Louis-Marie de Montfort (True Devotion, No. 30).

“Were a new way made for me to go to Jesus Christ, a way paved with all the merits of the Blessed, adorned with all their heroic virtues, illuminated and beautified by all the radiance and beauty of the angels, were all the angels and saints on that way to lead, defend and sustain those who wished to tread it, truly, truly, I boldly declare, and I speak the truth, that in preference even to such a perfect way I would take the immaculate way of Mary . . . the way without stain or spot, without sin, actual or original, without shadow or darkness ...” St. Louis-Marie de Montfort (True Devotion, No. 158).

The Spirituality of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort

By Rev. WILFRED JUKKA S.M.M.

“**M**AN was created by and for the Eternal Wisdom, and this Wisdom took flesh and was crucified in order to save man.”-In these words we have the keynote to the whole of Montfort’s spirituality. Now this may seem strange to many who have come to look on the Saint as the great champion of devotion to Mary. And yet this is his fundamental characteristic ; he is the apostle of Jesus Christ, the Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom. All his other devotions spring from this essential and central fact and only in this light can they be properly appreciated and understood ; to ignore this basic point would be to divorce his other devotions from their natural background. As an author once wrote : a person embracing the True Devotion to Mary and forgetful that it is but a means of becoming more closely united to Jesus Christ, the Eternal Wisdom, is like a man trying to preserve the freshness of a flower after it has been cut, from the stem-it will wither and fade in his hands.

Therefore the purpose of this article is to show how all Montfort’s devotions, especially his devotion to Our Lady, are rooted in his devotion to the Incarnate Wisdom.

I. MONTFORT AND DIVINE WISDOM

The word “Wisdom” must not lead us astray. For St. Louis-Marie it does not mean that quality or gift of wisdom as is generally understood when talking of a “wise” man. No, *it means Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who took flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary.*

It has been objected that the title of “Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom” is ambiguous and cumbersome. It is not within the scope of this article to vindicate the choice of title, but the following reasons will help us to understand why Montfort preferred it to all others. The word “Wisdom” implies a way and philosophy of life, something that can direct and guide us in all the circumstances in which we find ourselves. That the Saint had this idea in view is evident from the contrast he draws between true and false wisdom, between the wisdom of the world and the Wisdom of God. Christ is our model and in His teaching we can discover that remarkable synthesis of philosophical and religious truths which the greatest thinkers before Him had never even remotely approached and which those after Him have been unable to surpass.

But besides this aspect of Christ Wisdom as the Christian philosophy of life—an aspect which appears singularly appropriate for our own days when so many false philosophies abound—there is the consideration of Christ Wisdom as given in the Sacred Scriptures, and this greatly influenced Montfort in his choice of title. In the Old Testament, and especially in the Books of Wisdom, the Eternal Word of God is described in the most captivating terms under the title of “Wisdom.” By this personal Wisdom all things have been created and for Him all things exist. And St. Paul completes the description given by the Scriptures: “Here are the Greeks intent on their philosophy, but what we preach is Christ crucified . . . Christ, the Wisdom of God.” (1 Cor. i, 22.) Of all the titles that the Bible applies to the Eternal and Incarnate Word of God, perhaps the most common is that of Wisdom. Can we wonder, then, at the choice of St. Louis-Marie?

The idea that the great God should Himself be the model for human wisdom, the idea that this Divine Wisdom should take flesh and die on the Cross so that man could share in the very life of God, haunted Montfort. For him, Christ Wisdom dominates all else. To seek after and to

possess this Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom is the one supremely important concern in life; it gives the true meaning to the whole of creation. This Christ Wisdom is the most beautiful and most attractive Being that the human mind can conceive. He has done everything that we could in any way expect—and far beyond what we could expect—in order to win our love. And yet this adorable, lovable Son of God is not adored and loved as He deserves to be. Far from being the object of all men's affections, He is for countless millions the object of their indifference and even hatred.

This thought shook Montfort to the very depths of his soul. He was inflamed with love for the Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom, and above all else he wished to lead men to this same love. All his life and labours, all his writings and preaching, all his prayers and sufferings have this one single end—to make Jesus Christ, the Divine Wisdom, more known and better loved. Thus, St. Louis-Marie fits in with the whole of Catholic thought, and especially with his own immediate background, the French School of the seventeenth century with its invariable insistence on Christ being the centre and pivot of all our life.

It was before his ordination that Montfort wrote his book "The Love of the Eternal Wisdom." Both from the point of view of style and of doctrine it is inferior in merit to his well-known "True Devotion," but it has this great importance: it is the only place in which we find all the Saint's teaching and devotions fitted into an harmonious whole, a perfect plan of spirituality. The book is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the quest for man's love made by the Incarnate Son of God. It shows how the Eternal Wisdom reveals His origin, manifests His beauty and attractiveness, displays His riches and goodness and testifies His ardent desire that He should be sought after and loved by men. In the second part the author points out the means we must take in order to respond to the call made by God's Eternal Wisdom, in order to possess within ourselves the Incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Four means are given, all of which are necessary: the first, an ardent desire; the second, continuous prayer; the third, universal mortification; and the fourth, true devotion to Our Lady.

II. DIVINE WISDOM AND DEVOTION TO MARY

And so we see how Montfort's devotion to God's Mother fits into his more general devotion to the Incarnate Wisdom. For the Saint, Our Blessed Lady is a means of acquiring Wisdom; that is, of being united to her Divine Son. Devotion to her is only a means, but it is the most perfect means, and according to St. Louis-Marie the only means we have of being constantly united to Christ. The other means enumerated by the Saint can help us to acquire this Eternal Wisdom, but only devotion to Mary is able to preserve it; it alone can influence all the actions of our life and bring about the complete reign of Christ Wisdom in our hearts.

We have already said that Montfort was absorbed with the idea of how much the Divine Wisdom has loved us and how much we should love Him in return. Contemplating this Christ Wisdom, the Saint saw that, out of the millions and millions of ways which were possible for God to use in order to save us, and thereby win our love, Divine Wisdom chose one in preference to all others, and that way was to take flesh after the manner of all men and thus to become dependent on a mother. This dependence was in all things complete and absolute during the time preceding His birth. During the years of childhood and youth, God Incarnate was in as great a dependence on Mary His Mother as ordinary children are on theirs. But that is not all. When Our Blessed Lord reached the age of maturity He, like other children, could have ceased to depend on His Mother. And yet, in a startling, soul-shaking mystery of obedience He remained dependent uniquely because He willed it—down to the age of thirty. Here, indeed, was food for thought.

Christ is our model, and in imitating Him Montfort, the ardent disciple and lover of Christ Wisdom, knew that perfection was to be found. And so, from his great love for Jesus Christ, the Saint necessarily and logically arrived at the conclusion that the surest way to please Him, to make Him better known and loved, was to imitate Him by devotion which would include the idea of dependence on His Mother.

Having arrived at this conclusion, Montfort next examined the theological basis of the devotion of complete dependence on Mary. And there he discovered that this idea of entire dependence on God's Mother, not only *could* be a safe and easy way of pleasing Christ because founded on His own Divine example, but that it *must* be the way of uniting ourselves to Christ and of pleasing God. This was another step forward. For Montfort discovered that Catholic theology teaches with unmistakable clarity the fact that Mary is our Mediatrix and Mother. Grace is the supernatural life of the soul. Without it we cannot be pleasing to God, without it we can do nothing as far as the salvation of our soul is concerned. Now, by one of those tremendous mysteries of God's Providence—for which God did not seek our consent but to which He most certainly expects us to conform our lives and our actions—Mary has been assigned a necessary rôle both in the acquisition and distribution of grace. Under Christ, in complete dependence on His infinite merits, Mary has obtained for us all the graces we receive during the whole course of our life. And not only did she, together with and dependently on her Son, earn all grace for us, but she also distributes to us all the graces we receive. Every single grace, from the inspiration to offer up a silent prayer down to the grace of martyrdom, each and every grace without exception comes to us through the hands of our heavenly Mother. Here, indeed, is complete and absolute dependence. The saints, and notably St. Augustine, have compared our dependence on Mary to the dependence of an unborn child on its mother. Possibly it is the best example we can give, but if anything it fails to bring out that utter and complete state of dependence on Mary in which God Himself has placed us.

God, therefore, has so willed the supernatural order that, even in spite of ourselves, we are entirely dependent on Our Blessed Lady. From this Montfort argues that the only devotion to Mary which can be fully pleasing to God, which can in any way be proportionate to the God-given rôle of the Virgin in our lives, is that devotion which acknowledges and proclaims this already-existing dependence and which goes on—in what is logically speaking the only way left open to us—to promise Mary that we shall try to model our lives for the future in accordance with that dependence. And this is all that Montfort's True Devotion to Our Lady, his Holy Slavery, asks of us. That seemingly tremendous donation which we make in the consecration of ourselves as Mary's slaves, what does it amount to?—The consecration of my body and soul, my goods both interior and exterior, and even the value of my good actions. And what is all this in comparison with the glory given to Mary by the Eternal Wisdom, with the acquisition and preservation of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Wisdom, in our hearts? It is but the natural consequence of understanding and appreciating our complete dependence on Mary. It makes us, if you will, Mary's slaves by choice, but we are already, in God's plan for our salvation, Mary's dependents by necessity. The important thing is that we of our own free will live and act with the knowledge of our dependence on our Blessed Mother.

Now we are in a position to understand why Montfort could assert with such confidence that this true devotion to the Blessed Virgin is the easiest and surest means of being united to Jesus Christ, the Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom. For not only do we fall in with God's plans, but we also place ourselves in a secure way of sanctification. The way of closest union with our Saviour surely means a way that will sanctify, not merely the duties of religion, e.g. saying our

prayers, going to Mass, etc., but also every single action, however trifling and ordinary, of our daily life. And this is precisely the great value of Montfort's True Devotion. As Mary's slaves we must seek to honour and please her in all our actions, even the most commonplace. As her slaves we must seek to perform all our actions, even everyday tasks, in the way that Mary would do them if she were in our place. It is no easy matter to sanctify every single action, even the most ordinary, of our daily life. But at least we must agree that Montfort has approached the difficulty with a practical solution. The general act of consecration sanctifies in some way all our future actions, provided they be not sinful. But this general act has its real value and significance only in so far as it is frequently renewed and allowed to influence our actions. And this frequent renewal, if seriously intended, must of necessity tend little by little to make us perform our actions with Mary as our model and with Mary's honour and pleasure as our end. Imitating Our Lady and working for her is something that even the smallest child and most uneducated man or woman can grasp and put into practice.

III. DIVINE WISDOM AND MONTFORT'S OTHER DEVOTIONS

What we have said of St. Louis-Marie's devotion to Mary is equally true of his other devotions: they are, all of them, the outcome of his ardent love for the Divine Wisdom. Montfort has been called, and truly so, the Apostle of the Cross. Once again he reached this devotion from the contemplation of the actions of our Saviour. Christ came to redeem a world lost by sin. He was God and before Him lay an infinite number of ways by which this redemption could be accomplished. In preference He chose the way of suffering, the way of death, the way of the Cross. The whole life of the Incarnate Wisdom was centred on the Cross. All his desires, words and actions were imprinted with the shadow of the Cross. The Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom is a God Crucified; Christ cannot be conceived without the Cross, just as the Cross cannot be conceived without Christ. Hence the saint's daring equation: Christ is the Cross and the Cross is Christ.

From this loving consideration of the Eternal Wisdom indissolubly united to the Cross flows another outstanding trait in the life of our saint: his hatred of the world. The world will not hear of suffering and pain and violently opposes the idea of holiness being linked with suffering. Before us therefore is a choice between the world and its pleasures on the one hand, and Christ and His Cross on the other. Montfort without hesitation chooses the latter. He embraces the Cross with all its attendant pains and trials, not for itself but because it is closely united with that Wisdom Who is the object of his life and devotion. He rejects the world with all its enticements because it is opposed to the spirit of his Crucified Lover. This aspect of Montfort's love of suffering and hatred of the world must ever be borne in mind. He is the Apostle of the Cross, uniquely because he is the Apostle and ardent lover of the Eternal Wisdom nailed to the Cross. It is the same with everything else that the saint taught and propagated. He was the great preacher of the Blessed Sacrament and of the Sacred Heart at a time when both these devotions were attacked by the Jansenists. St. Louis-Marie insisted on them because they were a proof of the love of the Incarnate Wisdom for mankind. The titles of the two Congregations founded by Montfort are both related to his love for the Eternal Wisdom. His congregation for women, which was the first to be founded, he called "The Daughters of Wisdom" in honour of that Wisdom Who was the end and aim of all his endeavours; his congregation for men he styled "The Company, of Mary" in honour of her who is the great means to union with the Eternal Wisdom.

Much more could be said of the spirituality of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. But from

what has already been said we see that the only title which in any way resumes all Montfort's teaching is: "The Apostle of the Eternal and Incarnate Wisdom." To be more complete we might abbreviate all his teaching into one phrase: "Jesus Christ, the Eternal Wisdom, became incarnate in Mary, His Mother, and crucified on the Cross of Calvary."

THE ASSOCIATION OF THE PRIESTS OF MARY, QUEEN OF OUR HEARTS

The Association of the Priests of Mary, Queen of our Hearts, originated at the Marian Congress of Einsiedeln, held in 1906. It received the approval of Pope Pius X the following year, and now numbers more than 8,000 members, both of the secular and the regular clergy.

OBJECT:

The Association has a twofold object :

1. To sanctify the sacerdotal life by the practice of the True Devotion to Mary, as taught by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort.
2. To make this devotion the great means of establishing the reign of Jesus Christ, through Mary, in individual souls, Christian families and society at large, thereby realizing the wish of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort: *Ut adveniat Regnum Jesu, adveniat regnum Mariae.*

ORGANIZATION:

The Association is for Priests and Clerical Students.

Its Director is the Superior-General of the Company of Mary, founded by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort.

It is under the distinguished patronage of the Cardinal Protector of the Company of Mary and the Daughters of Wisdom.

Centres for membership are established all over the world. They are the same as those for the Confraternity of Mary, Queen of our Hearts. By the fact that a priest joins the Confraternity he becomes a Priest of Mary.

Those who wish to become members may apply to any centre, and, having received the consent of the Father Director, they choose a feast-day of Our Lady to confirm their engagement in her service.

On that day they will celebrate Mass to obtain the grace of fidelity to the promises they are about to make ; or, if they cannot say Mass for that end, they will at least pray fervently for that grace. During their thanksgiving they will read their consecration according to the formula of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort.

It is to be desired that this solemn act be prepared for by the spiritual exercises recommended in the *Treatise on the True Devotion*.

To honour Mary, and to establish her reign in his own heart, as well as in the hearts of his people, the priest who becomes the apostle of the Queen of our Hearts will not neglect any practice of devotion or any organization in honour of Our Lady and approved by the Church. But in all his priestly works and methods of apostolate, he will be inspired with the spirit and the practices taught by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort in his *Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* and his *Secret of Mary*.

The Priests of Mary should live and act in conformity with the spirit of their total consecration to Jesus through Mary—i.e. in a spirit of entire dependence. They should renew daily their act of consecration in its short form ; apart from this, no other exterior practice is imposed on them.

PRIVILEGES:

The members are entitled to all the Indulgences which have been granted to the Confraternity of Mary, Queen of our Hearts.

The Priests of Mary enjoy the privilege *Altaris Privilegiati* three times a week. (Decree of Pope Pius X, December 18, 1913, *ad perpetuum*.)

In accordance with a Rescript of February 13, 1907, they may gain an Indulgence of 100 days each time they renew their consecration by saying: "I belong entirely to Jesus through Mary."

They have a share in all the prayers, good works and merits of the members of both Congregations, the Company of Mary and the Daughters of Wisdom.

Montfort, Apostle of the Cross

By Rev. JOSEPH REDMOND, S.M.M.



MONTFORT WITH CROSS

ANY saint, no matter who he may be, is above all else a man of the Gospel . . . a man bred and nurtured on its doctrine, its precepts, its counsels. The Gospel is the divine law after which we must all regulate our lives; that is the essential rule of perfection and there is therefore a logical connection and a necessary harmony between the Gospel and the life of any saint. All are schooled in the science of perfection by the pages of the Gospel, wherein they contemplate the Divine Model of all holiness, Jesus Christ Himself.

Now the Gospel teaches us that the poor and the humble are friends of God; that humiliation, renunciation and suffering may, if rightly understood, lead directly to God; that those who despise honours and riches, those who weep and suffer persecution will one day possess happiness without measure and joy without end. It was precisely this teaching, emanating from the humanity of Christ and permeating the pages of the Gospel that captivated Montfort. This it was which he looked upon as divine wisdom, the wisdom of the Cross. It is clear, then, that although love of the Cross cannot constitute his characteristic, his individuality . . . since it is a general quality of the Christian life, being the essence of Christianity and the foundation of all virtue . . . it is, however, one of the most striking aspects of his type of sanctity.

Like the great Christian artists who, before portraying the features of the Master, cast themselves on their knees to seek inspiration in prayer, Montfort, too, went on his knees before his Divine Model, contemplating Crucified Wisdom in order to reproduce in his own personality the traits of his suffering Saviour. From that source he drew inspiration and zeal. It was through the Cross that as a missionary he awed the masses of the people, softening hearts, converting sinners and sanctifying countless numbers of his hearers. The Cross sustained and invigorated the power of his speech and the ardour of his zeal, making the apostle eloquent at times even to the sublime. The Cross was set as a seal on his entire personality . . . and it was stamped in blood on his flesh, extenuated by fasting and lacerated by the discipline and the iron chains that never left him.

Montfort was well aware that it is a universal law of moral progress, promulgated by Christ Himself, that without sacrifice there can be no possible evolution in virtue, no transformation of soul. This divine law became a guiding principle of his life, since he desired to make his life a living application of the words of Christ: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross."

All those destined to a great mission have each their individual apprenticeship, and Montfort had his own initiation into the life of hardship and suffering in store for him; in the humiliations and contradictions of his clerical training, the future saint was to be prepared and moulded. In a class of four hundred students he was singled out for his virtue, especially "for his austere penance and universal mortification." And yet he received little understanding and less appreciation from those placed over him. His acts of generous piety were frowned upon as bizarre; his rigorous penance and mortification classed as imprudent and exaggerated and his zeal appeared extravagant to those whose ideal of virtue was plainly mediocre. Because he was

original and unconventional and therefore in sharp contrast to others, he was surprisingly misunderstood. Little account was taken of the wonders of his acts of charity, of the nights he would spend (sometimes three or four times in one week) watching the dead, of the discipline taken every day, of the hair-shirts and the iron arm-bands and girdles by which he unceasingly bore in his body the mortification of Jesus Christ. Indeed everything turned against him, his virtue as everything else, and the more his sanctity became apparent the less was it condoned. Rejected on all hands “like a ball in a game of tennis,” as he said, he could well apply to himself the description of St. Paul: “the refuse and off-scouring of all.” It is sad to see this misapplication of human prudence but in reality it was necessary in the designs of Providence for the young levite to be steeped in adversity that he might come forth tempered like the finest steel. It was necessary that man should fail him in all things that he might have the right to repeat with all the more truth the two words which for the rest of his life were to be the summary of his sermons, the refrain of his hymns and the motto of his spirituality: God alone, God alone.

The Cross, indeed, under the guise of misunderstanding and ridicule played a major role in the formation of the priest and in his preparation for the active ministry. With ruthless energy, revolting to our sensitive nature, he literally tortured his body with iron chains and the haircloth; he suffered willingly from heat and cold, fatigue, want and continual fasting; and he would spend long hours of the night in prayer, denying himself much needed rest. His body was exhausted under his cruel lash but he prayed for courage to suffer even more. Contemplating his crucifix he would repeat the words of Augustine: “My God, I see you wounded: I myself must not remain without wound.” This was but the putting into practice of his own teaching which he was later to embody in his hymns:—

“Let us believe, but with a lively faith,
Without the cross, we cannot be saved ...
The cross is God’s furnace,
His loving purgatory, His crucible,
Wherein He prepares for His glory
Even the most perfect of men.”

But his body was not alone to suffer . . . his soul had also its generous share in the pain and trials of each day. Here his sacrifice was even more complete, even more painful, for it embraced the innermost fibres of his heart by an absolute detachment from earthly things, the last recesses of self-will by perfect obedience and the most delicate susceptibilities of self-love by profound humility.

His entire life-story is interwoven with events which prove clearly his remarkable detachment and humility in the most trying circumstances. One day he passed near the Abbey of Fontevault where one of his sisters had just previously made profession. Tired and hungry after a long journey on foot (thus he always travelled), he approached the monastery simply requesting “charity for the love of God.” The portress, her curiosity aroused by his saintly appearance, asked many questions but the only reply she could elicit was his original request for “charity for the love of God.” The Abbess in person arrived on the scene and asked for his name. “Madam,” was the reply, “why have my name? It is not for me but for the love of God that I beg your charity.” Whatever his intention, there can be no doubt that this reply was considered disrespectful: he was sent on his way without further ado. Worn out with fatigue and hunger, the saintly priest withdrew without complaint, but he could not refrain from saying to the portress: “If Madam Abbess knew me, I don’t think she would refuse me her charity.” And indeed, his sister having recognised him from the description given her, he was overtaken and asked to

return. He preferred to go amongst the poor peasants to seek from them the food and rest he needed so urgently.

Later, in Paris, he was discovered in a small dark recess under a staircase, his only furniture an earthen jar and a dilapidated bed, fit, like the place itself, only for the lowliest of the poor. To him it was a near replica of the stable of Bethlehem and, therefore, ideal.

On another occasion, after having broken into pieces a gaming table . . . the cause of a disorderly street-battle between some soldiers and a group of workmen, and the occasion of foul blasphemies . . . he was seized by the annoyed ruffians, buffeted and cursed, and finally dragged off toward the prison. We are told that in these circumstances he bore himself like a conqueror in the midst of acclamation, rather than a criminal escorted by the rabid custodians of justice. To drown the blasphemies hurled incessantly at him, he took his beads in his hand and recited the Rosary aloud . . . and, so great was his love for humiliation, his joy would have been more perfect still, had he not been freed from the soldiers by the admiring crowd.

One day when he was preaching, two people in the congregation had the insolence to interrupt his discourse and level frightful insults at him. Montfort listened with profound modesty, his head uncovered, his hands joined. Then on his knees he publicly asked the forgiveness of his slanderers for anything he might have said or done, which could have caused them to offend God in this way. Full of shame and confusion they withdrew in silence, and again Montfort had shown how he could submit himself in the most trying of humiliations.

Yet again he was not content to impress the cross on his own body and soul: he wished others to share in his wisdom and so he unceasingly extolled the cross in his letters and in his sermons, and he sang of it triumphantly in his hymns. It was his ambition to set up the cross wherever he went. Arriving in a parish to preach his mission, he would choose the spot where the cross would be more noticeable, more apt to catch the eye and there he would erect his calvary, "like the conqueror who in his advance sets up citadels in the best positions." And thus it is that in the West of France, the parishes once evangelised by Montfort have kept their mission-cross to our own day in the place where he had once erected it, at the meeting of the roads or on the summit of the highest hill. This ambition of his was to have its most glorious fulfilment in the monumental Calvary at Pontchâteau which, alas! was not to materialise, at least in his own lifetime. On the day fixed for its official inauguration, it was levelled to the ground by the orders of misinformed superiors. "We are not allowed to erect the cross on this hill, let us plant it in our hearts" . . . was his only comment. But many years later it was set up triumphantly on his chosen site and today his Calvary dominates the countryside for many miles about, vindicating in the eyes of devoted admirers the submission and holiness of the man of God.

Montfort's love of the Cross was also strikingly effective in his preaching, bearing prolific fruit. One day, having placed in the pulpit the rather large crucifix he always carried with him, he left the pulpit without saying a word. Thereby he hinted that Jesus crucified was the preacher: the congregation had but to contemplate Him. Then, taking a smaller crucifix, he approached each person present: "Behold your Saviour: are you not sorry for having offended Him?" And thus the whole congregation in turn venerated crucified Wisdom. Stony hearts were seized with compunction and torrents of tears flowed in that church . . . this unusual and remarkably eloquent action produced more conversions than the most pathetic words he ever uttered.

Such was the unction and virtue that flowed from the Cross through his lips that his preaching had the most unexpected results. On one occasion he was seen at the head of a military procession, at the close of a mission he had preached to the licentious soldiers of the garrison at

La Rochelle. Led by a bare-footed officer carrying a standard decorated with the cross, the privates followed, a crucifix in one hand, the rosary in the other, calling on the Mother of God to obtain for them the "holy love of God." And their subsequent lives did not belie this moving demonstration of repentance. For many years afterwards people spoke with admiration of the edifying behaviour of the garrison and Montfort could never walk abroad in the streets of that town without an escort of admiring soldiers.

Finally this passionate lover of the Cross, having planted it deeply in his own heart, preaching of it without ceasing and wishing to set it up throughout the length and breadth of the scene of his apostolic labours, speaks of it enthusiastically, almost instinctively, in his letters. It has been said that we can seize on the deepest character and innermost feelings of a man only in the intimacy of his personal letters. If that be true, we have in the letters of Montfort ample proof of the depth and sincere conviction of his love for the Cross.

"Your letter is truly divine," he wrote to a religious, "since it is full of news of the cross." And to his sister (also a religious) he wrote: "My dear sister, praise God for me, for I am content and happy, and I do not think there is anything in the world sweeter to me than the most bitter cross, when it is steeped in the blood of Jesus crucified." Sister Marie-Louise of Jesus, the first of the Daughters of Wisdom, had expressed her anxiety over certain trials: Montfort wrote to her: "Glory to Jesus! Glory to His Cross! If you are the disciple of wisdom, your abandonment, contempt, your poverty, your captivity will appear delightful to you, since with all these things you purchase liberty through the divinity of the Heart of Jesus crucified. Know that I expect further set-backs more considerable and more painful than these in order to found the community of Wisdom, not on the shifting sands of gold and silver, not on the arm of flesh of a mortal being, who is at the most a mere handful of straw, but on the very wisdom of the Cross."

It is above all in his "Letter to the Friends of the Cross" that Montfort in forceful expressions and vivid images, praises and exalts the love for the Cross which penetrated him through and through. "You call yourselves Friends of the Cross! What a glorious title! It charms and dazzles me for it is brighter than the sun, higher than the heavens, more glorious and more splendid than all the titles of kings and emperors; it is the glorious title of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man; it is the genuine title of a Christian." . . . "Rejoice and abound with joy when God sends you a heavy cross. What a great gift of God is the cross! If you understood it, you would have Masses said, you would make novenas, you would undertake long pilgrimages to obtain from heaven this divine gift."

From all this it becomes quite clear that the Cross is indeed the very substance and the marrow of the spirituality of this apostle who, unable to erect the cross where he would, could cry out with sublime love: "We are prevented from placing the cross here; well, let us plant it in our hearts: there it will be better placed than anywhere else." To live without crosses was for him an intolerably burdensome cross. Love of the Cross animated his whole life, set it afire and utterly consumed it. This "giant of the apostolate," as he is so aptly called, worked marvels of conversion and sanctification by the cross and, by it, victorious over himself, the devil and the world, he reached that eminent degree of perfection which earns for him today the supreme glory of canonization. Truly it was by the cross, by suffering and humiliation that in him God had formed the priest, sanctified the missionary and fashioned the saint.

But we must beware of a false impression. This man who was compassion itself, who became the partner in misery of thousands of unfortunate outcasts, feeding and caring for more of the poor than any contemporary rich benefactor in France; drawing to his heart and setting in his own bed scores of incurables suffering from contagious diseases and abandoned by all; who

looked after the sick in the poorhouses and even founded his own hostels; this passionate lover of the cross who spent the greater part of his life alleviating the crosses of others may appear to us from afar, with his emaciated figure, his eyes fixed on the crucifix, as somewhat detached from our small daily difficulties. Because this wise physician, knowing that the cross is as necessary as it is inevitable and that the first remedy for suffering is resignation, because, therefore, he prescribes patience and love of the cross, simple souls may imagine that he would refuse to comfort them.

Yet it is not in vain that we call upon Montfort as “help of the infirm and the sick,” and “Father of the poor.” From his place in heaven he continues to take pity on those who turn to him in their distress, willing to alleviate suffering but eager as well to impart to all the secret of his own happiness in the midst of pain and humiliation: that perfect devotion and loving confidence in Mary which sweetens the most bitter of all our trials.

“Christian perfection, indeed, consists: (1) in being resolved to become a saint, *if any one will come after me*; (2) in renouncing ourselves, *let him deny himself*; (3) in suffering, *and take up his cross*; (4) in acting as a Christian, *and follow me.*”—St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, in his “Letter to the Friends of the Cross.”

“Do not purposely and of your own will create crosses for yourselves. We must not do, even for a good end, that which is wrong. Neither must we, without a particular inspiration, do things badly in order to draw upon ourselves the contempt of others. We must rather imitate Jesus Christ, of whom it is said, ‘He did all things well’; not through self-love or vanity, but in order to please God and benefit our neighbour. And, indeed, if you fulfil your duties as well as you are able, you will find no lack of contradiction, persecution and contempt; all these Divine Providence will send you although you have neither chosen nor desired them.”

—St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, in his “Letter to the Friends of the Cross”

“. . . Therefore the more you gain the benevolence of this august Princess and faithful Virgin, the more will pure faith be evident in your conduct; a pure faith that will make you care little for sensible and extraordinary feelings; a lively faith animated by charity, enabling you to perform your actions only from the motive of pure love; a faith firm and unshakable as a rock by which you will stand firm and steadfast in the midst of storms and tempests; an active and piercing faith, which, like some mysterious master-key, will give you admittance to the mysteries of Jesus Christ, the last ends of man, and to the heart of God Himself; a courageous faith, by which you will unhesitatingly undertake and carry through great things for God and the salvation of souls. Lastly, a faith which will be your blazing torch, your divine life, your hidden treasure of divine Wisdom, and the all-powerful weapon you will use to enlighten those who walk in darkness and the shadow of death, to inflame those who are lukewarm and need the burning gold of charity, to give life to those who are dead in sin, to move and convert by gentle and convincing word hearts of marble and cedars of Lebanon; and lastly to resist the devil and all enemies of salvation.”

—St. Louis-Marie de Montfort (T.D. No. 214).

England and the “True Devotion”

By Rev. STEPHEN RIGBY

[References to the Treatise are to the marginal numbers of the Montfort Fathers' Edition.]

ST. LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT claims to have discovered a form of devotion to Our Lady which he had sought in vain over a vast field of literature, and yet, by an apparent contradiction, denies elsewhere that he is an innovator, stating that others before him not only practised it in their lives, but taught it in their books. The apparent contradiction may be solved perhaps in the following way. Other saints had practised, other holy men had taught, what he practised and taught, but none had launched it with such definition and determination. He who loves Our Lady best necessarily loves God best, and the present writer is not “disputing about the merits of the saints,” when he says that however much dearer to God and His Blessed Mother other saints may be than St. Louis-Marie, no other saint has been chosen to write so precise and definitive a charter of devotion to God’s Mother. We may say that what St. Margaret Mary is to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Louis-Marie is to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. He has been chosen “to enlighten all men, that they may see what is the dispensation of the *mystery*” of Mary “*which hath been hidden* from eternity in God.”

Besides the objection to the word “slave,” there is an idea that St. Louis de Montfort’s devotion is “un-English.” But England, like all other countries, is to be judged by the Church; the Church is not to be judged by England. In any case authentic England, Merrie England, ceased at “the Deformation.” There are some indeed who affect to sneer at what they call the “myth” of Merrie England. Do such people realise the implication of the sneer? It signifies scorn of Catholic Europe, scorn of the Middle Ages as described by Leo XIII in the letter “Immortale Dei.” It implies approval of the sixteenth and succeeding Calvinistic and Lutheran centuries described by the same Pope in the same letter. Daniel Sargent in his “Sir Thomas More” has felicitously phrased the truth: “‘Merrie England’ was merry because it had a sense of security . . . trust in the Spirituality made peasants dance . . . with their legs . . . intellectuals with their thoughts. It gave More a freedom to laugh even at good things . . . It was literally the source of our joy on earth. It was also the source of our jests . . . He would never have been carefree enough to write of sailors who confessed their sins to a friar to lighten the ship and then threw the friar into the sea. He had told the story without the slightest suspicion that ever anybody in a benighted nineteenth century would imagine that by such a quip he was mocking the Sacrament of Penance, or advising the suppression of friars . . . Otherwise he would have practised the solemn dullness for which we have a right to be famous . . . More lived in two Europes, in two Christendoms. In the first, the Spirituality was not in danger. In the second it was. And the first was a thousand times merrier.” England will not be herself till she goes again the Walsingham way, and the greater the number of her children that embrace the Treatise and all it implies, the sooner will she take that way. It is not without its significance that the mystery emphasised at Walsingham is the Annunciation, and the Annunciation, “the House of the Secrets of God,” inspires Louis-Marie with some passages at once the deepest and most lyrical in his book. (No. 243 *et seq.*)

In any case “the devotion taught by St. Louis-Marie,” says Bishop Francis Vaughan, “is not a particular devotion. It is an egregious blunder to call it such. Anyone sufficiently interested, and at the same time sufficiently disinterested to study the works of St. Louis-Marie, will find

that his spiritual practice is . . . suited to any soul, any nation, any race . . . Three hundred years of exile amidst Protestantism have left us a dire legacy of confusion of thought . . . what we need . . . is a less timid, less suspicious outlook on Mary's place in the scheme of Redemption . . . There is no danger whatever of fanaticism provided the teaching of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort be . . . brought into fervent practice in the humdrum life of everyday."

As it is suited to any soul of any nation, so is it Catholic also in time. Record of its practice in England is found as far back as the time of St. Aelred of Rievaulx (d. 1167). Dom Ambrose Agius, O.S.B., refers us to Migne's Patrology for this quotation from a sermon of the Saint on Our Lady's Birthday: "We owe Her also slavery because She is Our Lady. For the Spouse of Our Lord is Our Lady (Domina); the Spouse of Our King is Our Queen: therefore let us serve Her, for the Apostle directed 'slaves (servi) be subject to your masters (dominis) in all fear.' And if he acts against the command of the Lord who does not serve those earthly masters, without doubt they are censurable who do not serve this spiritual Lady." This passage from St. Aelred is of particular value because the Church's fight against slavery had not yet finished. The Council of London in 1102, a few years before Aelred's birth, legislated against the "nefarious traffic" whereby men were bought and sold like animals; and the Council of Armagh in 1171, a few years after Aelred's death, decreed the emancipation of English slaves. In these days, when our Bishops are constantly warning us that totalitarianism is a growing menace in our midst, when Pope Pius XI has stated that the very Governments of the world are the degraded slaves of the Money-Power, when Belloc's prophetic thesis of "The Servile State," printed in 1913, is being proved true under our eyes in 1947—it would be odd indeed if we refused God in love the position which He already has in justice, but which Cæsar has arrogated in injustice. God alone can have a slave-owner's rights over us. No slave-owner ever had, or could have, the *right* of life and death, or the *right* of controlling marriage like the mating of beasts. God has the *right* of life and death; God has constituted the body and its members, the sexes and their mutual functions, according to His own Eternal Law. All that Montfort maintains is that the best way of acknowledging God's overlordship is to recognise that God the Father has given to the King, His Son, "the nations as His inheritance and the ends of the earth as His possession," and that the King has made His Mother the Queen, giving Her all power in Heaven and on earth.

The dogmatic basis of the slavery of the Blessed Virgin is Her position as Universal Almoner of Grace; consequently, it will not be unfair to quote references to this belief, even where there is no explicit mention, as there is in St. Aelred, of slavery. A Latin litany used by the Anglo-Saxons of the tenth century calls Her "Queen," "Saviouress," "Redemptrix" of the world. Langland in the fourteenth century uses the theme of Mary, the Second Eve who opened the gate which Eve had shut; he has no fear of being misunderstood in talking of the "help of these two" (Jesus and Mary); his "vision" closes with these words:

So I counsel all Christians to cry for God's mercy:

Pray we Mary His Mother to mediate also

That God give us grace.

Chaucer in the same century, apart from the Prioress' Tale and the invocation at the beginning of the Second Nun's Tale, in his "A.B.C." presses the whole alphabet into the service of his:

"Almighty and al merciable quene,

To whom that al this world fleeth for socour,

To have relees of sinne, sorwe and tene."

"Doute is ther noon," he says, "thou queen of misericorde,

That thou n'art cause of grace and mercy here:



*God vouched sauf thurgh Thee with us t'acorde.
 For certes, Cristes blisful moder dere,
 Were now the bowe bent in swich manere,
 As it was first, of justice and of yre,
 The rightful God nolde of no mercy here:
 But thurgh Thee han we grace, as we desyre."*

Boudon, whose book on the Nine Choirs of Holy Angels, was translated into English many years ago, says in his book on the "Holy Slavery"* that the English Catholics of the seventeenth century were remarkable for this devotion. If so, the practice would seem to have decayed until the great convert Frederick William Faber gave it new life by his translation of St. Louis-Marie's great *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*.

The case of Father Faber is of special importance as indicating that no one should give up the idea of reading the *Treatise* merely because he is repelled by it at the first, or second, or even tenth instance. In a letter to Watts Russell, in 1862, he writes: "With regard to Grignon de Montfort, my devotion to him began in 1846 and 1847 . . . I have made two attempts with his 'Vraie Dévotion.' One some years since, and the other a short time ago. Indeed, I made an attempt to model my whole life on his devotion to Mama.† But I could not do so without great violence, and much interior suffering. It is a great delight to me that the Nihil Obstat of the Congregation of Rites testifies that all is right. But with my present low attainments I am unable to embrace it. I am delighted with the book, with its sweet sensible unction, and its glorious fire, and I owe much to it in the way of increased devotion to Mama. But parts jar me beyond what I can tell you; and after twice studying the reports of the proceedings in the 'Analecta Juris Pontificii,' I cannot but feel that, while the answer of the Avvocato dei Santi proves that the objections establish nothing in him against faith or morals, it does no more. It fails to bring the teaching home to me as acceptable doctrine." Father Bowden, Father Faber's biographer, continues: "Before many months had elapsed, Father Faber saw reasons for changing his opinion, and . . . dictated . . . the translation of the *Treatise on True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin* . . . which was published by Messrs. Burns and Lambert. Shortly afterwards another version . . . was published in Dublin, with an imprimatur of Archbishop, now Cardinal Cullen."

This was in 1862. The Preface to the translation is dated "Presentation of Our Lady." Within a year Faber was dead. In that preface he had written: "May the Holy Ghost, the Divine Zealot of Jesus and Mary, deign to give a new blessing to this work in England; and may He please to console us quickly with the canonisation of this new apostle and fiery missionary of His most dear and most Immaculate Spouse; and still more with the speedy coming of that great age of the Church, which is to be the age of Mary!"

The fifth edition of the translation goes back to 1888. There was a "new" edition in 1937 which was possibly a convenient way of expressing ignorance as to whether any other edition or editions had intervened between the fifth and the "new." This new edition was reprinted in 1940 and in 1943, but by 1942 the Montfort Fathers had issued their centenary edition with the incomparable improvement, among other improvements, of marginal numbers which make one

* The present writer does not know if *Le Saint Esclavage* was translated. He is going by a footnote of Faber's.

† Thus, without inverted commas, does he speak of Her.

independent of the different paginations of different editions and different languages. Thus from 1862 to 1942 Catholics in England were dependent upon Faber. Out of that long spiritual travail of his were born many children and many slaves of Mary. The Latin for “slave” is “servus.” The Latin for “to serve” is “servire.” Hence, when it is said “cui servire regnare est,” the meaning is “to be a slave to God is to be a King.” Similarly to be a slave to Mary, in order to be a slave to God, is to rule the universe, for “all things are yours, and you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” It is an illustration of the eternal paradox of Christianity. We are “unprofitable servants” (slaves) and yet we are His friends, and He is the Spouse of the soul. Now that we are celebrating the canonisation Faber hoped to see, now that the Apparitions of Fatima have been coupled with the consecration of the world by the “sweet Christ on earth” to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in 1942, the hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the Treatise, we may well hope that the longed-for age of Mary has begun. Witness what the Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon wrote in October, 1942: “We believe that the apparitions of Fatima open a new era, that of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. What has taken place in Portugal is of the miraculous order. It is the foreshadowing of what the Immaculate Heart of Mary is preparing for the world.” *

Faber’s kind of spiritual travail was not the experience of William Granville Ward. He is refreshing to read inasmuch as he is usually guided by St. Alphonsus’ maxim that of two opinions allowed by the Church he will ever espouse the one more honourable to his Dear Lady. Thus, frequently in his articles to the *Dublin Review*, he quotes St. Louis-Marie extensively and then adds something of this sort: “*For ourselves we are disposed to accept the whole of this as true: but are here only maintaining that it contains nothing contradictory to Christian doctrine.*” The one difficulty he had would seem to be due to a misunderstanding. He appears to think that the Montfort way requires an *explicit* remembrance of Our Lady all the time. What has been happily called de Montfort’s “explosion” (No. 63 *et seq.*) ending as it does with St. Augustine’s burning prayer to Our Lord is sufficient to prove otherwise. But more than that there is this explicit remark: “Be persuaded, then, that the more you look at Mary in your prayers, contemplations, actions and sufferings, *if not with a distinct and definite view, at least with a general and imperceptible one*, the more perfectly will you find Jesus Christ, who is always with Mary, great, powerful, operative, and incomprehensible.” (No. 165.)

But neither Faber nor Ward were able to do what a Bishop could do, and Bishop Vaughan of Salford, afterwards Cardinal, wrote a letter to his clergy about the Treatise which remains a masterly defence of it to the English-speaking world. Neither is it a mere defence. It is a triumphant demonstration of the solidity of St. Louis-Marie’s doctrine. It is in itself a banquet of devotion to Our Lady and to St. Joseph Her Most Chaste Spouse. In these days when the commercial profits of a book count too much, and its message too little, it may not always be possible to publish Faber’s Introduction, Vaughan’s Introduction, and Vaughan’s letter to his clergy, in every edition of the True Devotion, but to leave out any of them is a pity, to leave out Vaughan’s letter a disaster. If Vaughan’s letter were always printed, fewer would



CARDINAL VAUGHAN

* See *More About Fatima*, published by Gill of Dublin.

turn away in distaste, prejudices would be removed, and numbers would be saved unnecessary spiritual travail.

Anyone who realises that exactly the same sort of nonsense is talked about “exaggerated” devotion to Our Lady now as was deeply refuted by St. Alphonsus in his day; anyone who follows the recurrent disputes in the Catholic press, will realise the need of some such introductory exposition. It is indeed true that most of the criticisms launched against the Saint are quite obviously by people who either have not read the book or else neglect the admonition of Benedict XV that an author is to be judged by what he says as a compact whole. There is not a criticism of St. Louis-Marie which he himself has not anticipated and amply answered in the body of his text. There is scarcely a difficulty that readers raise about implementing the practice which, if they read more closely, would not vanish. Thus the ground is cut from underneath the feet of the critics by his building on the rock-foundation of the Council of Trent and the Baptismal Vows; his constant repetition that Jesus is the End, Mary only the means; his robust avowal at the very opening of the Treatise; and his castigating as “diabolical presumption” the turning of Mary into a sort of magic talisman that justifies a course of wilful sin. As to the difficulties of people of good-will, a typical one is abundantly answered in Nos. 132, 133. All this is true, but if the hesitant had a letter like Vaughan’s to help them at the start, they would go forward with confidence and give Saint Louis-Marie the fairness and the reverence which is his right.

Faber, Ward, Vaughan, these three are vastly different kinds of contemporary Englishmen. That other Vaughan, Francis, is evidently correct in saying that de Montfort’s devotion to Our Lady is Catholic and not national. Faber would seem to be coming into his rights in the esteem of his countrymen, though some still criticise him as “sentimental” and “French.” There is a curious irony about calling him “French,” for the French are excellent judges of spirituality and while, with charming courtesy, they criticise “les quelques longeurs de ce génie anglais,” they so consider him a doctrinal, ascetical and mystical master that they have done for him what Fr. Prezvara has done for Newman—condensed his teaching in a single volume. “A prophet is not without honour save in his own country!” As to Faber’s “sentimentality,” let those who consider him such ponder the words of Chesterton who declares that “the miserable fear of being sentimental is the meanest of all modern terrors—meaner even than the terror which produces hygiene”—and he goes on to speak of Nelson’s “sentimental” “Kiss me, Hardy.” A man who understood suffering, in theory and in practice, as Faber understood it, has a deep of strength, which calls to a deep of tenderness, which only lesser men would call weakness.

The Anglo-Saxons, the Norman-English Aelred, Langland, Chaucer, the people of the seventeenth century, these represent different ages of the English character. It is evident that the words of the Book of Ecclesiasticus suit England as much as all the world beside: “Give ear my son, and take wise counsel; and cast not away my advice. Put thy feet into Her fetters, and thy neck into Her chains. Bow down thy shoulder, and bear Her: and be not grieved with Her bands. Come to Her with all thy mind and keep Her ways with all thy power. Search for Her and She shall be made known to thee; and when thou hast gotten Her let Her not go. For in the latter end thou shalt find rest in Her and She shall be turned to thy joy. Then shall Her fetters be a strong defence to thee, and a firm foundation, and Her chain a robe of glory. For in Her is the beauty of life and Her bands are a healthful binding. Thou shalt put Her on as a robe of glory and thou shalt set Her upon thee as a crown of joy.” (vi, 24-32.)

The Legion of Mary

By Rev. W. J. STIBBS



THE canonization of Blessed de Montfort is an occasion of the greatest importance in the Church, for it sets the final seal of approval on his teaching about devotion to Our Lady. The Legion received its first spiritual impetus from the ideas of de Montfort on devotion to Our Lady. It is so to speak the great external fruit of his spirit in the modern world. And, therefore, if we wish to see the True Devotion in action, we have only to look at the Legion of Mary.

The Legion arose out of the association of a number of zealous women with the work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. During one of their gatherings after a meeting, discussion turned on de Montfort's True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and such interest was aroused that a number of those present determined to practise it. This was the remote preparation arranged by Divine Providence. Shortly afterwards, at another meeting, an account was given of a visit of the Brothers of the S.V.P. to the women's ward of the Dublin Union Hospital. Naturally enough the women were interested, and some of them asked whether visiting of that sort could not be arranged for them. They could not be members of the S.V.P., and hitherto all general visiting had been done by men. However, the Brothers were sympathetic and a meeting was arranged to enquire what could be done. It was fixed to be held at Myra House, the local headquarters of the S.V.P., at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, 7th September. The year was 1921.

The meeting began with a remarkable inspiration. Before the members assembled, someone had the idea of erecting on the table around which they were to sit a simple altar of Our Lady; a white cloth, a statue of the Immaculate Conception as she is figured on the Miraculous Medal, two vases of flowers, two lighted candles. It is not difficult to guess from whom this inspiration came. At all the meetings in Myra House this table had until now always been bare. And here, suddenly, was an altar of Our Lady. The True Devotion, so recently undertaken, was bearing its first visible fruit. After some prayers, which consisted of the opening prayers of the S.V.P., the Rosary and a short spiritual reading, they discussed their plans. Under the influence of the Immaculate Conception portrayed before them, a new association was set up. It was to work under the special patronage of Our Lady. It would do an allotted weekly work. It would have a weekly meeting. At all meetings the table would be arranged at one end as an altar in honour of the Immaculate Conception. It would preserve the form of prayers mentioned above, to which the members had become accustomed at other meetings. Its work would be the visitation of the women's ward of the Dublin Union, and in general any other active work which might arise, with the exception of material relief, already given by the S.V.P. Its members would do all visitation in pairs, lest individuality should spoil the corporate spirit. Under the influence of Our Lord's words in His description of the Last Judgment: "As long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matthew xxv), the spirit of the work was discussed, and it was decided that a special effort should be made by the members to see Jesus Christ Himself in those for whom they would work. Methods and discipline were discussed. It was decided that the Miraculous Medal should play a prominent part in the apostolate of the new association and that every effort should be made to spread devotion to it. The new group decided on the name of the Association of Our Lady of Mercy, for their first work was to be the visitation of the sick in a hospital conducted by the Sisters of Mercy.

Here, then, was the Legion of Mary complete in essence after its first and inaugural meeting. It was not yet called the Legion of Mary, but its spirit was there, the spirit of dependence on Mary in virtue of her universal mediation of intercession, and the spirit of Catholic Action, working for others because Christ is seen in them. This twofold inspiration of the new association was cultivated by a talk given at all the meetings by the spiritual director, a talk which is carried on still under the name of the allocutio, and as new branches were opened with members not in immediate touch with the founders, by means of a few points of discipline given out monthly by the president, and continued today as the Standing Instructions which are read at the first meeting of every month.

As in every large city, one of the chief social problems of Dublin was the girl of the streets, and the Association very soon turned its thoughts to seeking a solution. It was a problem which had defied every effort, and the authorities, while preventing open display, had left the residue as incurable. The legionaries, if we may anticipate a title which they did not bear until 1925, concluded eventually that a solution might be obtained by instituting a lodging house to attract them away from their usual centres, and there trying to work for their conversion. Shortly afterwards, in July, 1922, they were able to approach the problem personally, on the occasion of a parish retreat for women. The priest who was conducting the retreat visited in the course of his tour of the parish a notorious lodging house, where over thirty girls were living. He appealed to them to abandon their way of life, and put before them the spiritual motives which should prompt them to do so. One by one the girls broke into tears, and expressed their desire to change their lives. But they felt themselves victims of circumstances. Where could they go? What could they do?

There for the moment the matter rested. But after the Legion meeting that evening one of the parish priests, who had accompanied the retreat father on his visit, put the problem to the legionaries. After lengthy discussion it was decided to try and organize an enclosed retreat for the girls, as being the only way of impressing on them the supernatural reasons for leaving their present surroundings. We cannot recount the difficulties they met in finding a suitable place for the retreat, but eventually accommodation at a convent was secured. Faced with such a prospect, many of the girls at the lodging house were tempted to turn back, but after hours of persuasion they finally agreed to go. The retreat was an unqualified success, and at the end of three days all the retreatants received the Sacraments. Now the problem arose as to what was to be done with the girls. It was unthinkable to let them return to the lodging house, there to have to battle alone with the old conditions. But there was nowhere for them. A bold move followed. The Minister of Local Government was interviewed, and, when his interest had been aroused, he presented a report on the situation to the Government itself. The result was that a house, recently vacated by Government officials, was loaned to the legionaries for three months. The situation was saved at least for the time being.

The details of these transactions make interesting reading, but this is not the place for them. It is necessary, however, to mention the salient facts for two reasons. The first is that from this early experience has grown the all-embracing moral welfare system which is embodied in the Legion of Mary today, and carried on in numerous hostels, staffed and managed by legionaries. The second is that it was the occasion of the rapid growth of the infant organization, owing to the interest it aroused in all who had at heart the welfare of the least of Christ's brethren. A second branch had already been formed, and this took over the management of the house. The aim was to restore the girls to a normal manner of life through the application of Christian principles only. The measure of its success can be estimated from the fact that of these

first Sancta Maria* girls only two reverted to their former mode of life.

It was at this point that the most spectacular task ever undertaken by the Legion was brought to a successful conclusion. It was the dissolution of the notorious Bentley Place area of Dublin. Hitherto, by reason of the concentration of the worst of the city's prostitution into a small region, and in order to prevent the spread of the evil, the authorities had decided on a policy of toleration. The Legion, however, encouraged by the success of their methods in the earlier case, began to visit the area. The full story of this event would occupy many pages. It is an almost unbelievable story. The legionaries, relying on nothing but their faith in the Christian motive for conversion and their trust in Our Lady that through her intercession God's grace would soften the hearts of those who appeared to be confirmed in vice, carried the stronghold by storm, and succeeded, in the face of even physical danger, in closing down the houses in which the traffic was centred, and introduced into them innocent families who for a long time had been victims of the housing shortage. No wonder, then, that the Legion of Mary believes that it has the only possible answer to the social immorality of the times. The Christian motive was successful in this and other cases, while natural motives achieve little or nothing.

At the time of which we are writing, the new organization was confined to a section of the city of Dublin. There was indeed some extension, but it was brought about simply by the personal influence of friend upon friend and other such fortuitous causes. And so things remained for five years. By the end of 1926 the Legion of Mary, as it was now officially called, consisted of thirteen branches, all in Dublin. But the year 1927 saw the beginning of the outward surge, which has in less than twenty years made the Legion a world-wide organization.

But before proceeding with an account of the Legion's extension, it is necessary to mention another important event which took place in 1927. The Legion was founded as a means of giving women the opportunity of doing the sort of visitation undertaken by the S.V.P. It was never deliberately limited to women, and in fact one man in particular was concerned in all its early work. But men did not enter into ordinary membership. In this year, however, a hostel—the Morning Star Hostel—was opened, under Legion auspices and to be conducted on the Legion system, for men. Naturally, men were necessary to conduct it. And so unofficially men were introduced into the Legion. It was another two years before, in 1929, the position was regularized, and men were officially recognized as being eligible for membership of the Legion. It was of course an event of the first importance, and has had great influence in extending the appeal of the Legion of Mary to all who are willing to undertake work for the spread of the Kingdom of God.

During the ten years after 1927, the development of the Legion was a constant process. The first place to receive the new organization outside Dublin was the city of Waterford. In the same year, on the occasion of a visit of the Bishop of Down and Connor, Mgr. McRory, to Maynooth, legionaries were able to introduce the Legion to another diocese. On his elevation to the See of Armagh in the following year, the Legion spread still further. 1928 saw the Legion make its first excursion outside Ireland, when a special mission was sent to Glasgow to enquire into the possibilities of opening there. It was not long before the Legion was flourishing in Scotland. The following year, after a letter of recommendation had been sent to Cardinal Bourne by Cardinal McRory, by this time a confirmed friend of the Legion, London saw its advent. The year 1930 provided the first contact with the New World. An American priest was returning from Dublin to America by way of Paris. While in Dublin he had not even heard of the Legion. But on reaching Paris, and paying a visit to the Convent in the Rue du Bac, he heard of the recent visit

* The name given to hostels which cater for this type of girl.

of some legionaries enquiring into the possibilities of opening in France. He was so impressed with what he heard of the new association that, at the risk of missing his ship to America, he made a flying return visit to Dublin to make further enquiries. The enquiries bore fruit, and on his return to the United States he published an article on the Legion bearing a title framed in what are now for legionaries famous words: *Is This the Long Looked For Church Society?* It seems that the answer of America to that question was a decided affirmative. At all events, the first *præsidium* was inaugurated in the following year, and it is interesting to note that it consisted entirely of men. In the same year the first *præsidium* in India, at Madras, was founded, and the Legion quickly spread to other cities. 1932 was a most important year in the New World. The first branch in Canada was opened, and in that great country, where the Catholic population is a large proportion of the whole, it is worthy of note that the foundation *præsidium* was formed among the American Indians. This is surely a great tribute to the universal appeal of the Legion, and it was indeed prophetic of the phenomenal spread of the Legion among the non-European races all over the world. And it is an indication of the natural response of people who have not been spoilt by over-civilization to the appeal of Catholic Action. The years 1932 to 1934 saw many new foundations all over the British Empire, besides the spread of the Legion in those countries where it was already established. By the end of 1934 the Legion was an established force in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the West Indies. In 1937 China, perhaps the most conservative country in the world so far as the acceptance of Western ideas is concerned, received the Legion, and since then it has transformed the lives of the Catholic population, so sorely tried, in common with the rest of the nation, by the miseries of war. It would be interesting to give some of the details connected with these various foundations, but it is not possible to do so within the scope of an article. The story when told, however, will rival the great epics of the Church in the romantic adventures of the pioneer legionaries. It has now become the established practice to watch over the development of new foundations by sending envoys imbued with the true Legion spirit. These heroic souls, who give their whole lives to the Legion and to the Church, although receiving neither the advantages nor the protection of the religious state, are indeed the spiritual descendants of the early missionaries, for their spirit and purpose are the same.

Perhaps the most romantic of the new foundations has been that of France. It was not easy to establish the Legion in France, for the Church in France is well organized and has its own traditions. The first approach to the authorities received sympathy, but little more. France had everything necessary to the health of the Church already, and it was difficult to see how a new organization could be introduced. But Providence was to take a hand in affairs. The Legion had many individual contacts in France, and among them a teacher in Angers. She had seen the Legion in action in Dublin, and felt that it was what France needed. Leaving Angers in the first year of the war, she went to Paris and did her best to make a start there. It was a difficult year. France was worried, and had little time to think about new associations. But the envoy persevered and at last managed to arouse enthusiasm among members of the Polish forces, who since the fall of their own country had carried on the fight in France. In the early summer of 1940 a *præsidium* was inaugurated among them. Within three weeks France had herself fallen, and the infant *præsidium* was dispersed. It was recommenced in London, when the Poles reached England, but that was the end of foundations in France for the time being. The envoy had to move from Paris, and found refuge in the Convent at Nevers. Here she continued her propaganda on behalf of the Legion, and gained the sympathy of the Bishop, Mgr. Flynn, who no doubt was attracted by this Irish-born organ of Catholic Action. The next news from France was of the

foundation of six præsidia in the diocese of Nevers. Thus was the seed sown in suffering France, and one may legitimately judge from the way in which the Legion spread during the years of occupation, that French Catholics found relief for their worries and an outlet for their zeal in trying to emphasize the need for Christian principles in any future rehabilitation of the country, by working for the spread of the Legion in their war-torn Fatherland.

In addition to the ordinary extension, by means of the foundation of new præsidia, there have been during the past fifteen years several interesting developments within the Legion itself. The first of these is the introduction of juniors into the Legion system, and it is to London that the credit must be given for this advance. In 1931, only two years after the Legion came to London, some children, inspired by the example of their elders, asked if room could not be found for them in the Legion. The result was the foundation of a junior præsidium for those under eighteen years of age. The movement has been a great success, and it is now the normal aim of all branches to have junior præsidia attached to them.

A great problem in England, and in all countries where the majority of the population is non-Catholic, is to decide upon the best means of bringing the Faith to those outside the Church. For some time now informal lectures have been given for non-Catholics, who are brought to the meeting place through the personal contact of legionaries. The culmination of this movement was the inauguration, in 1945, of a special præsidium for the organization of this work. Centred in London, it is the first of its kind, and no doubt, as the result of experience gained in these early days, this part of the Legion's activity will develop and bear great fruit in the future.

It now remains to give some indication of the spirit of the Legion of Mary. **The fuel which drives the Legion is a mixture derived from Catholic Action and the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.** That these two mix in an admirable manner is evident from the health and vigour of the young society. Catholic Action has been well defined as the organized co-operation of the laity in the apostolic work of the hierarchy. The function of the hierarchy of the Church, its bishops and priests, is to spread the Kingdom of God, and therefore Catholic Action is the organized share of the laity in that work. It is founded as we know on the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, which shows that not only is Catholic Action a desirable feature of the life of the laity, and therefore encouraged by the Church, but also that it is a necessary feature of it, that without it the life of a lay person is incomplete. This, then, is the reason for the activity of the Legion of Mary, in common with every other form of Catholic Action. But what differentiates the Legion from other such societies is the spirit that informs that activity. It is the spirit of the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin. It was that spirit, as we have seen, which inspired the first work ever undertaken by the Legion. Since then the same spirit has been preserved, and it is the motive force in the Legion to this day. In confirmation of this, it was interesting to learn from the spiritual director of a curia in France that it was largely the appeal of the True Devotion which made possible the rapid spread of the Legion in that tortured land. The Legion of Mary, then, believes, as do so many others, that the Mother of God is the Mediatrix of All Graces by the universality of her intercession. But unlike so many others, and like de Montfort, it takes that doctrine literally, and puts it into practice in Catholic Action as he did in the details of his devotional method. The true legionary has constantly before his mind the fact that everything he may achieve as the result of his active life in the Legion is brought about through the mediation of Our Lady. This attitude causes him to commit the whole venture into her hands, and, while not neglecting the natural co-operation which he must give by his efforts towards achieving further the spread of the Kingdom of God, leads him to give the whole credit for his achievements to her intercession before the throne of her Son.

For this reason the Handbook of the Legion makes frequent mention of the True Devotion. It is vibrant with the high-pitched tone of de Montfort's own devotion. He would have recognized it as one of his own descendants. The Legionary Promise, made by all legionaries on their formal reception into the Legion, is full of the spirit of de Montfort. Addressed to the Holy Ghost, it contains a confession of faith in the doctrine of the universal mediation of Our Lady, of our utter dependence on her intercession, and a promise to engage in active work for the Kingdom of God in that spirit of dependence. This promise is renewed annually by every legionary on the Feast of the Annunciation, a day which St. Louis-Marie recommended to his disciples in a special manner. And the formula of renewal is made in his own words for renewing the consecration which he advised: I am all thine, my Queen, my Mother, and all I have is thine. Moreover, the prayers of the Legion breathe his spirit. The Magnificat was very dear to the Saint, and it is said at every Legion meeting. The special Legion prayer, said at the end of the meetings, contains words which will be familiar to all who know de Montfort's Treatise: Confer, O Lord, on us . . . a lively faith animated by charity, which will enable us to perform all our actions from the motive of pure love of Thee; . . . a faith, firm and immovable as a rock, through which we will rest tranquil and steadfast amid the crosses, toils and disappointments of life; . . . a courageous faith, which will inspire us to undertake and carry out without hesitation great things for God and for the salvation of souls; . . . to enkindle everywhere the fires of Divine Love, to enlighten those who are in darkness and in the shadow of death, to inflame those who are lukewarm, to bring back life to those who are dead in sin. . . .

This is the true spirit of the Legion of Mary. It is the spirit of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort applied to Catholic Action. There is little doubt that the combination has produced a perfect organ for lay co-operation in the apostolic work of the Church of God. In order to preserve the connection, the Legion authorities encourage all members to make the formal consecration to Our Lady in the form given by de Montfort in his book. But it is not a condition of membership, and this seems to be wise. It would be a mistake to discourage people from engaging in Catholic Action by imposing a condition which many would not feel called upon to fulfil, and if they did, would perhaps not fulfil in the right spirit. St. Louis-Marie's form of devotion is a special grace, and may not be offered to all. In any case the spirit of this great lover of Mary is safeguarded in the Legion by its very constitution. To make the Legionary Promise is to make de Montfort's act of consecration in other words. To renew it on the Feast of the Annunciation is to renew it in the form laid down by de Montfort. Nothing more is needed to make the Legion of Mary a perfect accommodation of the True Devotion to Catholic Action, and we can feel sure that the new Saint is now interceding with his and our Queen for the welfare and growth of this society, whose only object is to emulate in practice their own unlimited zeal for the salvation of souls.

ST. LOUIS-MARIE DE MONTFORT AND THE LEGION OF MARY

"In view of other decisions as to the inadmissibility of particular and local patrons, the inclusion of the name of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort would at first sight appear to be debatable ground. It can, however, be safely asserted that no Saint has played a greater part in the development of the Legion than he. *The Handbook is full of his spirit.* The prayers re-echo his very words. *He is really the tutor of the Legion:* thus invocation is due to him by the Legion almost as a matter of moral obligation."— From the *Handbook of the Legion of Mary.*

The Miraculous Cure of Sister Marie Theresa of the Visitation

The following is an account of the second miracle attributed to St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, which was presented for examination in the cause of his Canonization. It is taken from the official documents.

MARIE JEANNE LESAGE, in religion Sister Marie Theresa of the Visitation, was born at Ennetières-en-Weppes in the north of France on July 2nd, 1910. Her constitution was weak, and at the age of ten, and again at eleven, she suffered from severe erysipelas. She spent a whole year, from April 1921 to April 1922, in the hospital (preventorium) at Chevrières. When she was thirteen years old, she had a serious attack of bronchitis, and at the age of sixteen she underwent treatment (injections) for the prevention of tuberculosis. For a long time she suffered from inflammation of the mouth, which prevented her from eating with ease.

With much care, however, her health improved, and she was admitted into the Congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom, founded by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. Marie Jeanne Lesage made her Profession at the beginning of 1933, and received the name of Sister Marie Theresa of the Visitation. She was appointed to the hospital at Chatillon-sur-Sèvre in order to look after the sick.

At the beginning of June, 1934, constant headaches, nausea and vomiting obliged her to take to her bed. Dr. Couturier visited her on June 15th and found her suffering from the following: very violent headache, nausea and vomiting, prostration and fever. He also declared that she was suffering from tubercular meningitis.

The same day the Sister was taken to the Mother House at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre and examined immediately by Dr. Jouitteau and Dr. Roy. These two doctors found the same symptoms that Dr. Couturier had diagnosed, and their decision also was that she had tubercular meningitis.

On account of their declaration, "tubercular meningitis with fatal results within a few days," the Last Sacraments were administered to her that same evening, June 15th, 1934. After that, those in attendance on her began to give her a few drops of water from the Fountain of Mervent in which a relic of Blessed de Montfort's coffin had been placed. They also applied to her a relic (a bone) of Blessed de Montfort. That same day, the Community of the Daughters of Wisdom at St. Laurent, and the next day three other communities of the same Congregation began a novena to Blessed de Montfort, reciting the Rosary, the litanies of Blessed de Montfort, nine times the invocation "Blessed de Montfort, help of the infirm and the sick, pray for us," five times the invocation "Our Lady of Wisdom, glorify your faithful servant," and finally some invocations like those recited at Lourdes.

From the 16th to the 24th June, all the symptoms of meningitis became more pronounced. During this time the vomiting continued, and the invalid had to be sounded twice daily. She uttered cries of pain each time that she had to be moved.

The first novena of the Mother House ended on the 23rd of June, and there was no improvement in the Sister's condition. On the 24th, her pains and sufferings increased, and it was decided to begin a second novena with a daily pilgrimage to the tomb of Blessed de Montfort by eight Sisters of Wisdom and the mother of the invalid. Mrs. Lesage said in her ardent faith that she would not leave St. Laurent until she had obtained her daughter's cure.

The same day, after the first pilgrimage to the tomb, the Sisters in charge put on Sister

Marie Theresa some clothing that had been placed on the tomb of Blessed de Montfort. Half an hour later the invalid began to improve. Her kidneys began to function normally, which they had not done for ten days. At 5.30, the novice-mistress heard her speaking, and articulating her words in a strong, lively voice. The same evening, Sister Marie was able to drink a little, with the help of a feeding-bottle. After an attack of violent pains in the early part of the night, she said to the Sister watching beside her: "I feel better. I feel that Father de Montfort is going to cure me." Then she slept peacefully until morning.

On awakening, Sister Marie was able to open her eyes and mouth normally, and she had no difficulty at all in receiving Holy Communion. A little later, she took a cup of cocoa. The vomiting had completely ceased, and at 7.15 the pains in her legs and heels disappeared also. Her headache went away for good later in the morning.

She passed a good and restful night, and next morning Sister Marie was allowed to get up. She walked round the room, embraced her mother, knelt down without help to receive the blessing of the Superior, and finally sat down in an armchair to await the arrival of Dr. Jouitteau. He came, thinking the Sister was dying, and was very much surprised to see the Sister stand up and come forward to meet him with every appearance of a person in perfect health, happy and calm. After a short examination, he declared that all the symptoms of meningitis had disappeared. Doctors Couturier and Mazilier, called in by him, examined her and found no traces of her recent illness. All three signed a certificate stating this.

Sister Marie was suddenly and completely cured, without convalescence. She went to Mass, took her meals regularly and with a good appetite, rose at 5 a.m. from June 27th, and made the pilgrimage to Blessed de Montfort's tomb in order to join in the novena which was continued in thanksgiving. She began to follow the full Community life on June 28th.

At the beginning of July, she made her annual Retreat with the Community, and then returned to Chatillon to take up her nursing duties again. Since then, Sister Marie Theresa has remained in perfect health.

THE FOUR MIRACLES PRESENTED IN THE PROCESS OF MONTFORT'S BEATIFICATION.

On Septuagesima Sunday, the 21st of February, 1886, the Holy Father Pope Leo XIII, after having offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, called to his side the Most Reverend Cardinal Domenico Bartolini, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation and Pontent of the cause, the Reverend Father Agostino Caprara, promoter of the holy Faith, and the Secretary Lorenzo Salvati, and declared in their presence that:

"The four miracles presented as having been worked by God through the intercession of the Venerable Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort, may be held for certain, namely:

1. The cure, instantaneous and complete, in the person of the young Reine Malle, of hip disease (coxalgia) which had produced luxation of the right leg.
2. The cure, instantaneous and complete, in the person of Sister Marie de Saint-Lin, Daughter of Wisdom, of a chronic malady of the spinal marrow.
3. The cure, instantaneous and complete, in the person of Sister Saint-Gabriel, of pulmonary consumption joined with an abdominal tumour and heart disease.
4. The cure, instantaneous and complete, in the person of Sister Emmanuel, of a hemiplegia of the spine."

The above miracles were worked on the 19th of March, 1870, the 27th of July, 1869, the 18th of April, 1873, and on the 2nd of January, 1845, respectively.

The Company of Mary in England

By Rev. GERARD HANNA, S.M.M.

IT is often said that “it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good,” and the phrase has never been verified more fully than in times when the barque of St. Peter has been tossed on the waves of persecution. From the days of Nero (54 A.D. to 68 A.D.), who unleashed all the forces of diabolical hatred against the early Christians, down to modern times, the Church has undergone the severest of trials and after each has emerged triumphant, strengthened and purified in the blood of her martyrs. The aftermath of religious persecution is always characterised by a brilliant efflorescence of the faith among the faithful, new conquests by exiled disciples, the expansion of Orders and Congregations.—Such is the setting which presents itself if one wishes to trace the beginning of the Company of Mary in England.

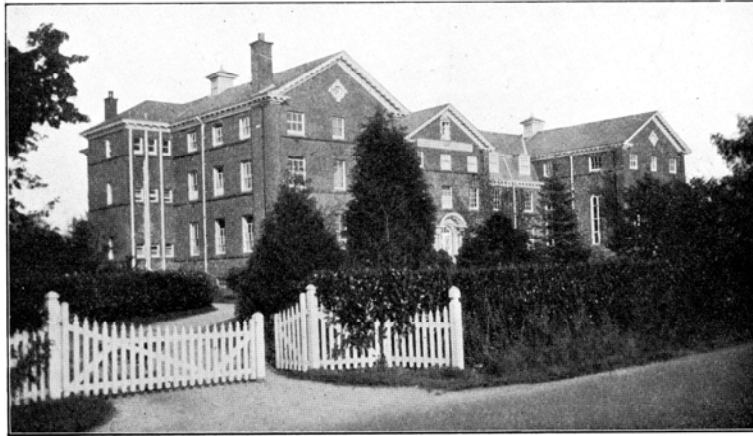
In 1901, the French Government took great offence at the continued presence of religious congregations in France and passed a law to render their domicile illegal. To enforce the statuted law, heavy penalties were levied on those who failed to comply. Anti-clerical feeling ran high and was accentuated by mass meetings and public protests, which eventually gave way to unbridled fanaticism. Convents were broken into and the Sisters who had been caring for the poor and the sick expelled. Monasteries and religious houses were ransacked and taken over by the Government. Some were even converted into military barracks and, incidentally, remain so to this day. Consequently, religious orders were scattered far and wide. It seemed that paganism had inflicted a crushing defeat on Christianity, and the anti-clericals congratulated themselves on having excised one of the heads of that “hydra,” the Catholic Church. To the despair of the persecutors, not only was that head to grow again more strongly than ever, but even more were to sprout from this “delicate” operation.

Among the refugees that made their way across the northern frontier of France were the students of the junior Seminary of the Company of Mary. They settled down in a temporary home at Santbergen, Belgium. Towards 1908, the thoughts of those in authority turned to the question of a permanent residence. And as they were already in Belgium, it was decided that they should stay there. But it seems that this anti-clerical movement is like influenza; it is contagious. Even Belgium began to show signs of a fever of its own. Not much, it is true, but enough to sow the seeds of doubt in the minds of the superiors. So hopes turned to England, the traditional home of all refugees.

A place was therefore sought in England, and the Fathers who were sent over took up residence in Romsey, Hampshire, a town with which they were already acquainted by hearsay, for the Sisters of La Sagesse had managed to open a house here in 1891. It was at Romsey that the search began and it was only a mile outside Romsey that it ended. A suitable property of some thirty acres was acquired. Building operations were begun with the minimum of delay and in 1910 the college was completed. It was named “Montfort College” and was to remain the only house of the Congregation in England until 1940.

In the February of 1910, the first pioneers started trickling over from Belgium. They were not very numerous—one or two Fathers and a few students. This number was considerably reinforced in April when a further contingent of priests and students arrived, accompanied this time by four Sisters of La Sagesse.

The first English student arrived at Montfort College on March 31st, 1911. The chronicler relates that he was eighteen years of age and had been a convert to Catholicism for some four years. His parents remained non-Catholics, and of these and of the student himself we



MONTFORT COLLEGE, ROMSEY, HANTS.



ST. JOSEPH'S, COLBURY, TOTTON, HANTS.

find nothing but praise. His parents brought him to the college and he proved himself to be a pious student and most exemplary. However, he did not stay long at Romsey, but left to join the Benedictines, as one of whom he was eventually ordained priest. Montfort College must have had the cosmopolitan touch about it in those days, for reference is made of the advent of two boys from Columbia. The first ordination took place in November, 1911, when the Rev. Fernand Fradet was raised to the priesthood. Some readers may remember him, for he was superior at Montfort College during the school year 1931-1932, and a musician of no little repute.

The year 1914 saw the outbreak of the first World War. Fathers, Brothers and students were called to serve in the French Army. Some gave their lives, others were wounded, and the chronicle of those days is one continuous report of comings and goings, of wounded and dead. Mention is made of an old enemy of ours—the black-out. The police paid a visit to the College and the chronicler ruefully reports that “they were menaced with a fine.”

The years following the Armistice were fraught with much hardship in the struggle for existence. The number of English students was never imposing—one or two lay Brothers and a handful of students. Special mention is made of the first English lay Brother, Wilfrid, who was sent to Canada in 1919, and eventually went to British Columbia, where he was accidentally drowned shortly after his arrival. In 1925, things began to look a little brighter and, on 16th September, the largest group of English boys arrived at Montfort College. They came from Lancashire and were seven in number; of these seven, three became priests in the Congregation. In 1927, the great change came about. The number of English students had now become sufficient to justify their becoming sole occupants of the College with their own staff of professors. After due deliberation, the major superiors decided that the French students would henceforth remain in their native country, for by this time the religious persecution had somewhat subsided. It was on September 16th, therefore, that there began, what we in our time called, the English College. The Superior then was Father M. Moors. During the first year, there were about 29 students, and this number was increased to 54 at the beginning of 1929, and to 74 in 1931. The teaching staff for the most part was composed of French priests. When the students had completed their course of studies at the College, they went to France where first they made their year’s novitiate, at the end of which they were professed and then passed on to the senior seminary at Montfort-sur-Meu, the birthplace of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. Here they completed their Philosophy and Theology and were eventually ordained priests. After ordination some were sent to the mission field in South East Africa, others to Montfort College to replace the French fathers. This went on until the declaration of war with Germany in 1939. Two years prior to this, the senior seminary at Montfort-sur-Meu had become overcrowded and a new house of studies had been opened at a place called Chézelles, not far from Tours, a town beloved of English tourists. This seminary was devoted exclusively to the study of Philosophy, while Montfort-sur-Meu remained the house of Theology.

Thus, at the outbreak of war, the English confreres were in three different groups. At Celles-sur-Belle, seven novices were nearing the end of their novitiate ; there were some sixteen philosophers at Chézelles; while at Montfort-sur-Meu there was a score or more of the theologians. Mobilisation in France decimated the number of professors and students in the seminaries, with the result that the philosophers were sent to Montfort-sur-Meu.

The writer of this article was a student at Montfort-sur-Meu in 1939, and can well remember something of the unrest which swept through the seminary as rumour after rumour was circulated, only to be surpassed by another more fantastic than the first. However, most of the rumours died a natural death, due mostly to the impact of study, and so the first year of war



MONTFORT HOUSE, HORSFORTH, LEEDS



ST. MARY'S SCHOLASTICATE, CHURCH STRETTON, NR. SHREWSBURY

passed quietly enough. At the end of that period, the German Army invaded the Low Countries and this put an end to any serious study. A war map had been affixed to the notice board in the cloisters, and the red string indicating the advance of the German Army began to get uncomfortably mobile. Gradually, it drew dangerously near to that part of France in which Montfort-sur-Meu was situated. It was on June 15th 1940, when all were assembled in the chapel, that the French Provincial officially informed the whole community of the immediate departure of the English students. Suffice to say that the following night we were sailing across the English Channel, bound for Southampton. The boat was the last to leave St. Malo, and some hours later the Germans entered the town itself. Such was the narrow margin between us and internment for the duration of the war, a fate which unfortunately overtook the novices who were too far south to escape.

We landed at Southampton on June 17th, and thus began what might be called the second chapter in the history of the Congregation in England. It began without any flourish of trumpets. After three days at Montfort College, the Father in charge hired a bus to take us home. A month passed by and then the intention of seeking a temporary seminary was made manifest. It was an undertaking at which the stoutest of hearts would have quailed; we were absolutely penniless, devoid even of the essentials to start a seminary: beds, desks, chairs, tables, etc. But the works of God have a habit of beginning in precisely the same way, and it was definitely in accordance with the spirit of the rule as drawn up by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort: he always had a profound dislike for banking accounts! Thanks to an unprecedented response on the part of parents, friends and benefactors, who extended a helping hand in the hour of need, we were able to settle at Leagram Hall, near Chipping, a small village about twelve miles from Preston. The house was opened in September, 1940, and was to remain the senior seminary for six years. Funds were always sufficient but never prodigious: we had faith in Our Blessed Lady, the Star of the Sea, to guide us through these anxious moments. In the Spring of 1941 the first three English priests were ordained, and with this ceremony our hopes, which had never wavered, rose to heights sublime. Something had been accomplished.

Towards the middle of the second year at Leagram Hall, it became evident that another residence was needed. Eight students had been ordained priests the Christmas preceding, and both Leagram Hall and Montfort College were amply staffed. Besides, the students from the College had been going directly to Leagram Hall to begin their course of Philosophy without having done their novitiate, and this was not quite canonical. Therefore, another search was inaugurated, and this time with a view of acquiring a novitiate. As in the case of Leagram Hall, the house was chosen first, and then thoughts turned to the financial side of affairs. Choice fell upon a residence at Colbury, Totton, not many miles from Montfort College, and was named "St. Joseph's," in honour of the great saint who is patron of foundations. It was bought in July, 1942, and opened as a novitiate in September. Some short time prior to the acquisition of St. Joseph's, we received the news that we had now been formally erected into a vice-province, with the Rev. Fr. P. Ryan as Provincial.

Although the province was still in its infancy, it had made colossal progress. During these years several Fathers had been sent to the Shire Mission, Nyasaland, to help the hard-pressed missionaries, and all the time there was a steady flow of newly-ordained priests from Leagram Hall. Gradually the number of Fathers was sufficient to justify the opening of yet another residence—this time a house for missioners. Hence it was that in September, 1945, Montfort House, Horsforth, Leeds, was officially opened.

Twelve months later, Leagram Hall again came into prominence. It had served its purpose, but as a seminary left much to be desired. Once again the search began, this time for a permanent senior seminary. The superiors were exceedingly enamoured by one residence in particular, a large house in Church Stretton, near Shrewsbury. Negotiations were completed and the house was acquired in September, 1946. The seminary of St. Mary's, Church Stretton, was opened in October, 1946, and with it we shouldered our greatest financial burden to date.

And so terminates the short but eventful history of the Company of Mary in England. Looking back over the past years, we can but utter a prayer of gratitude to Almighty God and to His Blessed Mother for the many favours and blessings received, for protection and guidance in the most crucial hour when it was a question of life and death. May Our Lady bless so many generous benefactors, whose self-sacrifice made possible the establishment of each foundation at a time when England was suffering from the scourge of war!

“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Thy Name give the glory.”

ELECTION OF NEW SUPERIOR-GENERAL.

The General Chapter of the Fathers of the Company of Mary, held at St. Laurent-sur-Sèvre during the month of April, resulted in the following elections:

Superior-General: Very Rev. A. JOSSELIN, D.D.

Assistants: Rev. J. THEUNISSEN, D.D.; Rev. L. FOURNIER, D.D., L.S.S.; Rev. J. BERTRAND;
Rev. M. BIDEZ.

PROPHECY OF ST. VINCENT FERRER FORETELLING THE COMING OF MONTFORT.

St. Vincent Ferrer, who died on April 5th, 1419, 254 years before the birth of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, foretold the coming of this great apostle of Our Lady. St. Vincent was preaching at a place called La Chèze, near Loudéac, and his eyes happened to fall on a large, ancient, but at that time deserted and roofless chapel, little better than a ruin, and choked up with briars and nettles. He was deeply touched at the sight of this abandoned sanctuary, which was known as the Chapel of Our Lady of Pity. And as he was telling the people what a joy it would indeed be to him to restore it to its former state and to the worship of God under the invocation of His Virgin Mother, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and, being thus rapt in spirit, he foresaw that the work would be done by other hands than his, and at a far distant day. *“This great undertaking,”* he said, *“was reserved by God for a man whom the Almighty would cause to be born in later times: a man who would come as one unknown: a man who would be greatly contradicted and laughed at: but a man, nevertheless, who would bring this holy enterprise to a happy issue.”*

In 1707, Montfort went to La Chèze, stood on the ground sanctified by the great missionary of the Middle Ages, St. Vincent Ferrer, preached to the people and began rebuilding the Chapel of Our Lady of Pity.

The Daughters of Wisdom in England

THE Congregation of nuns, founded by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, came to England fifty-six years ago at the time of the religious persecution in France. They are known as the “Daughters of Wisdom,” or the Sisters of La Sagesse. They devote themselves to the education of youth, the nursing of the sick, the care of orphans, and Foreign Missionary work. The Sisters have schools in London, Liverpool, Newcastle-on-Tyne and Romsey, and have residences at Chorley, Preston and Blackpool, where they carry on their charitable works of mercy.

Abbey House Convent, Romsey.

Abbey House Convent, Romsey, Hants, is situated on the grounds which for many centuries belonged to the old Benedictine Monastery, and stands almost within the shadow of the ten-centuries-old Abbey Church. It was started fifty-six years ago, when five Sisters of La Sagesse came over from France. They arrived in England on June 24th, 1891.

Three days later, the first Mass was celebrated in one of the rooms of the old house in which the Sisters first took shelter. There were four Catholic lay people present. Later on, a few more Catholics made themselves known and it was decided to transform an old stable into a chapel. This was replaced, in 1912, by a new building. The first chapel was placed under the patronage of Our Lady of Reparation. The reason for this was that one night a man, hostile to religion, came and broke a statue of Our Lady which was in the grounds. The Sisters, however, succeeded in repairing it, and as an act of reparation it was placed over the altar in the chapel.

Shortly after their arrival, the Sisters were asked to give lessons in French, and towards the end of 1891 succeeded in opening a school for the education of a few day scholars from the town. Meanwhile, the Bishop, His Lordship Dr. Virtue, confided to their care a number of poor-law boys from the Unions. In 1932, the Government decided to send poor-law boys to cottage homes rather than to institutions; consequently no more came to Romsey, and Abbey House Convent became exclusively a Boarding and Day School. Today there are 260 pupils at the Convent.

La Sagesse Convent, Liverpool.

The foundation of La Sagesse in Liverpool was due to the initiative of the Reverend Father Colpin, Rector of the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Roubaix, France, and of Mr. A. Lepoutre, also of Roubaix, who desired to provide protection and shelter in Liverpool for the Daughters of Wisdom of their parish, should they, in their turn, become victims of the religious persecution in France.

When Bishop Whiteside was approached, with a view to obtaining his approval, he was actually reading the Life of Blessed Grignon de Montfort, a striking coincidence and touching example of the way this holy Founder was preparing the way for his Daughters. After many difficulties, Bishop Whiteside gave permission for the foundation and arranged with Dean Goethals, the Rector of St. Patrick’s, that the Sisters should take charge of visiting the poor of this extensive and impoverished parish.

Accordingly, on Thursday, the 21st April, 1904, Reverend Mother Provincial, with the new Superior, arrived at the poor bare house destined to be the foundation in Liverpool. Monsignor Whiteside came to visit the little Community, and in later days used to relate how the first Convent of the Daughters of Wisdom in his diocese began with only two chairs!

With the arrival of several Sisters, the work of visiting the poor commenced, and



ABBAY HOUSE CONVENT, ROMSEY, HANTS.

[X] Room where miracle took place—see page 35



LA SAGESSE CONVENT, GRASSENDALE, LIVERPOOL

everywhere they were received with open arms. The Archbishop showed his appreciation of their work by next asking them to undertake the direction of the Children of Mary and the Guild of St. Agnes. The Sisters were ready for the sake of souls to take up any work of mercy, whether spiritual or corporal, and as the scope of their active charity widened it became necessary to find larger premises, until, after several removals and many vicissitudes, they finally settled, in 1910, at Holmleigh, Grassendale, at the instances of Abbot T. A. Burge, O.S.B., in whose parish the property was situated.

This house, standing in large grounds, was very suitable for development as a school, and the first pupils arrived in September, 1910. As their number gradually increased it became necessary to provide further accommodation. Consequently building operations began in 1913 and, by September, 1914, the pupils were able to enter a new block. In 1922, a new spacious gymnasium was added, then a laboratory, and finally "Mayfield," an adjoining house, was converted into a Junior School in 1923.

In 1929, the Kindergarten was transferred to a separate wing and, following the development of the school, "Recognition" by the Board of Education was obtained in April, 1928. Since then, the number of pupils has increased until at the present time there are more than 400 in the school.

Moorfield Convent, Preston.

The Convent at Moorfield, Preston, was opened on June 8th, 1905, by six Sisters of La Sagesse who, like so many other religious of that time, had been driven out of France by the religious persecution. It was to become a home for poor girls, a work so dear to the heart of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. The Sisters brought eight French girls with them from France and these were quickly supplemented by some forty Catholic poor-law children from the diocese.

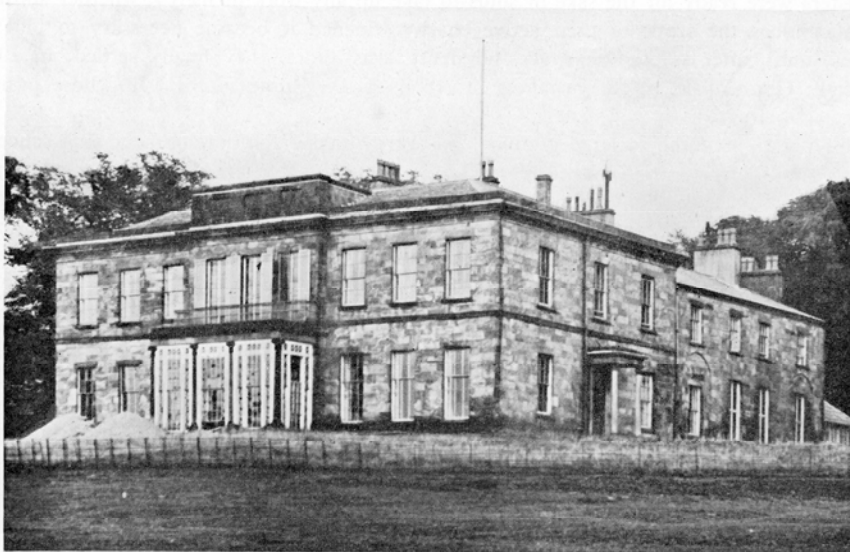
The original building was soon found to be insufficient to accommodate the increasing numbers; consequently, it was modified and considerably extended and, after a short while, certified by the Government.

It is interesting to note that 1,500 destitute children have passed through Moorfield Convent and have gone thence into the world, well-grounded in their Catholic faith and sufficiently trained in one or other of the professions to make them useful members of society. Besides the care of orphans, the Sisters visit and tend, in their own homes, the sick of five different parishes. Private retreats for women and girls are also held at Moorfield Convent.

La Sagesse Convent, North Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

The beginning of this foundation dates back to June, 1906, when Reverend Mother St. Augustine, Provincial, accompanied by two other Sisters, arrived at Gateshead. A week later, the first Mother Superior, Mother Louise-Emmanuel, set foot on English soil. The small Community settled in "Summerfield," a house on the Great Northern Roman Road. Apart from two bare mattresses and a few boxes which served as furniture, the house was devoid of all household commodities.

After a few months of hardship, the Sisters began their work in the district of Low Fell. They opened a small school and began catechising the poor children. The care of the parish sacristy was entrusted to them, likewise a chapel-of-ease. Later on, they were put in charge of the Children of Mary and of the "Holy Angels." Owing to rapid development, the Convent was transferred to a larger house, "Fern Dene," but towards the end of 1911, "Fern Dene" had to be abandoned and refuge was sought in Newcastle. This led to the acquisition of North Jesmond House Estate, in 1922. The house underwent considerable changes during the years 1923, 1925, 1928, and benefited by several extensions. In 1938, the Convent was recognized by the Board of Education.



GILLIBRAND HALL, CHORLEY, LANCs., HOME FOR MENTAL DEFECTIVES



LA SAGESSE CONVENT, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

The Significance of Montfort

By C. J. WOOLLEN

SAINTS are not only for their own day. In some sense, and in their measure, they share the timelessness of their Master who is “yesterday, and today: and the same for ever.” Their influence remains in the world, and often increases; their prayers from heaven help to make fruitful the work of the Church. For many of them, there is a time in their own lives when they can say with Our Blessed Lord: “My hour is not yet come,” for they needed a long preparation for the work God gave them to do.

There is sometimes a similar period after their death. Their memory may be in comparative obscurity while the Church is getting ready to receive them in their larger radiance; so that when their glory is finally proclaimed, it is all the more magnificent for the delay, and productive for good in proportion.

Such a saint was Louis-Marie de Montfort. Marvellous though his life was, he is honoured chiefly for his teaching, and method of devotion to Our Blessed Lady. His exposition of this, hidden even from his spiritual sons for 126 years after his death, is exactly suited to the present age.

Not that his doctrine was new; he insists and demonstrates that it is not. But Montfort and his treatise on “The True Devotion” are there to remind us that it must now be made known far and wide. Mary, the Mediatrix of All Graces, is not for the speculative few; she is not merely for the theologian. She is for all, just as are the graces she secures for them, and distributes. Practices of devotion will always be the speciality of the devout; nevertheless, Montfort has today a vast significance even for the man in the street.

We are entering a new social era. What will it be? Who will deny that it tends towards a universal Communism under a cloak of spurious democracy? Whole populations are deluded by a mirage of delights in which there is no room for God. Men are invited to prepare for an earthly kingdom in which their every want will be satisfied; one in which Christ cannot reign, who said: “My kingdom is not of this world.” And the anti-Christian planners infuse their schemes with a pseudo-philosophy laced with half-truths, attractive to the would-be intellectual, and easily deceiving the less thoughtful masses.

But the acceptance of godless social “reform” is gradual and apparently inevitable. Always it is disguised, like temptation, as good. The man in the street genuinely seeks social justice; his error is in looking for it from the wrong quarter. Even the man of goodwill is apt to be deceived—perhaps the practising Catholic, but he with less excuse, for he should at least have remembered Our Lord’s injunction: “seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

There have been times when men have lost liberty and some sold into slavery, but against their will. Today, we witness with astonishment a wholesale loss of freedom, and an acquiescence in the slave State; and all this because few realise whither they are being led. The devil’s attack is profoundly subtle. Not, indeed, that that is new. It dates from Eden when the lure to “be as Gods” seemed to promise greater felicity than the friendship of God. Now, however, when there can be little doubt that we have entered the last ages of the world, the subtlety of Satan is greater than at any time since he deceived our mother, Eve. Montfort is explicit that the battle in these latter times will become relentless. “The devil,” he says, “knowing that he has but little time, and now less than ever, to damn souls, will every day redouble his efforts and his combats.”

What are we to do? The devil, with his acute intellect, and the malicious cunning which directs all his activities, can outwit the cleverest man, who has as much chance against him in a battle of wits as a babe in arms. But as we know to our cost, he can inspire men who have become his willing tools to do his diabolical work for him in the world. There is no remedy within human vision; the victory seems to be for Satan all along the line. To combat him in world affairs, men are needed whose minds can detect his wiles in every sphere. And where are they to be found? For they would need to be angels rather than men.

There is surely only one Man who could ever have been capable of meeting the subtlety of the Evil One. Only Christ, the God-Man, has the power of forestalling him, and frustrating his plans. Yet we should think that if the devil can get such a hold on evil men, that they carry out his detestable scheme for him, all the more should there be good men whom Christ will inspire to overcome the wicked.

But we must remember that every man is to some extent under the devil's influence. Mankind has the unholy heritage of original sin. And it is precisely in the gradual unhinging of his hold on the soul that the spiritual combat consists throughout life. The aim of the spiritual life is to oust the devil and to put on Christ, and so to grow up into a perfect man. But they are few, indeed, who reach even the comparative perfection that is demanded if they are to become a power for Christ in the world; none who become so strong that they can marshal forces for Him with any hope of succeeding. With one exception, however; one whom the devil has never touched; "our tainted nature's solitary boast," as the poet said of her: Mary, the Mother of Jesus. In her hands He has placed the direction of the campaign, because she it was who by her consent to become the Mother of God made possible, under Him, the salvation of the world. And this unique position in creation has given her by grace a pre-eminence in intellectual powers even over the angels. She is more than a match for the devil and his angels; she alone is "terrible as an army set in array."

But if Mary is to direct the campaign she needs faithful servants in the world, a general staff and officers who will conduct it. These will be men and women who have at last triumphed over Satan in their own lives, and have with her help reached a high state of perfection. "The Most High," Montfort tells us, "and His Blessed Mother are to raise up for themselves great saints who will as much surpass in sanctity most other saints as the cedars of Lebanon tower above little shrubs . . . These great souls, filled with grace and zeal, will be chosen to stand against the enemies of God, raging on all sides. They will be outstandingly devoted to the Blessed Virgin . . ." Again: "They will be true apostles of the latter times to whom the Lord of Hosts will give speech and strength to work wonders and carry off glorious spoil from His enemies."

Some might object that in this description Montfort has in mind ministers of the Gospel, more particularly the members of the Company of Mary, which he founded. But it is obvious to those who will read those glorious passages in the "True Devotion" in which the Saint speaks of the necessity of devotion to Our Lady in the latter days that he intends his words to be of universal application. "Satan will lie in wait for her heel," he says; that is to say, all Our Lord's and His Mother's faithful servants, as the phraseology of Genesis indicates, "her humble slaves and her poor children, whom she will rouse to war against him."

Those who will have a distinguished place in the larger political arena in which the struggle will doubtless be decided need the continual guidance of Our Lady against the snares of the enemy. The rank and file also must be capable of detecting the devil's wiles, for it is they, in this "democratic" age, who must examine the policies put before them. They must be able to

judge which of them are good and which evil; they need, as much as their rulers, the power to outwit the subtlety of Satan, so that they be not led astray by false social doctrine. They need guidance as to which social schemes are ruinous to religious and personal liberty. And a safe conduct through the maze of Satanic falsity and intrigue they will gain through a wholesale and fervent devotion to Our Lady.

We see, in fact, on one side an army led by Satan its head, and composed of fallen angels and reprobate men, his slaves and the enemies of God. On the other side are the faithful servants of Christ, His Mystical Body, of which Our Blessed Saviour is the supreme Head, but whose members He ranges under the banner of Our Lady. It is fitting that Mary, a creature, should have the office of competing with and overthrowing Satan in the battle for world supremacy. It is the pretence of the devil that he is the equal of God. We can well believe that those men whom he inspires to persecute the Church flatter themselves that they are worthy opponents of God whose existence they pretend to deny while their actions betray their fear of Him. They could even bear, no doubt, to be finally defeated by Him rather than at the hands of His servants whom they despise so much. "Satan," says our Saint, "fears her more than God because, firstly, in his pride, he suffers infinitely more from being conquered and punished by a small and humble handmaid of God; her humility humiliates him more than the power of God." Montfort's doctrine puts man on a pedestal. Glorifying Mary as it does, it demonstrates in due proportion the tremendous dignity of every humble follower of Christ; indeed, of every man and woman, because such is capable, by God's grace, of succeeding in His service.

Contrast this ennobling truth with the specious doctrine of Karl Marx, which in spite of its boast of glorifying man only serves to degrade him. It makes him as material as the earth from which his body is derived; it tells him that when he dies, there is nothing more for him. Hence Communism's frantic attempt to exalt material "progress"; its anxiety to snatch for its dupes the utmost amount of pleasure while there is yet time. But they lose even the pleasures of life in the certainty of death, whose shadow must always darken the lives of those without faith and hope. And thus the wretched slaves of a soulless regime themselves become as cogs in a machine.

If the man in the street can imbibe the intricacies, inconsistencies and falsehood of the Marxian doctrine, he has surely the ability to learn the simple because luminous secret of Mary, and the practice which comes of the "True Devotion." The future must decide between Marx and Montfort. Who can doubt that the canonization of Louis-Marie is the guarantee of his success for Christ, culminating in the victory for social justice, for which the Popes, by their encyclicals, have been preparing the world for the last hundred years?

"It is through the most Blessed Virgin Mary that Jesus Christ came into the world, and it is through her that He must reign in the world."— St. Louis-Marie de Montfort (True Devotion, No. 1).

"God the Holy Ghost communicated His unspeakable gifts to Mary, His faithful Spouse, and He chose her as the dispensatrix of all He possesses; so that she distributes all His gifts and graces to whom she wills, in the measure she wills, how she wills and when she wills; nor does He give any heavenly gift to man which does not pass through her virginal hands. For such is the will of God Who has decreed that we should have all things through Mary. . ."—St. Louis-Marie de Montfort (True Devotion, No. 25).

Priests and the Canonization of Blessed Grignon de Montfort

By Rev. PATRICK O'CARROLL, C.S.Sp.

THE event which is to take place on July 20th, the canonization of Blessed Grignon de Montfort, will have a very pronounced effect on the work of this most zealous missionary of the Holy Ghost. His being declared a Saint will have a rich and personal significance for the members of the religious Congregations, which he founded, and that will be pointed out by those who, having thoroughly assimilated his spirit, can speak with authority and competence on the doctrinal message which he communicated in his inimitable way and for which Divine Providence raised him up in the Church. But it may be asked what influence will this event have on the Church as a whole or on the world generally? I, with very great deference, but with a solid conviction, venture to state a very far-reaching one, subject to one all-important condition. And that condition is that the priests of the Church, secular and regular, accept his message; the lesson of his life, become thoroughly imbued with it, and then endeavour by every means in their power to transmit it to the faithful.

What that message is, anyone can know with indubitable certitude by asking one simple question. What would St. Louis-Marie de Montfort preach today had we still the privilege of his earthly presence? We can unhesitatingly answer that there are two things on which he would insist more than all others, the recitation of the Rosary, particularly the family Rosary, and the True Devotion to Our Lady. Thus the crowning event of this summer, an evident indication of God's approval, and the Church's earnest commendation of his work, will focus the attention of all the faithful on the two pivotal points on which his whole priestly ministry revolved, which he made the burning themes of his apostolic preaching, and which with all due reverence we must consider as his special legacy, not only to his own spiritual sons and daughters, not only to all who are desirous of being devout clients of Our Lady, but to all those who would look to him for guidance and inspiration in the living of a good Christian and saintly life.

My aim, in this article, is to try to put these two points before priests; to emphasise their importance, to get them to appreciate them as not only most valuable, but I almost say, indispensable parts of their spiritual equipment, first of all for their own personal holiness, and secondly for the successful combating of the Prince of Darkness, with whom, as Ministers of God, they must ever regard themselves as locked in perpetual conflict. I do not wish to insinuate that priests do not say the Rosary*; also I know they have devotion to Our Lady. But I fear, taking the Clergy as a whole, there would be only a small minority whose enthusiasm for the promotion of these two supremely important religious practices would have that solidity, intensity and constancy which would satisfy St. Louis-Marie de Montfort. And, nevertheless, there are many unmistakable, indisputable proofs that God wants the clergy particularly to be conspicuous for the practise of the devotions mentioned.

Regarding the Rosary, the Sovereign Pontiffs have repeatedly and with great emphasis put before the minds of the Faithful the immense spiritual value that is attached to this prayer, which is altogether unique in character, and they have urged all to adopt it and, as far as possible, to recite it daily. Pope Gregory XVI: "It is the most wonderful means of destroying sin and

* Pope Pius XI recited the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary every day. I personally knew an Irish parish priest, who for thirty years before his death, recited seven rounds of the five decades every day.

recovering God's grace." Pope Pius IX: "Great is the strength of an army that holds in its hands, not the sword, but the Rosary." Pope Pius X: "The Rosary is the most beautiful and the richest in graces of all prayers; it is the prayer that touches most the heart of the Mother of God if you wish peace to reign in your homes recite the family Rosary." Pope Leo XIII: "For we are convinced that the Rosary, if devoutly used, is bound to benefit not only the individual but society at large. For evils such as these (the irreligion and immorality of his own time—how they have increased today) let us make a remedy in the Rosary, which consists in a fixed order of prayer combined with devout meditation on the life of Christ and his Blessed Mother." Pope Pius XI: "In addition, Our Lady's Rosary is not only a powerful force to overcome those who hate God, and are the enemies of religion, but it also stimulates, fosters and inclines the minds of all to the virtues of the Gospel." Our present Holy Father at the close of the Fatima celebrations, in 1942, said: "more still she bids us out of the fulness of Christ to diffuse around us, near and far, the perfume of Christ, and by constant prayer, especially the daily Rosary, as well as such sacrifices as zeal inspire, to win for sinful souls, the life of grace and eternal life." I purposely omit the striking statements of the Saints who have spoken on the Rosary, because, for any priest, the word and wish of the Holy Father should be an immediate call to action.

Let us now turn to the second portion of this article—the True Devotion. To every priest who reflects seriously on his state, two truths will come home to him with very great force. The first that God, in the loving designs of His Providence, has given him a most exalted vocation which demands great holiness of life, and entails many sacrifices, but which gives great contentment of heart in the measure in which these sacrifices are made. The second is that, when he looks into his own heart, he must see his insufficiency, his many weaknesses which are so many dangers for him, if he is not fortified by God's grace. Add to these the trials and fears which are peculiarly the priest's sorrows, his disappointments, which constitute for him so many temptations. Lastly, in this age of crude materialism, he will have such a struggle to keep himself from being contaminated by the spirit of the world, the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life.

If the priest in his poverty must honestly admit that his aim is merely negative, that somehow in his life he seems to be limiting himself to the avoiding of sin, then the True Devotion is put forward as the sure remedy for all his ills. If he consecrates himself to Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, and makes a genuine effort to understand the implications of the donation which he makes as exposed by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, he can be assured that in a very short time, under the care and protection of His Heavenly Mother, he will notice how irresistably he is borne on to acts of great generosity for his own personal sanctity and the works of the ministry. In one short sentence, for all priests this way of honouring the Mother of God is most confidently asserted to be the surest, the quietest and the most efficacious means of obtaining the *gratiae uberiores* necessary to be a very holy and most worthy minister of God, and to accomplish wonders in the Divine Vineyard.

Furthermore, I here make these two assumptions: that the True Devotion as expounded by de Montfort is the most perfect way of honouring Our Blessed Lady: that every priest should be desirous of giving of his very best to the Mother of God, because, according to the Saints, there are none dearer to Her Immaculate Heart than those who bear the sacerdotal character, and who participate in the priesthood of Her Divine Son. Even after this careful study there may be priests who, though desirous of having as perfect a devotion as possible to Our Lady, may find no attraction to the consecration as outlined by St. Louis-Marie, because they find his language excessive or extreme—and this has been admitted by many. To all such I make this suggestion.

Give the devotion a trial by beginning in a small and very simple way. If there is some work which is particularly trying and difficult, put it under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Experience will then show, that never was it known that anyone who implored the aid or sought the intercession of Our Blessed Lady was left unaided.

In December, 1700, St. Louis-Marie wrote: "*When I consider the needs of the Church, I cannot but sigh and ask constantly for a small and poor company of good priests who, under the banner and protection of the Blessed Virgin, should go from Parish to Parish, teaching the poor peasants and depending on Providence alone*"—and at the end of his life he prayed for this same Company—his priests, "*that as true servants of the Mother of God, they may everywhere fly with the flaming and burning torch of the Holy Gospel in their mouth, and the Holy Rosary in their hand, and barking like faithful watch-dogs against the wolves, which desire only to tear in pieces the flock of Jesus Christ, may burn like fires, and enlighten the darkness of the world like suns: and who by means of the True Devotion to Mary may crush, wherever they go, the head of the old serpent, in order that the curse with which Thou hast censed him may be fulfilled*"—"Inimicitias ponam inter te, et mulierem, inter semen tuum et semen ipsius! ipsa conteret caput tuum."

"Happy, a thousand times happy will be the priests, whom Thou hast so well chosen, and predestined to dwell with Thee in this fruitful and divine mountain, that they may become whiter than snow through their union with Mary, Thy Spouse, who is all fair, all pure, all spotless, that they may be enriched with dew of heaven, and the fat things of earth, with all the blessings of time and eternity, with which Mary is wholly filled."

These words, of course, primarily refer to the members of his own society, whose privilege it is to fulfil his wishes and strive to realise the hopes which he formulated when he made his foundation. But what is there to prevent any priest making them his own, for himself and his fellow priests? When our present Holy Father, now gloriously reigning, made the all-embracing act of Consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, he spoke of the Church "as the Mystical Body of Thy Son Jesus, which bleeds now from so many wounds, and is so sorely tried," and the whole world as "torn by deadly strife and paying the penalty of its own wickedness." For priests, these words of the Sovereign Pontiff need no amplification or commentary. All have some knowledge of the problem, though not all appear to see the full magnitude of its immense proportions. And the solution can only be now, as it was at every moment of crisis in human history, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Only God's grace can change the present state of things. And it is here that priests have enormous power and a tremendous responsibility. The Curé of Ars said he could convert the whole world if he had one hundred zealous priests, and, according to Cardinal Newman, St. Philip Neri asked for only a dozen really detached men for the same stupendous miracle. These expressions of the Saints are an attempt to put before us forcibly what they saw with incommunicable clarity, the immense, incalculable power which even one priest can have by living up to the full perfection of his sacred calling.

Of every priest who has done me the honour of reading this article, I very respectfully ask two favours. The first is that he would make the resolution to preach on Our Lady as often as possible, and never to terminate any sermon or lecture on a religious topic without some reference to her at the beginning or end; the second, that he would do all in his power to help the spread of the Legion of Mary. All priests can be adjutorian members; all can be easily convinced that this is a special work of Our Lady, that has every known sign of divine approval; all Parish priests can inaugurate it in their parishes, and every priest can help by disseminating the

knowledge of it anywhere he has any influence.

I conclude then, as I began, by stating that if the priests of the Church seriously set themselves to a propagation of the practice of the recitation of the Rosary and the True Devotion, Our Blessed Lady will work the great miracles of grace by which alone the works of Satan can be overthrown, and those under his yoke brought back to the sweet yoke of Christ. When the Prince of this World has been cast out, then that true peace for which every human heart longs can be established in an ordered society, where the members not only respect the rights of each other but have their mutual and multiple relations based on and inspired by genuine charity of the Spirit of Christ. As St. Louis-Marie de Montfort puts it: “it is through the Most Holy Virgin that Jesus came into the world; and it is also through her that He has to reign in the world.”

LEGIONARIES SHOULD UNDERTAKE DE MONTFORT’S TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY

“It is desirable that the practice of the Legionary devotion to Mary should be rounded off and given the distinctive character which has been taught by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort under the titles of ‘The True Devotion,’ or the ‘Slavery of Mary,’ and which is enshrined in his two books, the ‘True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin’ and the ‘Secret of Mary.’

“That Devotion requires the formal entry into a compact with Mary, whereby one gives to her one’s whole self, with all its thoughts and deeds and possessions, both spiritual and temporal; past, present, and future, without the reservation of the smallest part or slightest little thing. In a word, the giver places himself in a condition equivalent to that of a slave possessing nothing of his own, and wholly dependent on, and utterly at the disposal of Mary. . . .

“The True Devotion is inaugurated by a formal Act of Consecration, but it consists principally in the subsequent living of that Consecration. The True Devotion must represent not an act but a state. Unless Mary takes possession of all the life, and not merely of minutes and hours of that life, the Act of Consecration—even though frequently repeated—has but the value of a passing prayer. It is like a tree which has been planted, but which has never taken root.

“But this does not mean that the mind has to remain ever fixed upon the Consecration. Just as one’s physical life is governed by one’s breathing or by the beating of the heart, even though these operations are not consciously viewed, so it is with the True Devotion. Even though not adverted to, it works incessantly on the life of the soul. It suffices if the idea of Mary’s ownership is now and then made vivid by deliberate thought, by Acts and ejaculations; provided that the fact of one’s dependence on her remains permanently acknowledged, always at least vaguely present to the mind, and put into force in a general way in all the circumstances of one’s life.

“If there is a warmth in all this, it can be a help. But if not, it does not affect the value of the Devotion. Oftentimes, in fact, warmth makes things soft and not dependable.

“Mark this well: the True Devotion does not depend on fervour or emotions of any kind. Like every lofty edifice, it may at times burn in sunshine, while its deep foundations are cold like the rock they rest on. . . .

“The graces which have attended the practice of the True Devotion, and the position it has attained in the devotional life of the Church, would reasonably appear to indicate that it represents an authentic message from Heaven; and this is precisely what Grignon de Montfort claimed it to be. He attached to it immense promises, and he asserted most positively that those promises would be fulfilled if the conditions which govern them are fulfilled. . . .”—From the *Handbook of the Legion of Mary*.

“Let no one be timid in asking from this powerful Beatus (Grignon de Montfort) the most extraordinary favours, for the Most Holy Virgin will not fail to reward the confidence which any one reposes in the power with her of her most faithful slave of love.”—Cardinal Mercier.

“The Latter Times”

By Rev. GEORGE BURNS S.J.

ATTENTIVE readers of the True Devotion are soon made aware of the fact that St. Louis-Marie de Montfort often employs the expression “The latter times” and that he associates it with two ideas—a deepening consciousness among the faithful of the power and prerogatives of the Mother of God as the Mother of the members of the Mystical Body and the advent of violent, widespread and unceasing persecutions of the Church of God. He never dissociates these two developments; both are native to his thought, possess and animate his words and actions. The reason is this: he has a vivid realization of Our Lady’s central position and penetrative influence in the creed and worship of the Church—“the defence of many truths, the grace and smiling light of every devotion,” as Newman affirmed at the close of his sermon on *The Glories of Mary for the sake of her Son*. And thus St. Louis-Marie turns to her all-powerful patronage at a time when heresies were assailing divine Truth and casting a dreary darkness over traditional devotions. Heresy is a contagious disease, leaving ugly marks; hence his ardent prayer for “the true apostles of the latter times,” the true disciples of Jesus Christ, moulded and made, fashioned and formed by Her who, as the Mother of Christians in the supernatural order, “bestows upon them that same motherly care and fervent love with which she fostered and nurtured the Infant Jesus in the cradle.” *

During the year 1700, St. Louis-Marie came to close grips with the spirit and practices of Jansenism in the community of Saint Clement at Nantes. Here everything was distasteful to him: devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady were relegated to an obscure background; opinions derogatory to the authority of the Holy See were voiced and upheld. Hence a general spirit of worldliness prevailed—laxity in regard to the essential practices of religious life countered by rigorism towards the accidental. But at Nantes he at least learned to hate the very atmosphere of heresy! His own sure grasp on Catholic Truth enabled him to detect the secret unbelief lurking in many minds, the spiritual anarchy behind the façade of external observances. He foresaw the collapse of the spirit of faith in many parts of France and feared for the future of Europe thus weakened at its very heart. In a true sense he may be called a “prophet” of those developments which heralded the event known to history as “the French Revolution.” †

Other “prophets” were to follow him during the course of the nineteenth century, and they, too, spoke of the coming of “Anti-Christ.” But their vision of the future was conditioned by all that was happening during their own lifetime, since they were actual witnesses of the climax to the Protestant heresies. Under Jansenism, Jesus was obscured because Mary was kept in the background; rationalism took one step forward: it insulted the Mother and denied the Son. And thus it was that the power and the glory of God gave place to the power and glory of man. “Progress” of this kind, the mark of a century of scientific and secular illumination, “was hurrying the human race almost to the verge of ruin,” as Leo XIII was to affirm, reiterating the warnings of Pius IX.

Certain Catholic thinkers, writers and preachers voiced the mind of Rome. Lacordaire, in one of his sermons at Notre Dame, spoke of the possible capture of Europe by the “new

* From the Epilogue to the Encyclical on the Mystical Body—a masterly summary of Our Lady’s position in the life of the Church.

† St. Louis-Marie de Montfort died in the year 1716; international Masonry made its first appearance in the year 1717.

barbarians”; Balmez in Spain (1847) foresaw the rise of a powerful Russia and reminded Europe that just as Spain had held the fort against Napoleon, so she might again be a bulwark against new invasions from the East. To Manning, Liberalism was but the stillness before the storm. “There is a time coming,” he wrote, “when nothing will be persecuted but Truth; and if you possess the Truth, you will share the trial.” The Russian Solovyov, a great thinker, seer and sage, found his way into the true Church in 1896, wrote his “War, Progress and the End of History” four years later and died shortly afterwards with prayer for the Jews upon his lips. His notion of “Anti-Christ” is of one who is intent on achieving the general union of mankind *without God*—a defiance or a disregard of the supernatural Order for mankind, whether through “dictatorship” or a “world-parliament.”

John Henry Newman was yet another “prophet” who took a long and a deep glance into the heart of the nineteenth century. Note these words: “Surely there is at this day a confederacy of evil, marshalling its hosts from all parts of the world, organizing itself, taking its measures, enclosing the Church of Christ as in a net, and preparing the way for a general Apostacy from it. Whether this very Apostacy is to give birth to Anti-Christ or whether he is still to be delayed, as he has already been delayed so long, we cannot tell . . .” Several of the sermons preached at Birmingham are concerned with “the signs of the latter times” and in one of them (1876) he exclaimed dramatically: “Alas! The next generation—young people, I fear for you!”

But in many an age, the course of events has been so like that of the “last day,” as foretold in Scripture, as to remind contemporaries that perhaps it was upon them. It is enough to know, therefore, that the Second Coming will be preceded by a brief interval—“brief” is, of course, a relative term—during which Satan will be allowed a measure of “triumph” through the agency of the authentic “Anti-Christ.” And no great harm can be done and wise we are if we take care to watch out for the signs of the Second Advent, under the prophetic guidance of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort.

One other name must be mentioned and given its due importance in the growing recognition of St. Louis-Marie as a prophet and apostle of the “latter times”—the name of Father Frederick Faber.

It was in the year 1847 that Father Faber first studied the life and spirit of St. Louis-Marie and his “Notes on Doctrinal Subjects” include an analytical summary of a course of sermons on Our Lady’s influence on the history of the Church, proving that his own line of thought owed much to the *True Devotion*. “Nothing will pave the way for the coming of Anti-Christ more effectively than a general disbelief in Satan and eternal punishment,” he said shortly before his death. And in his introduction to the *True Devotion*, he re-echoed St. Louis-Marie’s ardent desires: “God is *pressing* for a greater, a wider, a stronger, quite another devotion to the Blessed Mother . . . May the Holy Ghost deign to give a new blessing to this work in England; and may He please to console us quickly with the canonization of this new apostle and fiery missionary of his most dear and most Immaculate Spouse; and still more with the speedy coming of that great age of the Church, which is to be the Age of Mary!” But such a “great age” is to be another “counter-reformation” against a general decline in the spirit of faith among Catholics and a violent attack on the Church herself.

The Holy Father, speaking last year to the parish priests of Rome and to the preachers of the Lenten sermons in the Eternal City, affirmed that there was an urgent need for an improvement in the general level of Christian living; Christians, he said, must give evidence of their faith by the heroism of their lives. “In order to breathe in the corrupt air of our modern cities and to live a Christian life in them without absorbing their poison, requires a profound

spirit of faith and a power of resistance such as the martyrs possessed.”

Christians, then, who live in the Eternal City, “require a profound spirit of faith.” With how much greater reason can we apply these words to those other members of the Church who have to live amid a society that has been almost wholly de-Christianised! The moral code of neo-paganism, generating its poisonous atmosphere, is all about them; their task, like the task of the first Christians, is to overcome the “worldliness of the world” by the fervour of their lives and their deep spirit of faith. The vital need of the times is that the rank and file of the faithful should have the courage and the supernatural energy to live as becomes those who are called to a sublime vocation.

There is a wide gulf between the rudimentary possession of a virtue and its perfection; between the necessary degree for salvation and the possible standard for sanctification; between what is of obligation and what is of counsel. When St. Paul spoke of the “victory of faith which overcomes the World” and said, “It is for us to have faith and save our souls,” he really meant: “It is for us to strive for the ideal spirit of faith and so enter into the vision of the realities of the invisible world.”

“May the light of thy faith dispel the darkness of my mind . . .” prayed St. Louis-Marie. They are important words. For Mary is the pattern and exemplar of the interior life; her own virtues, and in a special way her faith, animate the devout Christian soul. She adored the Sacred Humanity of her Son with all the powers of her being and through her daily contact with the visible realities of the Incarnation, she, to a far greater degree than the greatest contemplative saint, lived by the light of the invisible world as revealed to her by faith. Lack of appreciation of her interior grandeur will certainly imply a defect in the spirit of faith and lead to an impoverished supernatural life.

And thus it is that true devotion to Our Lady, in all its height and depth and breadth, as voiced by the authentic tradition of the Church, is the most effective answer to all the evils from which the Church suffers—weakened as she is from within by a defect in the spirit of faith among many of her children and threatened from without by the rising tide of persecution. This is the message of St. Louis-Marie to our own generation; he gives us seven reasons why God “wishes to reveal and discover Mary in the latter times”:

- (1) Because she was not manifested in her true glory in the first ages of the Church.
- (2) Because she is God’s greatest Masterpiece in the order of pure creaturehood and a true appreciation of her greatness is a pre-condition for a deeper appreciation of the Creator by His creatures.
- (3) Because she is the lesser light which enables us to gaze upon Christ, the Sun of Justice.
- (4) Because He came from her in His first coming, so she will also be the way by which He will come the second time, though not in the same manner.
- (5) Because she is the sure and straight and secure means to Jesus Christ; those who seek close union with Him will find it through her. “The kingdom of Our Lady is principally in the interior of a man.”
- (6) Because her mercy will help lapsed Catholics to return to the Fold and her “might” strengthen the valiant soldiers of the Church in their fight against her enemies.
- (7) Because the “latter times” will witness an increase in “cruel” persecutions, instigated by Satan and preparing the way for the reign of Anti-Christ. Mary has been given special powers to overthrow Satan, “that proud Spirit” who can be effectively vanquished by the humble Handmaid of Jesus Christ. Together they fulfil the prophecy uttered in the first pages of the Bible; the promise of the Woman and her seed made in the earthly

paradise meets with its accomplishment in the “great sign” of the Woman and her Child in the glory of the heavenly paradise.*

“But when and how shall this be?” asks St. Louis-Marie. “God alone knows,” he answers. But “if one part of the prophecy has been verified under our eyes, we are naturally led to believe that the remaining part, referring to the latter days, may yet be fulfilled.” †

Events of the highest significance have taken place during the last half century. Pius X, in his Encyclical on the occasion of the jubilee of the Immaculate Conception (1904), on many points, reflects the teaching of *True Devotion*; it is, in fact, a masterful exposition of the dogmatic basis of devotion to Our Lady as the Mother of the Mystical Body. Thirteen years later came the revelations at Fatima, to be followed by the consecration of the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary—a consecration, in other words, of all devout souls to the perfection of the *interior* life. The canonization of St. Teresa of Lisieux, of St. Bernadette, of St. John Bosco—all of them saints moulded by the spirit or the practice of the True Devotion—has brought immense benefits to the whole Church. The *Legion of Mary*, now officially established in 390 dioceses in all parts of the Catholic world, has based its magnificent apostolate on the doctrine of Our Lady as the mediatrix of all graces, on the *power of a living faith*, on supernatural motives and methods. Through the Legion, Our Lady has transformed countless “ordinary” folk into veritable apostles, “leaders” in the true sense of this much misused word; she has guided, inspired and sanctified them. Nor must we omit to mention that the Sodality of Our Lady, basing its apostolate on its motto “Ad Jesum per Mariam,” has harnessed itself to meet the needs of “the latter times,” at least in certain countries—notably in Spain, Ireland and the United States.

In God’s own time, in God’s own way, the Kingdom of Christ must triumph. “Ut adveniat regnum tuum, adveniat regnum Mariae!” May the Holy Spirit inspire the souls of the young with a great attraction to the Mother of the Mystical Body and give them an abiding confidence in her maternal heart, so that by her He may form new saints, made wise with His Wisdom and prepared to face the perils, persecutions and privations of “The Latter Times.”

* I have summarized several pages of the *True Devotion*.

† Letter of the Bishop of Salford (later Cardinal Vaughan) to his clergy, earnestly recommending them to study and practice the *True Devotion*.

“And another result (of the study of the Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin) was a determination to get it reprinted, in order that I might place a copy of it in the hands of every priest in the diocese, with a counsel not to be satisfied, as I had been twenty years ago, with one perusal of it, but to read it repeatedly, so as to experience personally the transformation it is capable of working in the soul.”

—Extract from Bishop (afterwards Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster) Vaughan’s “Letter to the Clergy, Secular and Regular, of the Diocese of Salford.” (This Letter, together with Fr. Faber’s preface, is printed in full in the *Canonization Edition of The True Devotion*.)



VOCATIONS

Young men aspiring to the
Missionary Vocation and desirous of
becoming a

Priest of Mary

for the greater honour and glory of her
DIVINE SON, should apply to:

THE VERY REV. FR. PROVINCIAL, S.M.M.

ST. JOSEPH'S,
COLBURY, TOTTON, HANTS.

Young men of respectable families and of good health, who wish to devote
their lives to the service of God as

Brothers in the Company of Mary

should apply to:

THE VERY REV. FR. PROVINCIAL, S.M.M.
(address as above)

Young Ladies who wish to spend their lives in the Service of God —

teaching children, nursing the sick, looking after orphans, or working on
the Foreign Missions—should apply to:

REV. MOTHER PROVINCIAL,
ABBAY HOUSE, ROMSEY, HANTS.

Archconfraternity of Mary, Queen of Our Hearts

OBJECT.

The object of this Archconfraternity is to establish the Reign of Mary in our hearts as a means of establishing more perfectly the Kingdom of Christ in our souls, by the practice of the true devotion to Mary, as taught by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort.

CONDITIONS.

The conditions for membership are: (1) To send in your name to be recorded in the official register. (2) To make the Act of Consecration to Jesus by the hands of Mary, on a special day, preferably on a Feast day of Our Lady. (3) To wear the badge of the Archconfraternity, which is the medal of Mary, Queen of our Hearts; but this is not required of those who wear the crucifix in an ostensible manner.

It is recommended to make the 30 days' exercises before the Act of Consecration, and to do a good work or to make a small offering in honour of Our Lady on the day of the consecration.

PRACTICES.

Every morning the members renew their Act of Consecration to Jesus through Mary, at least by using the short formula: *I belong wholly to Thee, and all that I offer to Thee, O most loving Jesus, through Mary, Thy Holy Mother* (Indul. 300 days each time); or: *I am all Thine, and all I have is Thine*.

Besides this, they apply themselves zealously to live always in dependence on Mary and to do all their actions in union with her.

Other prayers most conformable to the spirit of the Archconfraternity, and therefore most recommended, are: the Rosary, the Angelus, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the Magnificat, the Little Crown of Our Lady.

PRIVILEGES.

A Plenary Indulgence may be gained: (1) on the day of admission; (2) on the Feast of the Annunciation (Leo XIII, May 30th, 1899); (3) on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and on the Feast of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort (April 28th) on condition of renewing the Act of Consecration; (4) on Christmas Day; (5) on the Feast of the Purification; (6) on both Feasts of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady; (7) on the Feast of the Visitation and the Assumption (Pius X, December 18th, 1913); (8) at the hour of death. An Indulgence of one hundred days may be gained each time a member performs a good work in union with Our Lady, and in the spirit of the Archconfraternity.

PRIESTS who become members of this Archconfraternity are by the fact itself *Priests of Mary*, and enjoy the privilege *Altaris privilegiati* three times a week (Pius X, December 18th, 1913, *ad perpetuum*).

All the members have a share in the merits, prayers and good works of the two Congregations founded by St. Louis-Marie de Montfort, i.e. the Fathers of the Company of Mary and the Daughters of Wisdom.

FEASTS.

The patronal Feast of the Archconfraternity is the Annunciation, on which Jesus set us the example of dependence on Mary by coming to us through her. The secondary patronal Feast is that of St. Louis-Marie de Montfort (April 28th).

For membership apply to the Father Director, Abbey House, Romsey, Hants.

This edition is an almost-exact reproduction of the original booklet published in 1947 for the Canonisation of St. Louis Marie de Montfort