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THESE MADE PEACE

Studies in the Lives of the Beatified and Canonized Members of the Third Order of St Francis of Assisi

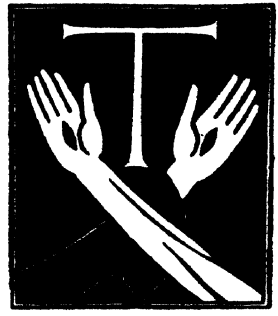
by

CECILY HALLACK

and

PETER F. ANSON

Revised and edited by
MARION A. HABIG, O.F.M.



LONDON

TO
MATHÉ

NIHIL OBSTAT : ANDREAS J. MOORE, L.C.L.,
CENSOR DEPVTATVS
IMPRIMATVR : E. MORROGH BERNARD
VICARIVS GENERALIS
WESTMONASTERII : DIE XI MAII MCMLVII

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FOREWORD

MORE than a quarter of a century has elapsed since the late Cecily Hallack began to write a series of lives of the beatified and canonized members of the Third Order of St Francis of Assisi. Durihg the six years before her death in 1938, seldom a week passed without the exchange of letters between us. Rough drafts of chapters were sent to me for criticism. Whenever we met the main topic of conversation was " The Tertiary Saints Book ". But other jobs held up its progress—' pot-boilers ' in the shape of novels, stories and articles. So the book was never completed, and after Cecily's death, the manuscript, together with masses of rough notes, was handed over to me by her executrix, with the request that I should edit the material for publication. I discovered that about half the lives had been finished, and there was no doubt that they needed much revision. As to the rest of the typed pages, they were no more than a first draft. Then there were all the rough notes on the lives of other holy tertiaries which had not been started.

Having made a thorough examination of this material, I realized that the task before me was far more difficult than I had anticipated. For one thing, it was obvious that the writing had been done under the strain of increasing ill health. In normal times there was no more conscientious author than Cecily Hallack. She would take infinite pains before she was satisfied that her work was as perfect as she could make it.

In this case the style was uneven, and it was obvious that she had not pruned and polished the wording in her customary manner. She must have been too weary to check facts in many places, and got confused over historical and topographical details. Elsewhere the novelist got the better of the historian, and she tended to let her imagination run riot!

When Cecily started the long labour of collecting material she was determined that her book should be a serious contribution to Franciscan literature. I think she wanted to prove that she could produce something more solid than novels and short stories. Moreover, we both knew that there was a real need for an authoritative volume devoted to the beatified and canonized members of the Franciscan Third Order, studied in relation to their historical background.

It seemed a pity that the years spent on the job; the hours of research in the British Museum Library, and the endless consultation with leading authorities on Franciscan history should be wasted. As an old friend, I felt it was my duty to revise, complete and augment the material which had been entrusted to me, and to produce a final result which would have given satisfaction to Cecily herself. I spent about six months on this work, but when the whole had been re-typed, came the outbreak of war. The publishers who had commissioned the book in the first instance informed me that it would be impossible for them to get it printed and put on the market. So the typescript was stowed away for nearly ten years. Then, at long last, came another offer of publication.

The work of revision was undertaken by Fr Marion A. Habig, O.F.M. No one was better qualified for the task, because this American Friar Minor has made

the history and activities of the Franciscans the chief source and inspiration of his extensive literary work for more than a quarter of a century. He put the finest of fine combs through the text, and discovered countless errors of detail. He insisted that whole sections must be re-written; pointing out that since Cecily Hallack had begun her researches much water had flown under the bridges, and historians had not been idle. He informed me that some of the facts related in this or that life had now been proved to be dubious legends! The result was that many pages had to be scrapped, and at least eight of the biographies written by Cecily Hallack had to be discarded. New lives of saintly tertiaries had appeared, besides articles in learned historical reviews. My collaborator pointed out that several more members of the Third Order had been beatified or canonized since 1938, and that the book would be incomplete without them. He reminded me of yet more tertiaries whose popular *cultus* had been widespread at one time or another, intimating that there was sufficient reason for writing brief lives of them. Finally, he recommended that a historical introduction ought to precede each chapter. Not content with this, Fr Habig sent me many books, magazines and pamphlets; including a complete set of the *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, covering fifteen years. It is due to his collaboration that the bibliographies are so complete.

A quarter of a century is a long time to wait between starting to write a book and having it published. The original chapters of *These Made Peace* have been changed again and again in this period, and much added to them. All I can say is that I hope Cecily Hallack would have approved of the greatly enlarged version of what she always used to insist was a work of historical research, not a story-book.

I must also thank Fr Ethelbert Cardiff, O.F.M., who read the original typescript, and made many useful suggestions. Acknowledgments must be made to Fr Basil Hodges, O.F.M., who verified the dates on which the saints and blessed are now commemorated in the Roman-Seraphic Calendar; and to Dom Basil D. Wedge, monk of Fort Augustus, who corrected this typescript. Neither must I forget to thank Sister Mary Dominic, Bridgettine nun of Syon Abbey, for her revision of the new life of St Bridget of Sweden; nor the Ursulines of Westgate-on-Sea, who corrected the much revised life of St Angela Merici. Lastly, my thanks are due to several authors whose writings are quoted in these pages; including Mgr Ronald Knox, Professor E. Allison Peers, Mr René Hague, Mr Edward Hutton, and Miss Nesta de Robeck.

May this book bring a message of peace to the troubled world in which we are living today, with its wars and rumours of wars.

PETER F. ANSON
Tertiary of St Francis

Low Shore
Macduff
Banffshire

Feast of St Clare of Assisi
August 12, 1956

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INTRODUCTION

THE story of the Third Order of St Francis of Assisi, otherwise known as the Order of Penance, is best told by the lives of those who, in it, became saints. We have collected what we could concerning them, occupying ourselves longest with those in whom the characteristics of the Order are most clear, and who contributed to its spirit, using any phrases found in the old 'Lives' which make their personalities vivid and memorable. Saints whose vocation it was to found a Religious Order or Congregation not grafted on to the Franciscan tree—for instance St Bridget of Sweden and St Angela Merici—have been discussed only as tertiaries.

Others, declared by some hagiographers to have been enrolled in the Third Order, have been left out, not merely for lack of conclusive evidence, but because it was common to wish to die in the humble habit as any sinner might do, without having any active part in the Order, or having a spirituality in any way formed, or even influenced by it. But saints who are said to have been enrolled will be found in one of the appendices. The total number of saints and blessed belonging to the three Orders of St Francis is reckoned to be about 340, of whom 113 are canonized and roughly 227 blessed. But these figures are only approximate, because no official list has ever been compiled. So far as is known, there are at least 52 tertiary saints and more than 80 who have been beatified. There are many more who are on a 'waiting list', and whose causes have been introduced at Rome. So it will be seen that it has not been easy to decide which of these holy men and women to include in this book.

Finally, the value of this small contribution to Franciscan literature lies only in its being a collection, and in the fact that care has been taken to give all sources of information, so that it can be seen on what authority statements are based. Since such a book is for ordinary people, we have drawn in the historical background as far as possible. Details of the Rule and actions of saints lose half their points—as does the founding of the Order itself—if a knowledge of contemporary circumstances is hazy. If every member of the Third Order Secular in the world today was inspired to buy this book at least 3½ million copies would need to be printed! In the United States of America alone the total number of secular tertiaries is estimated at 130,000. In 1947 the sum total of membership in all Third Order Regular communities of the world was put at 130,000. This includes about 63,776 sisters of various Congregations which are affiliated to or under the care of the Order of Friars Minor. More than 30,000 of them can be found in the United States. Having given these statistics of the Third Order of St Francis at the present time, we will relate how it came into being more than six hundred years ago.

First of all, the general background must be considered—the hill towns and cities of central Italy, the strongholds of its ancient fortitude. Those of Tuscany, Umbria and Romagna were peopled by the descendants of its earliest inhabitants, driven back to eagles' nests by strong invaders. The Third Order of St Francis was born among these ancient hill-cities in the springtime of the thirteenth century,

between Viterbo in the south-east and Faenza in the north-west, with Florence, Siena and Assisi making a star in the centre to mark the actual birthplace.

The men of the hill-cities saw successive tides of invasion sweep down from the north, over their countryside, towards Rome. The Pope was forced at last to crown a Teutonic chieftain, the Swabian 'Barbarossa', Emperor, that the barbarians might have some overlord who would be responsible for keeping them in hand.[1]

The struggle between popes and emperors continued for many years, and the opposition between the two powers see-sawed across central Italy.

To add to the confusion, there were two rival claimants for the Imperial crown, whose followers became known as Guelfs and Ghibellines. From the thirteenth century the spirit of the latter party stood for that secular and intellectual light which bordered often on heresy, even when it found room for itself within the Church, taking a detached view of Catholicism from the outside, as it were, and seeing it as a whole. The former party was more concerned with promoting the peace of Christendom, and saw the emperors as half-heretical Teutons, irresponsible in their pride.

Intense as was the party feeling between Guelf and Ghibelline, the feeling created by Italy's growing mercantile life was even deeper. While France was busy with the new learning, Italy had been busy becoming a nation of merchants. The power to make money was, as never before, within the scope of the ambitious. The great landowner could make more than ever, but so now could the citizen. The merchants of Venice, Pisa, Genoa, Florence and Siena and other cities forgot the old days of trade in kind and barter. They had gold in their money bags and coffers, news in their ears, power in their nod. They felt themselves to be the equals of princes, barons and bishops.

"Money and its commercial use had, in the days of St Francis", as Fr Hilarin Felder points out, "achieved an importance hitherto undreamed of. It had always been the medium of exchange to a limited extent, but with the growth of cities and their markets in the middle ages, the sale of agricultural products for money had become quite common. Towards the end of the twelfth century, money as a medium of exchange had, to all practical purposes, replaced the old system of trade in goods and barter. Side by side with the productivity of land and labour, the productivity of money now became a dominant factor; the capitalist had become a power to be reckoned with, as well as the landowner and the labourer. The latter also strove to become capitalists. . . . And forthwith began the struggle of class against class. Enormous wealth on one side: the poverty of the masses on the other; and on the part of both the insatiable greed for mammon that soon became the dread symptom of the time. Poets and preachers of the thirteenth century . . . depict in sombre colours these evil results of the new system of economics." [2]

There were many who were sickened by this money-making. They saw it as a new anomaly in Christian civilization—as indeed it was. The eternal combat between things spiritual and temporal was not only preached from pulpits with renewed uneasiness, but was discussed hotly in wineshops and market places, at the anchorite's window and in the castle hall. Men had been taught from their

[1] It was Adrian IV—the sole English Pope—who crowned Frederick Emperor on June 18, 1155.

[2] *The Ideals of St Francis* (Eng. trans., 1925), p. 120.

cradle according to the principles of the Faith which say how hardly rich men shall enter the kingdom of heaven, and that the uncovetous poor were the beloved of God, those who suffered injustice at the hands of the mighty, members of the meek Christ. But now, every day, a new voice was raised in denunciation of riches: with some the voice was that of faith, with others fanaticism. In many faithful and reasonable Catholics there was more than a tinge of mere negative conservatism—the fear of the new which is never to be found in that *christianus completus*, the saint.

Most of us prefer to think of Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as populated by orthodox Catholics, who, even if their morals did not always conform with their faith, built great cathedrals and marvellous parish churches, founded monasteries and nunneries, established universities where scholastic philosophy was taught, in fact, that this was indeed the 'Golden Age' of religion. What we often forget is that behind and beneath all these externals there flourished a vast and mysterious underworld of heresies.[1] "While some of the heterodoxies of the period were essentially philosophic and academic, others there were which made a wider appeal direct to the masses; and it was the latter that inspired the most apprehension and that were consequently most vigorously repressed." [2]

Mgr Ronald Knox has dealt with this religious underworld of the Middle Ages in Chapter V of his book entitled *Enthusiasm* (Oxford, 1950), and he stresses their multiplicity, giving the names of nearly forty of the strange sects which came into being. Those which flourished in the first half of the thirteenth century had, in a curious way, a direct influence on the setting up of the Third Order of St Francis. How these sects arose is described by Mgr Knox, who writes: "Likely enough, there would be little pockets, here and there, of self-sown discontent; a township, for example, which had been put under ecclesiastical discipline over some quarrel in which the citizens felt that right was on their side. A week's chance visit from some journeyman apostle would fire the imaginations of the people, and they would describe themselves thenceforward as belonging to the pure, the Cathar Church, or as owing allegiance to the Humble Men of Lyons, without any clear idea of the doctrines contained in either system. Once more, were they Waldensians, were they Cathars? You have to allow, surely, for a great deal of cross-fertilization between these isolated sub-sects, a further headache for the Inquisitor. The furtive group of *petits bourgeois* that had been delated to him, only yesterday, as Henrician, might have blossomed out into the open-work shoes of the Humiliati overnight. You get traces of these uncertainties actually in process of development."[3]

The sect which had the greatest influence on the establishment of the Third Order was the Waldenses, founded in the twelfth century by Peter Waldo, said to have been a rich merchant of Lyons, who sold all his goods and preached voluntary poverty. His first followers became known as 'Poor Men of Lyons'. But, strictly speaking, they were not heretics and managed to obtain a papal blessing in 1179, but only on condition that they did not go about preaching,

[1] Cf. Beuzart, *Les Hérésies pendant le moyen âge de la Réforme* (Le Puy, 1912); A. S. Turberville, *Medieval Heresy and the Inquisition* (London, 1920); Bussell, *Religious Thought and Heresy in the Middle Ages* (London, 1918); H. J. Warner, *The Albigensian Heresy* (London, 1922); E. Gebhart, *Mystics and Heretics in Italy at the end of the Middle Ages* (Eng. trans., London, 1922).

[2] A. S. Turberville, in *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. VI, 699.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

except with the approval of the local clergy. The Waldenses crossed the Alps and became very numerous in Piedmont. "The movement", as Mgr Knox says, "stood for a protest rather than a denial." [1] It was, in the main, a protest against the un-Christian way of living among the secular and regular clergy, at least during the earlier period.

An offshoot from the Waldenses was the so-called 'Order of Poor Catholics', founded about 1210 by Durandus of Huesca, but its activities were confined mainly to France and Spain. Another movement, externally very much like the Franciscan, was that of the Humiliati, which had its roots both in Provence and in Lombardy about the middle of the twelfth century. The latter group originated among the poor wool-workers in northern Italy, and at first it was merely a guild for their mutual support, but before the pontificate of Innocent III, who gave them his approval about 1200, they had been divided into three 'orders': the first of men and women living in their own homes; the second of those in community; and the third composed of both priests and women living under an austere religious rule. The wives of the twelfth-century Humiliati in Milan who left their husbands and retired to convents were mostly drawn from the nobility. They substituted a white habit for the original ashen-grey garment. These female communities of Humiliati became very numerous in Lombardy. Some of the nuns nursed lepers. They followed the Rule of St Benedict.[2]

There were many other movements of the same kind in the second half of the twelfth century, which in most cases blossomed into heretical sects. Riches they renounced, but spiritual pride was less easy to be rid of. All these institutions were built on sand, and if the Church managed to underpin some of them with its own concrete, their architecture never had lines inspired by any laws greater than the fancy of the builder and the needs of the moment and the province. "Whatever judgment we pass on the medieval heretics, it is bad philosophy not to recognize that they must have some honourable excuse for their existence. A religious movement which has no such excuse will look in vain for a popular appeal. Viewed at its best, the movement we are considering was a protest on behalf of simplicity in an age which had begun to feel the oppression of worldliness. The Middle Ages suffered from a growing nostalgia for the Sermon on the Mount. Indeed, it is permissible to suggest that if St Francis had lived a century earlier, there would have been no Waldenses, and the Catharists would have lost their market. But St Francis came too late to immunize society against the anti-clerical germ that had now found a lodgment in its organism. To be sure, the set-up of the twelfth century was not as worldly as that of the Renaissance; but already there was sharp disproportion. It was not so much, perhaps, the private lives of the clergy that gave scandal, though complaints of this kind are frequent even in the best period of the Middle Ages. It was rather the aggressively prominent figure which churchmen cut in the secular world, the terrific powers which they wielded, not always wisely, in defence of their temporal rights, the magnificent style they often adopted, that gave the impetus to revolt. Enthusiasm is a disease,

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 73.

[2] Of the Humiliati, Jacques de Vitry wrote in 1216: "For Christ's sake they have given up all, they are gathered together in divers places, and live by the labour of their hands. They hear the word of God gladly, and often preach themselves; steadfast in faith, sound in doctrine, they are faithful in good works." (Cf. Nesta de Robeck, *Among the Franciscan Tertiaries*, p. 9; also L. Zanoni, *Gli Umiliati nel lero rapporti con l'eresia*, etc. (Milano, 1911), pp. 112 ff.)

not of the starved, but of the full-fed organism, and takes on its character from the nature of the protest it desires to register. Because the age, compared with those which had gone before it, seemed an artificial one, the medieval heretics struck, everywhere, the note of simplicity." [1]

In God's Providence a man was born in due time who, later on, would take all that was good in the medieval underworld and prevent it from going astray by placing it under the wise direction of the Church. This man was Francesco di Bernardone, born at Assisi in about 1181, and who died there in 1226. In this book it is impossible to tell the story of his life, it can be found elsewhere.[2] All we are concerned with is the Order he founded primarily for men and women living in their own homes—nothing novel in itself, because it was far more of a purifying and piloting into safe channels—the same spiritual urge which had resulted in the formation of the innumerable sects and sub-sects mentioned already.

* * * *

It is not absolutely certain when or where the Third Order was formally constituted.[3] Until fairly recently the general consensus of opinion was that the Brothers of Penance, as the Order was first called, were the logical outcome of the ' Letter to All the Faithful ', and that this " circular addressed to the entire world inviting all men to follow more closely the precepts of the Gospel " [4] was the material from which the first Rule was drawn up in legal language. However, some historians now maintain that this famous letter was not written by St Francis in 1214 as had always been taken for granted, but ten years later, shortly before his final illness. Furthermore, it is now quite certain that the Third Order was founded by St Francis long before 1221, even as early as 1209 or shortly afterwards, which makes it more or less contemporary with the foundation of the First Order.[5] This opinion arrived at by some modern historians agrees with what Thomas of Celano says in his Life of St Francis, written three years after his death. He indicates quite clearly that it was the preaching and example of the Little Poor Man which led to the founding of the First Order in 1209, but there were so many people from all walks of life who wanted to work out their salvation under his guidance, the only thing to be done was to give this majority a simple rule of life, suitable for every class of society.[6]

Cannara, Poggibonsi, Villa Gagiani (near Poggibonsi), Bologna, Florence and Faenza have all been claimed as places where the first group of tertiaries was organized, but we have no means of finding out which city can be given priority.[7]

[1] Knox, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-5.

[2] The following are the best modern lives in English : Fr Cuthbert, O.F.M. Cap., *St Francis of Assisi* (1912) ; Omer Englebert, *St Francis of Assisi*, translated from the French by Edward Hutton (1950) ; J. Jörgensen, *St Francis of Assisi : A Biography* (Eng. trans., 1912) ; Ernest Raymond, *In the Steps of St Francis* (1938).

[3] Cf. Marion Habig, O.F.M., " The Founding of the Third Order ", in *Third Order Forum* (January 1, 1931), pp. 20-3 ; also Fidentius Van den Borne, O.F.M., *Die Anfaenge des Franziskanischen Dritten Ordens.*

[4] Omer Englebert, *St Francis of Assisi*, p. 232.

[5] Cf. Luis de Sarasola, O.F.M., *San Francisco de Asis* (Madrid, 1929), p. xxxvii.

[6] Cf. *Legenda Prima*, Part I, Chap. 15.

[7] St Bonaventure seems to imply in his *Legenda Major*, which appeared about 1263, that the Third Order came into being at the chapel of St Mary of the Angels, Assisi, about 1209, saying : " Because of the fire of the preaching of Blessed Francis, in many men and women was kindled the love of God and they began to live in chastity and to bind themselves

No copies of this original Rule, whatever it was, have been discovered.[1] In 1221 Cardinal Ugolino prepared a Rule in legal wording, and in the same year Pope Honorius III approved it verbally.[2] From the Bull of Honorius III, *Significatum est*, addressed to the Bishop of Rimini, December 16, 1221, one can conclude that the Third Order was already established as a definite organization at Faenza and other cities as well by that date. The Rule of 1221 is found, with local changes and additions, in each of the four primitive rules which have been discovered in the past half century: the Venice and Koenigsberg Rules (dating from before 1228), the Capistrano Rule (1228), and the Mariano Rule (1234 or later).[3]

The different versions of the first Rule of the Third Order which have been discovered suggest that all of them are revisions of an earlier Rule. There are slight variations in their wording and arrangement. Critics of these ancient texts tell us that the oldest parts are those which refer to the organization of the local groups of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance.[4]

In order to understand the sort of life which was lived by the first tertiary saints and blessed dealt with in this book, it is essential to know something about their Rule.[5] Personal sanctification was the primary purpose of this Rule; the means to achieve it being: poverty and simplicity in dress, the avoidance of dangerous amusements, mortification in food, prayer and the regular reception of the sacraments, examination of conscience, the hearing of sermons, and attendance at Mass.

The distinctive ' uniform ' adopted by the " Continent Brothers and Sisters " must have made them very conspicuous because of its simplicity, especially in an age when bright colours in dress were the fashion. This uniform is described in such detail that it is quite easy to visualize the first tertiaries. For the Brothers it consisted of a long tunic and cloak made of " humble undyed cloth, the price of which is not to exceed six Ravenna *soldi* an ell, unless for evident and necessary cause a temporary dispensation is given ". No collars were allowed. The neck

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to do penance according to the rule given by God to Blessed Francis and which he, by preaching and example, showed to the world. These men and women he called Brothers of Penance, and rightly so, for the way of Penance is to all who go to Heaven, and in this path of penitence all can walk, priests and laymen, married persons, virgins and widows, and many miracles have shown how great this Order is before God." St Bonaventure stresses that " *here* it was "—at the Porziuncula—that St Francis realized that layfolk must be gathered into some kind of Order.

[1] Certain historians have pointed out that the Rule drawn up by Cardinal Ugolino about 1221 was adapted from the one which Innocent III approved for the Third Order of the Humiliati.

[2] The several versions of the first Rule which have been discovered describe it as the ' Rule of the Continent Brothers and Sisters ', with the sub-title of ' Memorial of the project of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance living in their own homes, begun in the year 1221 '. So far as is known, the words ' Third Order ' were not used in any official documents until June 7, 1230, when a letter of Gregory IX to the bishops of Italy referred to the Brothers of Penance as the ' Third Order of St Francis '. The Bull of this same Pope, *Detestanda* (March 30, 1228), was addressed to all tertiaries in Italy. (Cf. *Bullarium Franciscanum*, ed. Sbaralea, O.M. Conv., Vol. I, 39, XX (Roma, 1759); P. Z. Lazzari, O.F.M., ' Primodi Francescani e instituzione del Terz' Ordine a Firenze ' in *Studi Francescani* (1921), p. 14; P. Frédegand, O.F.M. Cap., *Le Tiers-Ordre de S. François d'Assise* (Paris, 1923), p. 15.)

[3] Cf. Marion Habig, O.F.M., ' The First Rule of the Third Order ', in *Third Order Forum*, March 1931, pp. 44-7. This article must be supplemented by the more recent findings of Fr Sarasola.

[4] Marion Habig, *ibid.*, p. 47.

[5] The full text in an English translation is given by Fr James Meyer, O.F.M., in *The Words of St Francis* (Chicago, 1952), pp. 316-26. He uses the Venetian version.

had to be fastened with laces, and not left open, as was then the secular mode. The sleeves must be narrow and closed.

The Sisters were permitted a greater variety in dress. They could take their choice between a tunic made of the same cloth of the same price as worn by the Brothers, or they could wear a white or black petticoat; or if they preferred, a loose fitting linen gown, without pleats or flounces. The Sisters were told that its price must not exceed 'twelve Pisa *denars*'. Here again, it was possible for them to get a dispensation to spend more on their uniform, according to their social status or local custom. The ban on silk and coloured veils, also ribbons, must have been a real mortification for some young women.

Both the Brothers and the Sisters were allowed to have their cloaks lined with fur, but nothing more costly than lamb's wool was permitted. As to their belts and wallets, these had to be of leather, and without any fancy ornament, such as silk embroidery.

We can picture these men and women of almost every social class, clothed in their grey-brown uniforms, some of the Sisters wearing simple black or white dresses, moving through the streets of almost any Italian town after the middle of the thirteenth century. Their common rule of life cut them off from the more worldly-minded of their contemporaries. They were not allowed to be present at stage-plays or dances. The troups of actors which wandered around Italy were notorious for the licentiousness of their performances.

In their own homes they were bound to say grace before and after meals, and be content with two repasts daily, dinner and supper, just as if they were monks or nuns. They had to observe abstinence from flesh meat except on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. But they were dispensed from the rule of abstinence in illness, when travelling, and on all the greater festivals of the Church. Except for some just cause, every Brother and Sister had to fast on all Fridays, on the Wednesdays from All Saints till Easter, and every day from November 11 (St Martin) till Christmas. It should be remembered that fasting in the thirteenth century was very severe, and allowed only one abstinence meal, without butter, cheese or eggs, towards evening. On ordinary abstinence days, cheese and eggs were permitted. In regard to the rules of fasting and abstinence, the Third Order merely followed the same rule as existed in most religious orders at that date. This in itself proves that the ecclesiastical authorities did not regard the tertiaries merely as a confraternity or pious society.

It is interesting to study some of the dispensations from the letter of the Rule. For instance, mothers with child, and men engaged in hard manual labour were allowed three meals daily from Easter to Michaelmas. It was permissible to eat of everything put on the table when working among strangers, except on Fridays and the fast days of the Church.

The recitation of the full Divine Office was obligatory for all who could read Latin, not only for priests who were members of the Third Order. The uneducated Brothers and Sisters substituted the Breviary offices with a total of fifty-four *Paters* and *Glorias* daily, spaced out to correspond with the canonical hours. If they knew by heart the *Credo* and psalm *Miserere* they added these at Prime and Compline. If the first Rule of the Third Order were still in force today, one fears that it would be very difficult, if not impossible in most places, for its members to fulfil their obligation to assist at the recitation of the office of Matins in a church every day between All Saints and Christmas, also throughout Lent. In the

thirteenth century every Brother and Sister had to do so, unless prevented by some valid reason or by sickness. There were other prayers which were of obligation: for a deceased Brother or Sister, a priest had to celebrate one Mass. Other tertiaries had to recite either fifty psalms, or fifty *Paters*, adding *Eternal rest grant to them.* Once a year every priest was bound to celebrate three Masses for the repose of the souls of members of the Third Order. Layfolk who could read had to recite one hundred psalms; the unlettered saying the same number of *Paters.* Priests and people were brought closely together by these prayer-rules. This was very necessary in the thirteenth century when some of the heretical brotherhoods were trying hard to estrange the clergy from their flocks.[1]

To Catholics of the present age it will seem strange that the Rule made provision only for confession and Communion three times a year—Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Insistence on more frequent reception of the sacraments would have been far too revolutionary in the thirteenth century. But certain local additions to the first Rule advise that the Brothers and Sisters should go to confession every month, and quote some words of St Francis by way of commending this practice.

There are detailed instructions for the proper organization of the monthly meetings, visiting the sick, burying the dead, the correction of individual Brothers and Sisters, and the appointment of the various officials. It is made perfectly clear that this is a *lay order* with its own *lay organization*, and its own *lay authorities.* This cannot be stressed too strongly, because there is a widespread idea that the Third Order was, and still is, merely an auxiliary and appendage of the First Order of Friars Minor.[2] Each local group of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance was under the direction of officers and superiors elected from their own ranks. They consisted of two ministers, several counsellors, an almoner or treasurer, and some messengers. The business of the last named was to keep in close touch with the members. The two ministers admitted postulants, clothed novices, and received professions. They convoked the monthly meetings, cared for the sick, and took care that fraternal charity was maintained. It was not until much later that the lay ministers began to be replaced by priests in some places, due to the lack of the right sort of layfolk.

The visitors were appointed by the local bishop, and in the first Rule there is nothing to indicate that they need be priests. The only occasion when a priest had the direct opportunity to interfere with the organization of the Third Order in the early days was when he preached a sermon at the monthly meetings. For obvious reasons a Friar Minor was generally asked to do so. Here again, he had no powers to receive new members, this was the business of the ministers.[3]

The friars acted merely in an advisory capacity, and were what we should now call spiritual directors of the fraternities. The monthly devotional meetings in

[1] Cf. Van den Borne, *op. cit.*, p. 136, note 21.

[2] The Third Order of St Francis always has been, and still is, different from other lay associations, because it has its own Rule approved by the Holy See, a novitiate, profession, and a habit. These features give it the character of a religious order, and distinguish it from a pious confraternity. The Third Order Secular, as it exists today, has been defined as an association of lay Catholics who, by their religious profession, bind themselves to strive after a more perfect form of Christian life than that of the majority of layfolk. (Cf. P. Matteo Conte de Coronata, O.F.M. Cap., *Il Terzordine Francescano—Legislazione Canonica* (Roma, 1932); French edition, Turin, 1936.)

[3] St Francis authorized Bd Luchesio to admit members, and he was a layman.

a church were followed by a Mass, after which a business meeting took place, with a collection made to assist the poor or sick members of the local unit.

No heretic, or anybody suspected of heresy, could be received into the Order. If suspected only, the individual could be clothed as a novice after an examination before the episcopal tribunal. Married women could become Sisters only with the consent of their husbands.

Such then is a brief summary of the Rule observed by the Third Order until 1289, when Pope Nicholas IV issued a universal Rule for tertiaries in all countries. The first Rule "was to be the Magna Charta of unborn multitudes of tertiaries; in it were contained the precious germs of saintliness and of social betterment soon to produce so rich a harvest in the soil of Christendom. Severe, even stern, as may appear some of its provisions to modern eyes, it was on that very account a challenge thrown down to a world steeped in luxury and festering with pride and arrogance; an instrument devised to preach to men the Cross of Christ, which Francis, the herald and standard-bearer of the Great King, held aloft in the sight of an astonished world; an echo in legal phraseology of the words of Him who once had said: 'If anyone will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me'." [1]

A few more details of the tertiary way of life are worth mentioning, especially the practical working of those clauses in the Rule enforcing fraternal charity. When Brothers or Sisters fell ill, the ministers had to visit them at least once a week, either personally or by deputy. If necessary, the sick members could be supported by grants made from the common fund. Every member of a local fraternity was bound to attend the funeral of a Brother or Sister. Within eight days of the decease, the prescribed prayers for the dead had to be recited.

Other clauses in the Rule stressed the importance of paying taxes or tithes imposed by legitimate rulers, and the obligation of making a will within three months after profession. Lastly "there were the far-reaching regulations forbidding tertiaries to accept or carry deadly weapons against any man, or to take solemn oaths unless forced by necessity. The four cases when such necessity existed—namely, when maintenance of peace, defence of the Faith, averting of calumny, and testimony in court demanded an oath—were later specified by the Supreme Pontiff and added to the primitive rule. These rulings played a very important part in the history of the order."[2]

It was the refusal of tertiaries to take up arms or to take any form of solemn oath without permission of the Pope that differentiated them from the greater number of their contemporaries.[3]

As Omer Englebert reminds us: "The whole political edifice of the Middle Ages reposed indeed on the oath; it was taken to a suzerain or to a commune; but beyond this, whatever happened, however unjust or arbitrary the war in which the suzerain or the commune was engaged, he who took oath was compelled to take up arms and fight in their quarrel. To be master of the oath was for the Holy See to dispose of an unheard-of power against its enemies. By this means, in opposing wars it considered unjust and in favouring others, it could

[1] Fr Oswald, O.S.F.C., *The Third Order of St Francis*, p. 29.

[2] Fr Marion Habig, O.F.M., 'Original Organization of the Third Order', in *Third Order Forum* (July 1931), p. 94. Cf. Van den Borne, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-11.

[3] Cf. F. Caelley, *Le Tiers-Ordre de S. François d'Assisi*, p. 31; *Seraphicae Legislationis textus originales*, p. 85 (Quaracchi, 1897).

break the resistance of the communes, resist the civil power, hold the Emperor himself in check. And so it befell, for the tertiaries soon spread through the whole peninsula. Thanks to them the Papacy found auxiliaries everywhere infinitely precious since their aid allowed it to reduce the Ghibellines to despair." [1]

There was at least one instance of the greater number of the inhabitants of a city joining the Third Order in a body, so as not to be obliged to answer the call to arms of their suzerain. This happened at Faenza in 1221. The suzerain appealed to Honorius III, whose only answer was that the tertiaries of this city were freed from their oath of vassalage, and that it was up to their bishop to protect them against the unlawful demands of the suzerain.[2]

The part played by members of the Third Order both in public and private life in many a small town of Italy during the second half of the thirteenth century can be understood from certain documents which were discovered some years ago by the late Fr Livarius Oliger, O.F.M.[3] One of these is a Bull of Innocent IV, dated April 13, 1253, in which he informs the civil authorities of Città di Castello the exact nature of the privileges enjoyed by the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. Another document, drawn up by the bishop of the diocese, insists that the tertiaries shall not be pressed into public service. We are able to realize that the membership of the Third Order in Città di Castello represented all classes of society, because there is reference to an attorney nominated to handle a lawsuit, and a druggist chosen to attend a convention of tertiaries held at Marsciano in August, 1289. Città di Castello was never more than a small city, hidden away among the mountains between Perugia and Arezzo, nevertheless its tertiaries were powerful enough to uphold their rights during the endless feuds between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. Not only did they succeed in being exempted from military service, but they won at least two lawsuits against the local government, which wanted them to pay taxes to support the soldiers. The Brothers of Penance were nothing if not militant ' conscientious objectors ', when it came to taking part in or paying for civil wars, which lacked the blessing of the Holy See.

* * * *

The message of St Francis to the world was a message of peace : " The Lord revealed to me that we should speak this greeting : The Lord give you peace " (*Testament of St Francis*). Although there is no proof of its authenticity, the prayer ascribed to St Francis develops the same idea as the simple message which is genuine :

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
where there is hatred, let me sow love ;
where there is injury, pardon ;
where there is doubt, faith ;
where there is despair, hope ;
where there is darkness, light ;
and where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,

[1] *St Francis of Assisi* (London, 1950), p. 237.
[2] Cf. Sbaralea, *Bullarium Franciscanum* (Roma, 1759-1768), Vol. I, 8.
[3] Cf. ' Tertiary Traditions ', in *Third Order Forum*, Vol. XVIII (August 1939), 185-6.

to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.[1]

In the *First Rule of the Friars Minor* the Brothers are bidden to say first " Peace be to this house " no matter what dwelling they enter, and " to give to everyone that asketh them, and if anyone take away their goods, let them not ask them again ".[2] The same command to be peace-makers is set forth in the next chapter. " Of those who go among the Saracens and other Infidels ". The final ' Admonition of the Brothers ' starts with the words : " Love your enemies, and do good to them that hate you."

The same stress on peace-making is found in the *First Rule of the Third Order* where it is laid down that the Brothers of Penance must " not take up lethal weapons, or bear them about against anybody ". The very fact of being forbidden to take " formal oaths unless where necessity compels " exempted the Brothers from military service, other than " in the cases excepted by the Sovereign Pontiff in his indult, that is, for peace, for the Faith, under calumny, and in bearing witness ". This meant that " the penitents were men of peace according to the Gospel, and might not therefore be forced to take part in feuds and wars which were mostly waged in opposition to all Christian principle and the common good of Christendom ".[3]

For more than seven hundred years the Third Order of St Francis has been a pacifying influence in the Church and in the world. This is why we have entitled this book *These Made Peace*, for all the saints and blessed whose lives we have told have, each in his or her own way, been peace-makers.

[1] Fr James Meyer, O.F.M., thinks that this prayer could have been based on one of the *Sayings of Brother Giles*, or it might have been the other way round. Cf. *The Words of St Francis* (Chicago, Ill., 1952), p. 338.

[2] Chap. 14.

[3] Fr Cuthbert, O.S.F.C., *Life of St Francis of Assisi* (new edn., 1921), p. 341.

CHAPTER I

EARLY BEATIFIED AND CANONIZED TERTIARIES IN ITALY (1174-1320)

INTRODUCTION

THROUGHOUT the thirteenth century during which the men and women here recorded grew in union with God as Brothers and Sisters of Penance, a fierce war was being waged among the Friars Minor over the interpretation of the vow of Poverty. Even before the death of St Francis in 1226, his First Order was divided into two very definite parties: the immediate companions of the Little Poor Man and their adherents, later to be known as 'The Spirituals', and the vast and still growing Order at large. The former, like the Founder himself, were devoted to an ideal of abject poverty that amounted almost to destitution, but which, as the Order grew in numbers, became more and more impracticable and at last impossible. In its early days this body comprised a number of heroically generous souls—a series of lives of 'The Spiritual' saints and blessed would not go amiss—but there grew up among them later a generation of bitter zealots. Their views on poverty were so uncompromising that at last they were led into open defiance of the Holy See itself. They had been much attracted by the apocalyptic teaching of the visionary Joachim of Flora, and came to identify themselves with that last "Age of the Holy Ghost" with which that Cistercian abbot in the south of Italy held the world was to end.

The main body of the Friars Minor had begun to establish houses at universities like Paris and Oxford from 1224, and within a few years they were lecturing in most of the strongholds of learning throughout Europe. This, in itself, was more than enough to antagonize the 'Spirituals'. But, "far from destroying Franciscan idealism as the Spirituals fancied, these men were building up an intellectual foundation for it. The 'Spirituals' wanted to eschew the world of knowledge as though it were the realm of the Evil One; while they, instead, wished to conquer it for Christ by permeating it with the Franciscan spirit." [1]

The brilliant intervention of St Thomas Aquinas and St Bonaventure in the great controversy with the university professors at Paris over poverty is alone enough to show the need there was for an intellectual basis for the Franciscan way of life. St Bonaventure was undoubtedly and very explicitly on the side of large convents and of university studies for the Friars, and during his long tenure of the office of Minister-General the organization of the First Order into large communities went on apace, together with an intense pursuit of learning; while the General's immense personal prestige secured a comparative silence from the Spirituals. The thirteenth century in consequence saw in the Order, as in Europe at large, a vast development in all branches of learning. This was the high moment

[1] Agostino Gemelli, O.F.M., *The Franciscan Message to the World*, p. 49.

of the great medieval intellectual effort called Scholasticism, and conspicuous in that effort were the Dominican and Franciscan Friars.

At the same time as the tertiaries dealt with in this chapter were living in Italy, the first Franciscan martyrs had laid down their lives for the Faith. During the latter part of the thirteenth century the Brothers and Sisters of Penance would have heard that Franciscan missionaries had penetrated into lands far beyond Europe—Persia, Armenia, India, Tartary and even China. It is more than likely that they were told that their Brothers in the First Order were preaching the Gospel nearer home; in Greece, Rumania, and more and more countries north of the Alps. The Franciscan spirit was showing its influence on popular piety, art, architecture and literature.

The Third Order found its way by degrees into almost every large town, wherever the friars established themselves. Local groups soon manifested a desire to combine within their region or province. In some places congregations of the Third Order were distinguished by the particular trade practised by the Brothers—carpenters, shoemakers, tailors and masons. However, it was more common to find the rich and the poor, nobles and serfs, priests and layfolk all linked up together in the same local fraternity. In 1289 a Chapter of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance was held at Bologna, with four presidents and thirty-one delegates from the twenty-four Third Order provinces or cities of Italy. This in itself shows that there existed a very definite organization of tertiaries well before the end of the thirteenth century. By this time it had become clear that the original rule drawn up by Cardinal Ugolino in 1221 needed considerable clarification. About the same date as the Bologna congress, in 1289, Pope Nicholas IV confirmed a new Rule which codified divergent local versions of the 1221 Rule. It served for the needs of both secular and regular tertiaries until 1521, when Pope Leo X approved of a special Rule for the numerous congregations of the Third Order Regular which had been established in almost every country of Europe.

Although there was a fair number of isolated tertiaries during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, most of them hermits or anchorites, who had little or no direct contact with the local units, it is true to say that the Third Order remained "in the strict sense a corporate entity whose Rule of Life, rights and privileges were guaranteed by the highest powers in Church and State. . . . It was a veritable leaven in the society of the later Middle Ages, working towards the disruption of the decadent Feudal System, hastening the return of society towards the ideals of the Gospel, and promoting a healthier moral tone, and a fuller realization of civic and political liberty." [1]

BD LUCIUS MODESTINI (C. 1174-1241) AND BD BUONADONNA

THE old medieval highway, Via Francigena, on which the life of Europe once passed to and from Rome through the heart of Tuscany by way of Siena, follows the course of the river Elsa, a tributary of the Arno. The former river flows gently through the long valley where poplars and olives gleam silver in the breezes, and where rich grapes ripen in the warm sunshine, and where corn turns to gold long before it has ceased to be green in northern lands. Coming from the north, either by road or by railway, one passes by many a little hill-town, walled and spired, crowning the heights above the Val d'Elsa. Their names are like music

[1] Fr Oswald, O.S.F.C., *The Third Order of St Francis*, p. 56.

from the bell-towers—Castelfiorentino . . . Certaldo . . . Cambiano . . . Gavignano.

Just where the Via Francigena leaves the Val d'Elsa and starts to climb upwards towards Siena, keeping close to the narrower stream of the Staggia, lies Poggibonsi, a cheerful little town with an ancient castle and many old churches. Here it was that Luchesio Modestini, the first known member of the Third Order of St Francis, spent the greater part of his life. Here, in a church, dedicated to himself, are enshrined his relics, and here on the twenty-eighth day of April, the people of Poggibonsi keep his feast as only a *festa* can be kept in Tuscany.

Luchesio, often called Lucio, is said to have been born in the same year as St Francis, probably in the castle of San Casciano situated in the *contado* of Florence, but some historians maintain that he was a native of the neighbourhood of Siena. Like Francis, he came from a merchant's family. The world into which he was born in or about the year 1172 was disturbed by the great struggle of the communes with the Emperor's nobles who reigned in the fortress-like castles or in city mansions as fine as palaces.

What Luchesio heard of the outside world as a boy was chiefly the clash of swords and tongues between the Florentines and the Sienese. The Emperor Barbarossa had taken away the privileges of the Florentine republic in 1185 and had deprived it of self-government. His successors seem to have given back some of these privileges, for at the beginning of the thirteenth century Florence was ruled, not by its own consuls, but by a *podestà*, generally a foreign noble elected by the citizens. Under this form of government, the Florentines had liberty enough to take up arms against the Sienese, from whom they exacted a concession of territory in the year 1208.

Florence against Siena. Florence hated 'the barbarian'. After a long and chequered history Florence had been restored and had become a powerful state in Tuscany, accustomed to visits from Emperors and Popes. The citizens gradually assumed control of the government and were always fighting hard to safeguard their commerce. And Siena too, not only because of the number and power of her nobles, but largely because of her rivalry with Florence in the newly established business of banking, strove with equal determination to safeguard her liberty and her commerce.

Luchesio grew up familiar with victory, because he was on the side of Florence and the Popes. He could scorn the nobles with an insolence older than theirs. He is said to have been the captain of the youths of the Guelf party in San Casciano, on the highway from Florence to Poggibonsi. He may have taken part in this civil warfare because he enjoyed a scuffle, or possibly from sheer need to defend his business, for he was early a successful merchant.

He married young—a woman of his own people. The men of these hill-towns were not accustomed to marry with those of other parts. Buonadonna is the only name by which we know his wife. Like many figures in the backgrounds of Tuscan altarpieces, she is unforgettable.

Luchesio had two sons, and the realization came to him that the care of a family and fighting did not go well together. So he resigned his captaincy, and left his birthplace for Poggibonsi. This town, unlike San Casciano, was Ghibelline and pro-Siena at heart, but for fear of Florence, in whose power it was at that time, kept quiet. It was quiet that Luchesio needed. He and his wife opened a business for curing fish and exchanging money—money from Pisa, Venice,

Ravenna, and from France, Germany and many other far off countries. We are told by Père Léon in his *Auréole Séraphique* that Buonadonna " displayed the same energy for business, the same desire of gain, the same love of money, and unhappily, the same negligence in the service of God " as her husband.

Both of them thought it a fine thing to make money, and this was characteristic of the age. The financial system of Europe at this time was very corrupt, largely in the power of kings and nobles who constantly varied the titles and weights of coins. Sometimes this was done to defraud creditors; at other times to force debtors to pay more than they had received, or the taxpayers more than was due. So Luchesio and his wife believed that there was no better career than that of a money-maker. He himself was a free man, dependent on no feudal lord. He got what he wanted, not so much by barter and dues paid in kind, but by taking money for trade out of his leather bag like a prince. In fact, Luchesio was more than a prince, for he made the money himself by his own good judgment and did not have to spend half of it keeping up appearances in a castle or palace. As for the princes and nobles, they were only too glad to borrow his money and pay interest for it. When they clapped him on the shoulder and shrugged their own at the thought of how much money they would soon owe him, he would make them smile by his wit, and they would laugh together like equals. His customers liked to catch a glimpse of his wife. Perhaps it was one of them who first called her ' Buonadonna ' —' the gracious lady '. Riches came quickly to this merchant of Poggibonsi.

At this point in the story, the soul of Luchesio comes into the picture for the first time. He feared he had made too quick profits. Exchanging money was a gamble with the dice and loaded in favour of the man who knew a little more than his neighbours about local and foreign politics and intrigues. So he sold out his business, gave up banking, and began again as a corn-merchant. But again—strange inquietude—he made money too fast for his conscience. He had been utterly honest, even generous with the small farmers of the Val d'Elsa. Yet there he was, rich, while they remained poor. The farmers had sweated in their fields and vineyards while he had sat in his cool counting-house or ridden to other markets comfortably on his mule. Probably it was not only the inequality of fortunes, but the equality of greed that began to sicken him. He pitied not only the hardships of the poor but the hardness of their hearts. They might be poor in pocket, but poor in spirit they were not.

Had Luchesio already fallen under the spell of the Little Poor Man of Assisi? We do not know where or when they first met. According to some accounts, the origins of which are difficult to trace, Luchesio had known Francesco Bernardone in his merchant days. This is likely enough. But even if it had not been so, no town in Tuscany or Umbria, however secluded, but knew the Franciscans by now. Consider the time and the country and the Catholic passion for a saint, and add to it the need of the period, and reckon the welcome with which a saint would be hailed. Multiply this by the personal attraction of Francis, and you have some idea of the swiftness with which appreciation of his Order grew.[1] The

[1] It is more than probable that Giovanni Velita, the ex-soldier of knightly rank, who was one of the most intimate friends of St Francis, joined the Third Order. It will be remembered that he set aside part of his estates near Rieti for the Friars Minor, and that it was within a cave at Greccio that St Francis erected the crib at Christmas, 1223. The Palazzolo-Beschin Franciscan Martyrology lists him on November 2, with the style of " Blessed John Velita, Tertiary confessor ". (Cf. *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, Vol. XXVIII (November 1949), 336.)

farthest glimpse of the habit, the simplest word from the most rustic friar was enough to draw crowds who were thirsty for the Franciscan spirit of peace and joy. So we shall not be far wrong if we say that Luchesio cannot have been uninfluenced by the Franciscan message and may have been converted by it long before there was a Third Order to join.

Yet, when the day came on which Poggibonsi could talk of nothing but how Modestini, the rich merchant, had sold his business, and having bought land, the cultivation of which would provide for the simple needs of his family, had set himself free to serve the sick poor, he did not escape the suspicion of the prudent. Was he going to become a fanatic, denouncing the rich, wandering about irresponsibly, wreathed in vague prophecies ? Was he going to join the brotherhood known as the Umiliati, orthodox enough, but just a bit queer ?

Luchesio joined no movement or sect. He denounced nobody, but went—or more probably continued to go—like any charitable person of the time—to the hospital, where the sick depended largely on voluntary nurses for their comfort.

Serving in the hospital at Poggibonsi and giving alms to those who asked were actions done in the hope of saving one's own soul, since Christ had said : " Inasmuch as you do it to the least of these My brethren, you do it unto Me ", and human beings who sinned against Him as all human beings do, wanted, in those days, to prove their contrition and the love which had faltered. Like the brancardiers at Lourdes they regarded the sick and sorrowful as their masters, as living members of their Divine Master.

Luchesio seems to have been remembered for his journeys down to the Maremna—those endless plains and marshes that lie between the sea and the mountains of Tuscany—a country of strange desolation—to fetch the old and helpless who had fallen victims to fever and malaria. He would bring them back to the fresh air of the hills and to the hospital where they could be cared for. He was to be seen on the road between Poggibonsi and Cecina that winds up over the bare, mud-coloured mountains to sinister-looking Volterra, with these poor wretches, huddled in their ague on his donkey, or even on his back. It was a poor ambulance in either case. The fever-wracked creatures, foul and absorbed in their misery, are not likely to have been strong in the virtue of gratitude. Yet, was it they who made their benefactor better known as ' Luchesio '—' good old Lucio ' ? It was a title that introduced his Cause to Heaven long before it was introduced at Rome.

Buonadonna, housewife and mother, objected to these journeys, to the vermin and the taint of fever-sweat that were Luchesio's gratuities, until, as the chronicler tells us laconically, miracles convinced her that God and her husband were working together. And then by the death of her sons she was relieved of taking thought for the future. God is as cruel to the worldly well-intentioned as a true mother to a child with a festering wound. He does not lift His hand when the soul writhes. Could Buonadonna plan better than paradise for her two boys ? Henceforward she followed Luchesio like a dog, in his service of the poor, pitying because of her own piteous state, giving what drops of tenderness fell from her broken heart, empty of all it once held, empty of possession which might have caused her to lose to the uttermost and be separated eternally from her husband and her sons. What poverty she had now, whose treasures nothing could corrupt, whose heart was with them, while her body, early middle-aged, bent to its tasks day after day !

In the spring of 1221, there came to Poggibonsi the Little Poor Man himself. Whether it was for the first time, one does not know. At least it must have been for the first time since his return from the East, where he had gone defenceless into the very camp of the Sultan. Probably, everyone knew him, even if he had not been in their town before. Certainly he must have been greeted with the wildest enthusiasm. No doubt there were cynical persons who reminded themselves and others that as late as 1204 Assisi had a *podestà* who was a heretic—one of the Cathari—and that the citizens had not got rid of him until Innocent III threatened them with an interdict. There was no saying what strange doctrines and heresies might arise in Assisi. But the general public had forgotten about this scandal. By this time Francesco di Bernardone was regarded as a holy man of angelic orthodoxy. The famous Chapter of Mats, where five thousand friars had assembled at Assisi two years before St Francis came to Poggibonsi, gave wide publicity to the movement and to the Order.

One glance at the Little Poor Man, and the townsfolk came out to him as those of Galilee had flocked around his Master. Here was no prophet driven like a leaf before the high winds of feeling about human liberty. Here was a man who had chosen, not merely to serve the poor, but to enslave himself in the love of God. This was no separatist, but a man consciously one with the whole human race in their dependence on Divine Providence and their need to do penance for their sins and to love God in their neighbours.

The dark burning eyes looked out from the woollen hood to find kindling for their love of Creator and creature, and from the sleeves where they were folded, the hands of *Il Poverello* came out to worship every work of God, and to unite all creation: "that they may be all one, as Thou, Father in Me and I in Thee: that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

In peace, Luchesio heard Francis preach in the market place; his voice a little hoarse with constant use, his arm round the neck of a lame beggar or an idiot boy. The crowds pressed close, drinking in the loving words and the radiant holiness of the little figure in its tattered garment powdered with dust. There was no aping of the theologian or attempt to explain the more subtle mysteries of the Gospel, but a layman's honest words about the general neglect of the teaching of Christ and His Church, about forgiving one's neighbour before going to the altar. Francis could speak with a merchant's knowledge of the deceptions practised in business, and with new knowledge—his chosen study at the university of poverty—and of a serf's helplessness and a sense of injustice. His words were those of a poet, simple and poignant, but the sense of them was home-truth. His gestures were eloquent, now drawing together all men parted by grievances, now pointing to the swallows which skimmed the evening sky of its colour, and declaring that he and his brethren were their fellow travellers, going from the cold of evil concupiescence to the warmth of the love of God.

If we choose to imagine that Luchesio took Francis and his companion home to supper and a bed, we may well believe that as they made their way up to the little house, Luchesio, seeing how the children dived through the throng that followed them to peer into the faces under the hoods, and to find the response of a smile knew beyond doubt that pride does not attract urchins. At supper he would reckon that, though pride might fast and rise at midnight, it does not praise God for a warm bowl of ministrone. And he must have recognized the spirit

which not only tended lepers but kissed them on both cheeks : not only befriended sinners, but ate with them.

What did they talk about when they went out on to the loggia or roof after supper, to sit there in the coolness of the spring evening, watching the lizards run on the wall, where the warmth of the sun still lingered ? As Francis watched the stars, perhaps he spoke of the man whose teaching had almost certainly been inspiration to him—the Cistercian Abbot Joachim, who had prophesied the reign of the Holy Spirit, preceded by the coming of Antichrist.

It was a wandering disciple of Abbot Joachim who had cried '*Pax et bonum*' —' Peace and goodness '—in the streets of Assisi, which cry the Franciscans had borrowed from him, to mutual content undoubtedly. One wonders how far Luchesio realized that his seraphic guest was greater than the Cistercian prophet.

Spiritual enthusiasm may be infectious, but happiness is conquering. At first, people had turned to look after Francis of Assisi as they would have looked after a lover. This same attraction made them unable to forget him, made them travel to whatever town he was in to feast their eyes on him again. He was real —in touch with their lives. He was also living sanctity, a being to whom God was his ALL. And his joy was new wine they longed to taste. He knew men and women for what they were—anxious, greedy, unhappy. He knew that, nevertheless, they longed for justice and simplicity. When he opened his arms, they came to him with tears of happiness. They implored him to let them into his Order.

Tradition calls Luchesio and Buonadonna the first tertiaries. It is inscribed on Bd Luchesio's tomb at Poggibonsi that he was " the first to give his name to the Third Order of Penance ". This does not mean necessarily that the Third Order was founded during this visit to the Val d'Elsa, but it is more likely that Poggibonsi was one of those towns where the need for such legislation was made clear. The tradition that Luchesio received the habit at Cannara, near Assisi, suggests that he had followed Francis back to Umbria to learn more of his teaching. It is not unlikely that, when the Order of Penance was instituted, Luchesio was chosen to be one of the first to receive the habit, either because he had known Francis for some time, or because he had been in a similar state of life and had made a similar renunciation—as far as his married life permitted.

In the life of another tertiary saint, we come across the statement that Francis empowered Luchesio to admit candidates into the Order of Penance.[1] Possibly Luchesio returned from Cannara clad in habit and cord, to keep the promise of his master to his fellow townsmen. Soon Poggibonsi must have been as full of Franciscan habits as a tree of sparrows : its streets less colourful but how joyful ! Buonadonna laid aside her coloured dresses, her silk purse and embroidered belt, and the gay hanging sleeves. Did she smile, that sad-eyed wide mouthed smile of the Tuscan mother to find herself surrounded by so large a family ? We hear nothing of her henceforward. She was only the servant of that servant of the poor, her husband.

[1] It may be worth while stressing the fact that in the First Rule of the Third Order it was laid down that if anybody wished to be admitted, this depended " on the advice of some discreet brothers, and that it was the ministers, not the Visitor, who clothed and professed the new members. On the other hand it was left to the Visitor to decide what punishments should be inflicted on any Brothers or Sisters, and if they proved incorrigible, it was his duty to expel them from the Order. In the case of a Brother, he had to be denounced to the mayor or governor of the town or city.

The years went by. Brother Elias was elected Minister-General in 1233, and glorified the Little Poor Man whom he disobeyed. Brother Anthony of Padua won innumerable souls in Portugal, France and Italy with his incomparable sermons and loving miracles. Brother Albert of Pisa was elected Minister-General after the downfall of the unhappy and worldly-wise Elias. The friars were everywhere—among the Saracens, among the lepers, at the universities, in hermitages, in the cities, and in Paradise. And so were the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order of Penance.

Meanwhile old Brother Luchesio still went on those long journeys to the coast, across the pestilential marshes and swamps, to find the victims of fever and ague. On one occasion, so it is related, when he was staggering along with a stricken wretch on his back, and two more holding on to him because they were shaking with ague, he met a profligate young man who shouted with laughter at the queer sight.

" What in the world have you got on your back ? " he asked Luchesio, " The Old Man of the Sea ? "

Halting to get breath, Luchesio replied : " I am carrying Jesus Christ, who has said : ' Inasmuch as you do it to the least of My brethren, you do it unto Me '."

And the scoffer felt his tongue lie helpless in his mouth. Terrified, he ran to Luchesio, and with sighs begged pardon. Luchesio blessed him and the young man cried out : " Ah, my tongue blasphemed God, Brother Luchesio, and insulted His poor. Thanks to your merits, it has now escaped its just punishment."

" Go in peace ", said Luchesio, " but be watchful lest you offend again, and a worse thing befall you."

On another occasion, going along beside his donkey which was heavily laden with provisions, he encountered six young good-for-nothings, who, when they had seen him far away down the road, had plotted to take all he had, thrash him, jeer at him, and discover for themselves whether he really was a saint, as people said he was.

When he came within speaking distance, Luchesio greeted the young men, saying : " You can take my sins, if you like ! But all I have on the donkey has been given to me, or I have earned it, to be the patrimony of the poor of Jesus Christ, and it will be to Him you will have to answer if you persist in your intended attack." So astonished were they that Luchesio had treated them in this friendly manner, that he was far away along the road before they could collect their wits.

Such was his charity. But he was not merely a good man busy with good works. He was the serf of God, intent on his Master's bidding, considering himself no more than one running errands for his eternal livelihood. He ran errands to Christ, from Christ, and Christ was the Way. The poor were the pictures in his book of prayers, ever open before him, wide as the visible earth, in which he read over and over one word.

Luchesio fell ill at last, and was evidently near his death. Buonadonna asked him to wait for her, not to leave her alone in the world. It was not as a husband that she feared to lose him, but as a guide. And so it was that she died first, after a brief illness. Luchesio seems to have been told of the hour of his own death. He sent for his confessor, who came to the empty house and sat beside the bed. Perhaps he was a young friar, for he began to talk in a cheerful and well-meaning way about preparation for death.

" Preparation ! " said old Brother Luchesio. " Well, if I had waited until this

moment to prepare, I should still have confidence in God's mercy, for I know how great are these riches. But I should not be without fear in the presence of death and my Judge. Still, I give thanks to Almighty God, to Blessed Mary, to my Holy Father Francis, and to all the Saints, because, not by my own merits but by the merits of Jesus Christ, I feel myself ready, free from every earthly bond, and safe from all the snares of the devil."

He received the last sacraments joyfully, and died while the friars were praying for him.

A mile or so to the south of Poggibonsi, situated on rising ground above the river Elsa and its tributary the Staggia, is an old church, Santa Maria di Camaldo, handed over to the Franciscans by the Commune in 1213. It was rebuilt towards the end of the fourteenth century and rededicated to St Francis and Bd Luchesio —or ' San Lucchese ' as the people always call him.[1] Adjoining the church is the friary. Here is to be found the shrine of the first known Franciscan tertiary. It is located in a side chapel adorned with frescoes by early Sienese painters. On the tomb is the following inscription in Latin :

> The Body of St Luchesio, who was the first to give his name to the Third Order of Penance under The Seraphic Father, in the year 1221. All you who draw near venerate him.

His feast, which the Friars Minor keep as a major-double on the day of his death, April 28, is a holiday of obligation at Poggibonsi, for he is the patron of the town. The Capuchins keep his feast on April 15.

The body of Bd Buonadonna was carried away by the Germans during their later wars with the Florentines, but one arm was left behind, and this is exposed in a reliquary every year, beside the shrine of her husband, on the day that his *festa* is celebrated. She has no feast-day of her own. Perhaps for her slowness of heart she has chosen this minimum of holy fame.[2]

BD GERARD OF VILLAMAGNA (*c.* 1242)

LEAVING Florence by the Porta S. Niccolò, on the left bank of the Arno, and following a road through the suburbs of Ricorboli and Candeli, one climbs upwards through richly wooded farming country to the village of Villamagna, nearly 900 feet above sea-level. In this remote spot, some time about the middle of the twelfth century, was born a son to a family of poor peasants, whom they had christened Gherardo. When the boy was twelve years old his parents died and he found himself an orphan. It would have surprised them if they had known that one day there would be erected an altarpiece in the already ancient church, dedicated to Santa Donnino, depicting their son in the garb of a hermit, together with Our Lady and the patron saint of the village. Still more, perhaps, that within less than a hundred years, just outside Villamagna, would be built a lovely little chapel in honour of their son, where one can look at his portrait painted by a follower of Andrea del Sarto.

[1] He was not formally beatified until 1779.

[2] A series of articles in *Franciscan Herald and Forum* (Vol. XXIV, 1945) give a vivid picture of the lives of Bd Luchesio and Bd Buonadonna.

Gherardo's father had worked on a farm belonging to a noble family, whose castle stood on the wooded hills above Villamagna. It was here that the twelve-year-old boy made his home after the death of his parents. He must have been quick and intelligent, for he became the *major-domo* on the estates. He might have continued in this position, but one of the sons of his employer, Federigo Folchi, Knight of St John of Jerusalem, offered to take him on the Crusades. Gherardo accepted. He had an adventurous time. Both he and his Lord were made prisoners by the Saracens, and sold into slavery. Somehow or other Gherardo managed to escape and found his way back to Italy. His eyes had seen the horrors, not least the reality of life among the Crusaders on board ship and in camp. Although the Knights of St John were true metal, many others carried the cross above the heart of a free-booting commercial traveller. Once would have been enough for many an idealist. Yet, when another member of the Folchi family wanted to go crusading and offered to take Gherardo with him, the *major-domo* did not refuse. Their ship was attacked by Turkish pirates. Should they fight or fly? Gherardo said: "Fight!" But he fell to prayer, unarmed, while the crew fought to their fury's content; and the seamen believed that it was due to his prayers that the infidel was driven off with great loss of life.

This time Gherardo stayed seven years in the Holy Land, where he joined the Order of St John of Jerusalem as a lay-brother. Some historians are of the opinion that he became a Knight, despite his peasant origin, but it is not certain what authority there is for this statement. The Order of St John had evolved from a group of pious merchants who, early in the eleventh century, built hospices where pilgrims would be safe from the Saracens. So was established a Brotherhood, whose first Superior was a Brother Gerard, described by Vertot in his *Knights of Malta* as "Founder of the Order of St John of Jerusalem", and later called Bd Gerard. So it is possible that our Tuscan *beato* took his name from this holy man and had some other baptismal name not recorded.

Gherardo devoted himself to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy performed by the Knights—praying for the release of the Holy Places and nursing sick pilgrims. The reasons given for his eventual return to Italy are curious. He begged permission to leave Jerusalem because he was revered there too much. So he found his own way home.

This is all we know. It was humility that, like a fair wind, brought him back to the hills above Florence, just about the time when St Francis was establishing the Order of Penance in that city. At the feet of the Saint of Humility, the former lay-brother of the Knights of St John asked counsel. St Francis bade this man after his own heart to return to his native village of Villamagna, in the habit, not of the friars, but of the Third Order.[1]

Clothed in the habit of holy poverty and humility, Gherardo [2] once more

[1] Edward Hutton in his *Country Walks about Florence* (p. 180), taking his facts from the *Bite dei Santi e Beati Fiorentini* by Brocchi, published in 1752, says that this incident took place in 1219. Now in that year St Francis was mostly in Palestine. It is possible that Gherardo may have met him there, or even accompanied him back to Italy. The Third Order seems to have been instituted at Florence in 1221.

[2] In the Life by Bartolomeo della Querchia, written in 1550 and reprinted by the Bollandists, Gherardo had this hermitage built between his two journeys to the Holy Land. The Knight with whom he travelled had given him the legal status of a 'Free Serf'. In this Life we read that Gherardo, after spending some of his liberty in devout pilgrimage to the Holy Places, returned to his own village and lived there as a hermit instead of re-joining the service of the Folchi family.

climbed the long winding road from Florence to Villamagna. Acting under obedience to St Francis, so it is recorded, he built himself a hermitage on the summit of the mountain to the south of his native village, now known as L'Incontro.[1] Gherardo had been driven by his humility to leave Palestine: it was with this same humility he set himself to make pilgrimages in which he can contribute as much patience, enduring hardships, and perhaps mockery, as when he spent long hours in prayer in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. From now onwards he adopted the simple devotions of a peasant, visiting three neighbouring churches thrice weekly, offering these visits for three intentions: for his own sins, for the dead, and for the conversion of the infidels. But unlike the peasants, who would be content to offer the sweat it cost them to go down those dusty roads in the broiling sun, or in the bitter cold from the snow-covered Apennines, that would cut through their few garments when the wind blew from the north, Gherardo made these pilgrimages on his knees. The man whose body must have been strong enough to endure taking part in the Crusades, now crawled in the dust or mud like a deformed beggar. It is recorded that when Blessed Gerard's tomb was opened in or about the year 1751, great corns were still visible on the knees of the incorrupt body. He was a prince of the dust, this man; and who knows what reparation he made for the pride of the new *popolo mezzo*—the 'new rich' middle classes of Florence with their new power?

Yet there was nothing repulsive, nothing of the fanatic about him. Despite his solitary life, he was not in the least out of touch with what went on in his village. The country people brought their sick to be healed. Brother Gerard restored to life a child who had fallen from a height. Nor was he concerned only with village life. He foresaw and prophesied the sorrow that the Emperor and his German legionaries would continue to bring upon the Church and Italy.

To pass from the main features of his life to incidents in it, we find another likeness in him to his Seraphic Father when he reformed the manners of a wolf. The story is told how he met a wolf with a hen in its mouth; but at his bidding, the beast took the plump bird back to its roost.

Gherardo remains in the memory, most of all, as the saint of the cherry trees; for one January, when he was old and ill, the cherry tree nearest to his hermitage bore fruit for him. His nurse, a widowed sister, picked them for him, but when she returned to get some for herself, the branches were bare of leaf and empty as winter could make them.

After prophesying the date of his death, he died in the year 1242 according to Brocchi, but on March 30 in the Life written by Bartolomeo della Querchia. The Bollandists, however, give him under May 3. It has been stated already that his hermitage stood on the site of the Friary of L'Incontro, but it is even more probable that it occupied the site of the chapel outside the village, where his remains were moved from the first place of burial and where they still repose.

Many miracles glorified him, and his cultus was approved by Pope Gregory

[1] Five centuries later St Leonard of Port Maurice, the great preacher, when acting as Guardian of San Maria del Monte at Florence, erected a small friary on this spot. In more recent times the buildings were enlarged and occupied by the Observant Franciscans as a *retiro*, i.e. a community living in much greater strictness and seclusion than those in towns. A *retiro* is more or less a hermitage, whose members devote themselves to prayer and penance. A few still exist in Italy, and remind us that St Francis himself drew up a Rule for those who lead the solitary life.

XVI in 1833. He shares with two *beati* of the First Order the date of May 23 for his feast. There is no proper Office.[1]

Gherardo's fellow countryman, Boccaccio, flings him a mention from his ugly mouth, fitting up his ' Fra Cipollo ' with " one of the pattens of San Gherardo of Villamagna ".[2] This casual canonization probably gives the title common in local devotion, for Boccaccio came from Certaldo in the Val d'Elsa, near Florence. It is possible that the ' patten ' was not a reference to a Franciscan sandal, but to the horn-like growths on his knees, which, as has been stated already, were visible when the tomb was opened five hundred years after the death of this humble tertiary.

ST VERIDIANA (1182-1242)

VERIDIANA (her name is also spelt ' Verdiana ') was born at Castelfiorentino in the year 1182. This ancient town in the Val d'Elsa is surrounded on all sides by cornfields, vineyards and olive groves. It is built on the slope of a hill rising above the river Elsa, the *castello* overhanging the houses. The modern part of the town which lies in the valley is busy enough, but there is a sense of decay and sadness about the old palaces and fortress-like mansions dating from the Middle Ages. In the upper and older part of the town is situated the Romanesque church of San Lorenzo, with the shrine of St Veridiana above the high altar. Down in the valley, not far from the river, is the stately church erected in honour of this local saint towards the close of the fifteenth century. It has a gorgeous baroque interior and many paintings recording incidents in her life story. Steps lead down to a crypt where can be seen the tiny cell and the adjacent oratory dedicated to St Antony. The former was the home of St Veridiana for more than thirty years. Here is a terracotta statue of the saint. She is also depicted in a fresco in the Palazzo Municipale. If one has time to wander out to the church of Santa Maria a Lungotuono that lies on the opposite side of the valley, there she can be seen again, dressed in her tertiary habit, in a fifteenth-century painting by one of the Sienese masters. This is enough to show that Santa Veridiana is not forgotten in the little country town where she spent her life seven hundred years ago.

Veridiana's family was noble but poor. It has been suggested that she was given this unusual name because she was born in the early spring with the new green leaves. But this is pure conjecture. As a child she loved solitude. We are told that she wore an iron chain and a hairshirt, and that she often fasted and spent long hours in prayer, for she had taken to heart already the sins of the world and was doing penance for them when other children were playing games. Even if life at Castelfiorentino seems to have been fairly peaceful during her childhood, Veridiana must have heard rumours of the wars that were being waged in other parts of Italy and of the struggles for independence on the part of Florence, Siena, and many smaller cities.

Her parents appear to have died before she grew up. At the age of twelve she became the *padrona* or housekeeper to an elderly kinsman and a companion

[1] Third Order Regular, Capuchins, and Conventuals, May 13.

[2] *Decameron*, Sixth Day, Tenth Story. It is interesting to note that while Brocchi and Becchi, writing in the middle of the eighteenth century at Lucca, canonize Gherardo as does Boccaccio, writing in the fourteenth century, Monzecchi writing nearly half a century earlier, and from the locality, omits the title of saint. The Franciscan Martyrology merely gives him the style of Blessed.

to his wife. This relative was a rich merchant. A famine having brought the inhabitants of Castelfiorentino to the verge of starvation, he took the precaution to hide a great chest of beans, intending to sell them when offered a good price. One day he managed to dispose of the beans to a neighbour, but when he looked inside the chest it was empty. Veridiana had given away all the beans to the starving poor who came to beg at Attavanti's door. Her rich kinsman was furious and raged against the girl. But she prayed hard all one night, and the following morning the chest was full of beans once more. She called her master and said: "Come and see how Our Lord has restored to you the beans He received in the person of the poor." When the merchant saw this thing and understood, he was astonished and proud that so great a wonder should have taken place in his house. He ran through the streets, telling everybody he met of the miracle which had been performed. So great was the amazement of the people that Veridiana could not leave the house or go to church without being begged to obtain some favour through her prayers.

She wondered how to escape from all this notoriety, and having heard that some pious women were about to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of St James at Compostella, Veridiana obtained leave to join them. On her return from this long journey through Italy, the south of France and across Spain, her companions told such moving tales of her piety and penances that the people of Castelfiorentino implored her never to leave the town again. Her humility urged her to refuse this request, but her charity was stronger. Finally she consented to remain, but only on the condition that she might live as an anchoress for the remainder of her life. With the approval of the Bishop of Florence, in whose diocese Castelfiorentino was situated, and while a cell was being built for her, Veridiana set off on a pilgrimage to Rome. Here, again, her piety aroused such veneration that the Romans tried hard to detain her in their midst.

As has been stated already, Veridiana's cell was built in the lower part of the town, where the river Elsa sometimes overflows its banks when there are floods. It was alongside a chapel dedicated to St Antony the Abbot. Constructed of bricks and roughly arched, it was ten feet long and three and a half feet broad. The only furniture was a ledge against the wall—no more than a foot wide.

In an Italian Life of St Veridiana, published in the seventeenth century, is to be found the following description of the enclosure ceremony. Just how far the details are historically accurate is not certain, but the writer probably recorded the local traditions. This is the story which he tells.

"When the cell was built, Veridiana went on Sunday to the parish church, where all the congregation were assembled. Then, after hearing Mass and receiving Holy Communion with many tears, she made the entire sacrifice of herself, pronouncing the accustomed vow of a recluse in the hands of the parish priest, making a promise of poverty, chastity and obedience. The priest, having blessed her and clothed her in the poor habit of a recluse, confided her to one of the collegiate Canons, who, in the name of the Chapter and of the parish priest, was to take her to the cell and have special charge of her soul.

"Veridiana then received a large crucifix which she clasped to her heart, kissing it over and over again, after which she rose to leave the church, and set out, humble and recollected, to her little hermitage.

"The people, deeply moved at the sight, wished her every blessing, and attended her to the place where she was to be buried alive for the rest of her life. It was

indeed a beautiful, touching sight, to see with what humility Veridiana carried her cross, followed by all the clergy, and accompanied by the people, every one weeping. When they came to the cell, Veridiana turned to the people and, with the face of an angel, bade farewell to her dear fellow citizens begging them to remember her soul before God. They all cried out with one voice : ' Blessed be thou, Veridiana, true servant of God ! Pray for us sinners, who implore thy intercession.'

" Veridiana, once more clasping and kissing her crucifix, entered her cell and the door was immediately walled up, no other opening being left but a small window looking towards the oratory of St Antony, which may still be seen."

Through this window she could hear Mass and receive the Sacraments, and through it was passed her daily food, provided by the charity of the townsfolk. She ate her one meal towards evening. It seldom consisted of anything more than bread and water, or sometimes beans boiled in water without salt. She slept on the hard ground, except in winter when she allowed herself the luxury of a bare board, her pillow being a block of wood. She made her confession once a week to the Canon who had been appointed her spiritual director. It might have been supposed that she would forget the poor now that she was a recluse, but their sufferings were always in her imagination. Every day she divided among them a portion of her bread or beans, keeping nothing for the morrow.

One hot summer day her neighbours forgot to leave her any water, and she asked a young man who had entered the chapel to fetch her some water from a nearby well, for she was thirsty. When he brought back the pitcher Veridiana noticed that it contained wine and she suspected that he had done this deliberately. She reproved him, saying : " My son, may the Lord God forgive you. I did not ask you for wine but for water."

The young man protested that he had filled the pitcher from the well, but when he saw that it did contain wine, he replied : " Most dear Mother " (for this is how the people called her), " I did indeed draw water only but I see that it is changed into excellent wine."

Veridiana then realized that she had performed a miracle and implored her visitor to give back the vessel. But he refused to do so and went off with it, telling everybody he met of what had occurred. History does not relate if this young man remembered to bring her some water. Perhaps she was left thirsty until the following day.

As a rule, Veridiana refused to speak to any visitors except the poor and the needy. During Lent and Advent she never opened her wicket for days together. If any food reached her it was not from human sources.

Yet she had no wish to escape from the evils of the world. She knew that men and women all round her were being tempted to sin. She increased her prayers and penances. Again and again she performed miracles through her intercession. One day she heard a preacher in the chapel of St Antony describe how this Egyptian solitary endured much suffering from devils who took on the shape of wild beasts. She felt that she too must ask God to send her like temptations. It was not long before her request was granted. Two large snakes came in through her little window and never left her, except sometimes when she was at prayer. They shared her food, eating off the same plate. Sometimes they lashed their slithery bodies against her with such violence that she lost consciousness.

For a long time nobody knew of these two snakes, until one day, Ardingo, Bishop of Florence, came to Castelfiorentino and decided to visit the anchoress,

having heard much of her miracles and reputed sanctity. He was so moved by her conversation that he prolonged his visit in order to have more talks with her. It was then that he discovered that she was not alone in the cell, and that two snakes were her companions. She told the Bishop how they had come to her in answer to prayer. He wanted to have them killed, but Veridiana begged him to keep her secret, trying to make him believe that God had sent His two creatures to keep her company and not as a trial to her patience. The Bishop consented, and before leaving asked her to pray always for himself and his diocese. It is recorded that every year he returned to Castelfiorentino in order to converse with its holy recluse.

Such is the legend which has been handed down from the thirteenth century. Modern critics would have us believe that the two serpents had no material existence, but were merely the creation of Veridiana's overwrought imagination. Or they would explain that the simple and credulous countryfolk may have invented the story. No matter; what is certain is that Veridiana endured some awful proximity of evil in that tiny cell. Why? To draw away temptation from those less able to bear it. Those who make nothing of such a possibility know nothing of the real world in which they are. Christ in Gethsemane, prostrate on the earth, let the weight of the evil which human beings had beckoned to them, fall on His shoulders and crush the blood out of Him in sweat. In His Mystical Body, the Church, those of His members who are selfless—namely such saints as Veridiana —continue to save souls till the end of time.

Veridiana is believed to have received the tertiary habit from St Francis himself, when he passed through Castelfiorentino on his way from Florence to Poggibonsi in 1221, where, as has been related, he instituted the Third Order. This act in itself was proof that the new Order was to embrace all classes of men and women. Veridiana was the first solitary to become a Franciscan tertiary. There was nothing in the Rule of the Continent Brothers and Sisters that she did not practise already. But within the Third Order she was encircled by a family of friars, nuns, and layfolk with whom she could unite her prayers and penances.

The attitude of St Francis towards the eremitical life is well known. He had asked St Clare to pray and find out whether he himself was called to a contemplative and solitary life, or to go out into the world, preaching and praising God. She gave him the answer that the latter was his vocation. He accepted the reply as he would have accepted the alternative—joyfully. But he was under no illusion as to the efficacy of preaching unless prayer and penance done for sinners opened their ears to hear.

We can realize that Francis and Veridiana would have understood each other. He left her to go on his way over the dusty roads back to Umbria. Her prayers followed him.[1]

The two snakes are believed to have remained with Veridiana for thirty years. Only a few persons knew of their existence, until one day the secret was discovered. The townsfolk feared that these reptiles might harm their precious recluse, and decided to get rid of them. Veridiana begged that her two now aged companions might be spared, but one was killed and the other disappeared. She was greatly

[1] The Roman Martyrology states that Veridiana belonged to the Vallombrosan family of Benedictines. This is also related in the lessons at Matins in the office for her feast in the diocese of Florence. The more general opinion, accepted in the lessons at Matins for her feast in the *Breviarium Romano-Seraphicum*, is that she entered the Third Order.

distressed, but it was revealed to her in prayer that her earthly sufferings were ended at long last. Soon after this she died—on February 1, 1242.

Nobody saw her die and the fact might have remained unknown had not a baby of three months old cried out: "Veridiana, the servant of God, is dead!" According to the legend, the bells of all the churches in the town began to ring of themselves as on feast days, to the astonishment of the people. They hurried to the cell. The Chapter and the *podestà* ordered a hole to be broken open in the wall. They found Veridiana on her knees, her eyes and arms raised to Heaven. Open before her was the Psalter at the *Miserere*. Her body gave out a sweet odour as it was carried into the chapel of St Antony, where it remained seventeen days, exposed to the veneration of crowds of pilgrims who, when the news reached them, came from Pisa, Siena, Volterra, Florence and all parts of Tuscany to venerate the mortal remains of the holy anchoress.

She was buried in her cell which was turned into a chapel. But, as has been told already, two centuries later, it was felt that such a saint deserved greater honour, and her body was borne up the hill to the collegiate church of San Lorenzo and enshrined above its high altar. And at the same time a great church was built in the lower town and dedicated to Santa Veridiana, who, among many other miracles, preserved her fellow citizens from the ravages of the plague when it swept over Tuscany early in the sixteenth century.

The Roman-Seraphic Missal and Breviary refer to Veridiana as Blessed, but in the office used in the diocese of Florence she is given the rank of Saint, although she was never formally canonized. Her cultus was approved by Pope Clement VII in 1533. Until recently the Friars Minor kept her feast on February 1, but the date has since been changed to February 16, when she is commemorated with Blesseds Philippa, Mariania, and Eustochia.

BD DAVANZATO (1200-1295)

We now return to Poggibonsi, where Davanzato was born in the year 1200, his family being of some importance in the town. There is a tradition that St Francis authorized Bd Luchesio to enrol men and women as Brothers and Sisters of Penance, and that many disciples put themselves under his direction. Davanzato was then a young man of about twenty-one, and among the first to ask to be given the habit. He remained at Poggibonsi for several years, acquiring the spirit of the Rule from Luchesio.

After he had been ordained priest, for he realized this was his vocation, he was appointed to the parish of Santa Lucia at San Casciano—a small town on the main road from Poggibonsi to Florence, mentioned already as the probable birthplace of Bd Luchesio. Here he was to spend nearly seventy years.

Nothing more is known of Davanzato until he was old enough to find a young disciple, who may have been another priest who had joined the Third Order. To him he enjoined giving from the household funds and stores to all who asked. This disciple was surprised to find that the more he gave away, the more was left; but Davanzato said he was wrong to be surprised, since Our Lord had bidden His followers: "Give and it shall be given unto you."

To visualize the background against which Davanzato spent the greater part of his long life we may as well borrow from Maurice Hewlett, who says that it is "a country which is abundantly fertile; olives, with flax, corn and maize in between

them, mulberry trees to carry the vines. Not an inch of ground is wasted . . . some of the best land in Tuscany, a tilth of corn and wine and oil indeed." [1] This same author goes on to describe Barberino " heaped up like a cairn upon the top of a mound—a warm foxy-brown and cream-coloured village " (where Bd Davanzato's body now rests in the church of San Bartolomeo), about half way between San Casciano and Poggibonsi. He sums up the landscape as " pastoral country, yet with a spice of classic formality in the way the towns are dotted in, each exactly fitting its own pedestal. . . . It has character; it has some mystery, and for all those far-off hill towns look more grandiose than in fact they are. It is quietly but admirably composed; it chastens the fancy; it leads the mind from the politicians to the people, from the artists to the artisans." Davanzato must have gazed often at the view " over the western slope, where you can just see the roofs of Certaldo; beyond that again, looking south-west, sheer across the vale of Elsa, deep in the purple shadows is San Gemignano, sad little city, with its thirteen towers clumped together into seven. Farther round towards the south is Poggibonsi, a warm heap of buildings, with a tower or two."

Round Davanzato's life, set in this fertile corner of Tuscany, cling stories of bottles filled from the public fountain that poured out exquisite wine for weary guests who were thirsty after tramping along the dusty roads, and of empty casks found full. The more one considers and compares these legends with the story of the pitcher which the youth filled from the spring for Veridiana, the more one feels profoundly unwilling to listen to the too critical historians of the last generation, who dismissed such legends with the explanation that one miracle ascribed originally to one Franciscan saint came to be claimed for others. Legends of grain-sacks and wine-barrels replenished are found constantly in the lives of the early Franciscan saints, and it seems likely enough that this Cana miracle was granted often to the new uprush of faith in the hearts of these men who had been released from the unknowing of God and of His Providence.

Père Léon de Clary writes that Davanzato " said the Divine Office on his knees before the altar. The abundant tears which he shed during the Sacred Mysteries filled those who were present with devotion, and revealed to them the holy ardour which burned within his heart. He afflicted his body with fasts, vigils, disciplines and incessant macerations. His charity towards the unfortunate was untiring. The income from his parish was the patrimony of the poor, and in order to help as many of them as possible he was contented more often than not with a little bread and water for his own sustinence." [2] We are told that he was such a generous host that he often and willingly gave up his own bed to poor pilgrims and slept on the floor.

Davanzato lived to be ninety-five. When the hour of death drew near, he warned his flock: " We are but pilgrims and travellers during this miserable life, and as we know not the day when our journey is to come to an end, it is very necessary that we should be always ready, lest perchance we be excluded from Paradise. As for me, miserable sinner that I am, knowing that the Sovereign Judge summons me to His Tribunal, I have recourse to your charity and piety, and I entreat you to pray to Our Lord Jesus Christ for me." He died on the night of July 7, 1295, and at the moment his soul left the body, a marvellous

[1] *The Road in Tuscany*, Vol. II, 112; 1906 edn., p. 433.
[2] *Auréole Séraphique* (Eng. trans.), Vol. II, 442.

splendour lit up the room and those who were present thought they heard the voices of angels.

Crowds gathered for his funeral, and instead of praying for their old parish priest, begged his intercession, and not a few miracles are said to have taken place. He was buried in the church of Santa Lucia at San Casciano which he had served so faithfully for close on seventy years. In 1655 his body was removed to Barberino, where it now rests in the church of San Bartolomeo, where his feast is kept on July 7. Every three years there is a solemn triduum in honour of Bd Davanzato, and the people from all the neighbouring towns and villages flock there to beg the protection of this saintly parish priest.[1]

In many ways his hidden and obscure career resembled that of another priest-tertiary, Bd Bartolo, whose story is told further on. Or again, he could be regarded as the prototype of St John Baptist Vianney, the Curé of Ars—who lived and died a Franciscan tertiary in France during the nineteenth century. History has a way of repeating itself in the Third Order of St Francis.

BD HUMILIANA CERCHI (1219-1246)

To come to the figure of *Beata Umiliana* is to come to the foreground of tertiary life. Just as the reader of this book may have begun to wonder whether the Order of Penance was intended, originally, for somewhat abnormal individuals, Umiliana stands before us with this saying on her lips: " God is ever present, and unites Himself to our soul when He finds it calm and ready, even in the streets and public places."

Umiliana was born at Florence in 1219 and the whole of her life was spent in this city. Her parents belonged to the famous family of the Cerchi, with whose members Dante associated. In the Via della Condotta, at the corner of the Vicolo dei Cerchi, can still be found the great palace which belonged to the ' White ' section of this noble family, to distinguish them from the ' Black ' branch. Dante in his *Paradiso* (XVI) describes another palace of the Cerchi family of which all trace has long since disappeared. The Cerchi were, in fact, among the most important Florentine families and played a big part in the history of the city during the Middle Ages. They were pro-Papal and Guelf in their sympathies. It is well to understand the sort of aristocratic world in which Umiliana was brought up.

She seems to have been a devout child from what is recorded. She showed little or no interest in the amusements of other children and was happiest when alone. No doubt they regarded her as ' odd '. At the age of sixteen she was married to a nobleman who was miserly, a usurer, and without religion. Little did Umiliana realize when she faced him for the first time, her heart shrinking within her, that his very name would be forgotten—unrecorded in the books that record her virtues.

She did not dissolve her life in tears. She made the best of it. In the manner of good wives of her time, she rose early and finished her devotions long before midday, busy with her household and her husband until night. Padre Francesco Cionacci, who wrote the *Compendio della Vita della Beata Umiliana* in 1673, says that she lived with her husband in holy peace—" for so much as it lay in her power to do so "—and in great patience. Her sister-in-law, Ravenna, was her friend and companion in piety. The two of them would meet together for prayer.

[1] He is not commemorated in the Roman-Seraphic Calendar.

They visited their favourite churches, and gave up all their spare time to works of mercy, trying to make up for what was lacking in the lives of their respective husbands. Umiliana worked with her own hands—not at all like a noble Florentine matron—and wore no rich garments, " venerating Jesus, poor for us, in all poor persons ", as Père Léon de Clary writes in the *Auréole Séraphique*. He adds that her husband persecuted her for this trait in her character, as he had no love for the poor.

Padre Cionacci, in the above mentioned *Life*, tells us that she had " many children, and was glad when they died in virginity ". One cannot comment on such phrases. Those who can appreciate this Florentine mother's point of view will not venture to criticize her. She evokes, as it were, the atmosphere of one of Perugino's paintings, their tragedy set in tranquillity. Many children—yet it was only five years of married life she had. When her husband fell ill she brought him to a good death, and Cionacci adds : " God set her free from his company."

A widow, and for the first time in her life free to do what she wanted, her thoughts turned to the Poor Clare convent at Montecelli, that stood on the south side of the river Arno on the rising ground that divides the Strada Romana from the Stradone del Poggio Imperiale. The community had been founded by St Clare in 1221, and over it her sister, St Agnes of Assisi, still ruled as abbess. In after years both Dante and Petrarch would refer to the Poor Clares of Montecelli in their writings. But on reflection, and after much prayer, Umiliana came to see that the life of the Second Order of St Francis was not her vocation.

Of the Poor Ladies of Montecelli Dante wrote that they " clothe and veil themselves, that they, even till death, may wake and sleep with that Spouse who accepteth every vow that love hath made conform with his good pleasure ".[1] In after years Umiliana would not have to say as did Piccarda Donati—in the words of Dante—" From the world, to follow her, I fled when a girl, and in her habit, I enclosed myself, and promised the way of her company." She was spared the fate of Piccarda, who was dragged from the Poor Clares by her brother, so that she should marry Rossellino della Tosa. Umiliana had been forced into marriage with a man " more used to ill than to good " before there was the chance for her to become a nun, and after she found herself a widow she resolved to be clothed with the habit of the Third Order of St Francis, not the Second.

It was in the year 1240 that she received the habit of penance in the church of Santa Croce—not the great Gothic church which was erected in the latter part of the thirteenth century, but in a smaller building then used by the Friars Minor. It is stated sometimes that Umiliana was the first woman in Florence to be enrolled in the Order of Penance, but it is highly improbable that during the nineteen years since its formal establishment in this city, only men would have been allowed to become tertiaries.

She had an aunt who wanted her to marry again, having found her a good match. But Umiliana replied (in the words of her biographer Cionacci) : " Know, O my very dear aunt, that I have a most noble Husband whom I shall never mourn, for He will never leave me widowed ! " She loved the angelic virtue so much that after her death she is said to have appeared to " a religious person " wearing the virgin's crown. This " religious person " recorded that her mysterious visitor said : " Our Lord has done this to me because of the sorrow I had in my heart

[1] *Paradiso*, III.

at having lost virginity because of holy matrimony." Umiliana is not to be smiled at for regarding this sacrament so naïvely; she does not wish to speak bitterly of the state of life into which she was forced, but she must have known that only her fidelity made the marriage valid. Like other Franciscan saints, she opens a window into heaven; in her own crown there was consolation for more sorrows than her own.

As she did not propose to accept the protection of a second marriage, she was taken back to her father's house, and given—no doubt at her own choice—rooms in a little tower, which she only left to go to church or to visit the poor. The dark narrow streets of the older quarters of Florence are full of such towers—nearly every great family seems to have added a tower to its *palazzo*, generally for reasons of defence. Perhaps the Cerchi mansion in which Umiliana spent the rest of her life had a flat roof or a covered loggia, like that on the tower of the Baldovinetti palace in the Via Lambertesca. If so, then Umiliana would have been able to sit there on a summer evening and enjoy the cool breezes. Florence was a much smaller city in the thirteenth century than it is today, but it was lively enough. Yet one doubts if Umiliana took much interest in what went on beneath her tower. " Clamour in the Council chamber—hue and cry, fighting in the streets, foreign wars, foreign tyrants—all the crash and din of the noisy Tuscan world " . . . passed over her like summer storms. She may have listened to " the wild bells and hoarse voices which followed them (beginning with a dull roaring afar off, and swelling and swelling till the light seemed to flicker at it) " ; she may have run to the window and leaned out " to see the *Caroccio* go swinging by, escorted by running mobs, or the pikemen file singing towards the city gate ", but one rather doubts it. Now that she was mistress no longer of a household there was no need for her to " bar the street door against drunken Burgundians, or some daring French knight spying after maids ".[1]

In that Cerchi *palazzo*—as in all the great houses of medieval Florence—" peace, sobriety, and shamefastness were the virtues in vogue ; you married your girls at twenty, and dowered them with a hundred *lire*. You kept your shop and counted your pelf ; you fought when you must, and since every hill about you held a robber and his horde, you had to fight to live ; your women stayed at home and looked after your daughters until you announced a wedding. Then some tall girl or other, whom you had kept in that still, passionless house, a grown baby of twenty years, without falter or blush held out her hand. Just such another as her old block of a father took it in his, having pocketed the money and written out his quittances, and away went the maid to wear the coif and bear the fardel of women." [2]

But from all this sort of thing Umiliana now was set free. She did not waste time in looking out of her window or in gossiping with the other women in the house. She dwelt in solitude in her tower, with a picture of Our Lady on the table beside her chair, with a lamp burning before it. She kept silence, thinking of the Passion, fasting four or five days in the week or more, and " keeping many Lents ", so Cionacci records.

Her little daughter, Regale, presumably the only child who did not die in infancy, regarded as her husband's heiress, had been retained by his family when she returned to hers. One day when Regale climbed the stairs of the tower to visit her mother, she fell and was stunned. Umiliana laid her out on her bed and

[1] Maurice Hewlett, *The Road in Tuscany*, Vol. I, 219.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 214.

went for remedies, but when she returned, Regale was dead. Umiliana would have been happy to think of her in Paradise, but she seems to have regarded the child as the property of her husband's family, and fearing their anger, she turned to the picture of Our Lady and prayed for help. A marvellous child appeared as coming from the picture and went to Regale's body, making the sign of the Cross over it, and the dead child came back to life. Apparently the servant or servants were witnesses, for they maintained that Umiliana herself had raised her own child to life by her prayers.

Whether or not this is a unique miracle, one cannot say. At least it is a beautiful story. But all the graces Umiliana obtained for those around her had a peculiar quality of tenderness and maternity. She befriended Fra Buonaccorso da Todi who had " the desire to taste of divine sweetness ", and by her prayers she obtained it for him. One day Umiliana met a poor leper, tormented with pain in his head, and she divided the white linen of her coif with him, putting it on like a bandage and ' made it better '. She served the poor constantly and even begged for them. It is only because there were so many saints alive at the same time that Umiliana is not better known ; yet even in that glorious multiplicity, she has distinction.

Her director, Fra Michaele degli Alberti, once asked her what motives had helped her most. She told him : " Love of the poor, contempt of self, and total abandonment to God."

In that Florentine tower her life, which from one point of view seems like a fairy-tale, was in reality more cruel than those in the noisy, cheerful streets below could have borne. Dark temptations were permitted to her. The devil, so it is recorded, took the same form as he had taken when buffeting Veridiana, though with Umiliana his visits seems to have been only for a time. These two Tuscan tertiaries were contemporaries and both were living their strange solitary lives at the same time—the one in Florence, the other in Castelfiorentino. Umiliana learnt much in the cruel darkness, and was granted the gift of prophecy. She was often consoled by visits from Our Lord and Our Lady. The saints and angels brought comfort in her last illness. She wished to die on a feast of the Madonna. This prayer was answered, for her death took place on a Saturday in May, 1246, in her twenty-eighth year.

Umiliana was buried within the church of Santa Croce as befitted a Franciscan tertiary of noble rank. Her funeral was attended by a great concourse of people, for whom she worked several miracles, so it is recorded. Her relics are still venerated in the present church which was erected on the same site about thirty years after her death, and which is now served by the Friars Minor Conventual. Michelangelo said he was brought up in devotion to Umiliana : rather an alarming client for so gentle a saint. Perhaps she obtained for him the grace to be enrolled in the Third Order. She is said to have appeared to many persons after her death. Pope Innocent XII approved her cultus. Until recently the Roman-Seraphic Missal and Breviary celebrated her memory on June 2, but her feast has now been pooled with two other widows on June 15.[1]

It is hard to take leave of Umiliana, even calling her as does her biographer, Cionacci : " The most clear mirror of widows, the special beauty of the Third Order of St Francis."

[1] Capuchins, May 19 ; Conventuals, and Third Order Regular, June 15.

BD PETER OF SIENA (d. 1289)

PIÈRO, or Pier—to use the diminutive forms of the name Pietro by which he is usually called—was born at Campi, a small hamlet hidden away among the hills of Chianti, famous for their vineyards, about twelve miles north-east of Siena. His family were poor peasants with the name of Tecelano, and Pietro was sent to work in Siena at an early age, where he was apprenticed to a comb-maker. One wonders what were the reactions of this Tuscan country lad when he got his first glimpse of the city set so firmly on her triune hill, towering there " even today with a gesture of joy, radiant and beautiful, caught about by her vineyards as with a kirtle of green, girdled with silver and gold—the silver of her olives mixed with the gold of her corn ".[1]

The medieval streets of Siena cannot have changed very much since the early years of the thirteenth century when Pietro Tecelano passed through them for the first time—streets that were to be his home for the rest of his long life. They are " still lined with palaces, splendid and severe ; not separated from the lesser houses, but joined to them with only here and there an opening through which you see a vista of a steep narrow way under an arch, perhaps that leads suddenly and swiftly down into the valley, or winds slowly uphill, where the wind rushes madly to and fro or sighs wearily in the darkness where the sun rarely peeps ".[2]

Then, as now, more often than not, the " only traffic that passes up and down these paved, narrow, twisting, climbing ways is the *barocci* of the charcoal merchants, the asses of the woodmen laden with wood from the mountains, or the great wagons drawn by drowsy white oxen, whose horns almost touch the houses on either side of the narrow ways as they draw slowly home the burden of wine from the vineyard ". Streets that are " quiet enough, only never silent, echoing every now and then with the musical voices of the pedlars above the voices of many women, mixed with the laughter, the inarticulate cries of babies, of children ".[3]

The Sienese are an elusive and difficult people for a stranger to understand : a " tragic, dauntless, high-flying race . . . quick and proud, high spirited and vivacious, idle and superb at once. . . . A people that went forth to war, but they always fell."[4]

The city itself is fair to behold, but it stands on the edge of a grim country of scarred rock and deeply channelled clay—a lonely desert with the outline of a great mountain far away to the south—Mont' Amiata. There is a mysterious quality not only in the visible aspects of Siena, but even in her history, and above all in her religion and in her art. So great was the devotion of the Sienese to the Mother of God that every young noble had to swear allegiance to Our Lady, and every citizen felt an impassioned loyalty to her.

Siena was, and still is, a city of violent contrasts. In summer the fierce sun dries up the clay soil, and the city on its triple hill pants in the shimmering heat. In mid-winter it can be one of the coldest spots in central Italy, when the wind and rain drive against the bastions and through the narrow streets or around many a broad *piazza.*

To understand the life of Pietro Tecelano it is essential to have a mental picture of the background against which it was set. For in the heart of medieval Siena

[1] Edward Hutton, *Siena and Southern Tuscany*, p. 68.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 70. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

he worked at his trade, grew in holiness, and became one of the most famous members of the Third Order.

Young Pietro was a studious as well as a devout boy. No doubt he soon began to meditate on the meaning of the word ' Liberty '. All the history of old Siena is bound up in that single word ' Liberty '.

It is recorded that Pietro used to amuse his customers by pointing out any tiny flaw in his combs. In his shop people were met with no flood of compliments, not detained to haggle over the prices. Pietro named the just price for his goods, and innocent of salesmanship, left the customers to buy or not as they wished. And they, accustomed to the haggling methods of other shopkeepers, found business here peaceful and pleasant enough. If they did not come out with a tit-bit of scandal, they came out satisfied with their purchases.

It seems, if one may judge from his popularity, that his silence was not irksome, although remarkable. He once admitted to a friend that it had cost him fourteen years' effort to bridle his tongue, but since St James had said that religion was vain without this virtue, he had set himself to possess it. Into this he canalized the tide of natural ambition. But silence is not one of those virtues that are acquired from love of success. Lastly, the Tuscans, and above all the Sienese, are born chatterboxes, who find it difficult, if not impossible, to keep silence anywhere, even in church. Had this young comb-maker been a native of Umbria, his silence would not have been so unusual, as anybody who knows both races will understand.

During the whole of Pietro's lifetime, Siena was hardly ever at peace for more than a year or two. A truce would be declared with Florence, only to be broken again on some slight provocation. Yet this state of almost ceaseless civil war between the two rival cities of Tuscany affected the normal life of the people much less than do our modern wars. The building of the great cathedral was begun in 1245, and the church was dedicated fifteen years later. It is more than likely that Pietro was among the vast crowd of citizens who gathered in the cathedral on the eve of the Battle of Monteperto when Siena feared the frightful destruction that would follow upon a Florentine victory. Before the famous painting, the Madonna del Voto, the Syndic, stripped to his shirt, barefooted and bareheaded, with a rope around his neck, dedicated the city to Our Lady, beseeching her to defend it from the enemy. Pietro must have joined in the long procession of canons, priests, monks, friars and citizens—all barefooted and bareheaded—who made their way through the narrow streets, reciting *Pater nosters* and *Ave Marias*, singing psalms and chanting litanies. When all had returned to the cathedral, no doubt he, as did the rest, confessed their sins and received Holy Communion, having made peace with one another. For as an old chronicle tells us : " He who was the most injured sought out his enemy to make with him perfect and good accord."

Siena's prayers were answered. A great battle was fought. The Florentines, assisted by German legionaries, were put to flight and thousands slain. But the triumph was short lived, and within two or three years the Florentines were attacking again. In 1269 they avenged the defeat at Monteperto with an overwhelming victory at Colle. Such was the troubled world in which Pietro Tecelano lived, worked, and prayed.

He had come to Siena at a time when the commercial rivalry between this city and Florence was becoming acute. Each city was striving to get into the

hands of its own merchants and bankers all the increasingly lucrative affairs of the Roman Curia. Each was trying to extend its territorial influence and jurisdiction at the expense of the other. The neighbouring towns of Poggibonsi, Montalcino, Asciano, Montepulciano—and many another—were perpetual sources of contention. Time after time Siena suffered severe defeat from the more powerful Florence.

Then there were factions within the city, nobles against citizens. Throughout Pietro's lifetime there was no lasting peace in Siena, even after the riots in 1233 which led to the formation of the Council of Twenty-four, which gave a more democratic complexion to the government. But the majority of his fellow citizens did not really want peace. All they hoped and prayed for was the recovery of one or more hill-towns, or the help of German mercenary troops and supplies with which to attack Florence.

Pietro himself took no active part in all this strife. His attraction lay more to penance, fasts and austerities. When he was old enough and could afford to have a home of his own, he married. Material ambition, as well as spiritual, might have made him cling longer to celibacy. But Pietro does not seem to have been ambitious, and like so many holy tertiaries of St Francis, he was essentially a normal human being. Even as regards his penances, he found he had to give them up with the growing demand on his time and domestic responsibilities. He did so without any fuss. He came to the conclusion that the best he could do was to profit by all the toil, sufferings, contradictions and humiliations of each day, accepting them gladly for the love of God and offering them up for his sins. Soon after this resolution had been made, Pietro found his liberty restored to him. His wife died. There were no children and he was alone again—free to carry on his job as a comb-maker in the dark shop in the narrow street—with all the wrangling going on around him in which he need take no part.

He was more interested in the things of God than in the strife between Guelf and Ghibelline. His humble mind realized that his vocation was to be a comb-maker, and he aspired to nothing higher. Working at his bench in the shop, he saw the friars go past. Sometimes they came to beg alms. Their teaching and example moved him to the depth of his being. He began to frequent their churches; the little chapel outside the city, known as Alberino, once sanctified by the presence of St Francis himself, and the humble predecessor of the present church of St Francesco, close to the Porta Ovile, within whose friary he was to dwell later on. Yet even now when quite free to follow his own inclination he did nothing in a hurry. He might have joined the Friars Minor—there was nothing to stop him. All he did, however, was to set aside from his earnings just sufficient for his daily needs, the rest becoming the portion of the poor. Outwardly he still remained the shopkeeper, known for his absolute trustworthiness.

He might have closed his shop and given himself to a life of prayer and good works. He might have achieved notoriety by becoming a hermit. But with the humility and steadfastness which were his characteristics, he preferred to go on making and selling combs. Once he had put up his shutters for the night, his day's job was done as a citizen and friend of the needy. Now he was free to turn to his prayers with the same concentration of purpose. The only sign of the seraphic enthusiasm that had set him on fire was the ash-coloured habit of the Third Order he wore. When not at work in the shop, he devoted his time to serving the sick in the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, situated in the great

square facing the cathedral. In this same hospital, two centuries later, St Catherine of Siena would minister to the plague-stricken.

If Pietro did not talk much, even about his vocation, as a Continent Brother of Penance, none could have come into his shop without getting a perfectly clear idea of it from this man of few words. He must have given the magistrates of Siena a remarkable sermon on it, for when they, impressed by his manner of life, said they would exempt him from certain taxes so that he could have more money for his numerous charities, he replied that he thought it against justice and order to profit by the advantage of a good government and not contribute to its expenses.

So great was his love of St Francis and of the seraphic spirit, that one day he went to the friars and asked permission to live with them. There was no question of wanting to enter the novitiate so that he could become a member of the First Order. He was convinced that this would be mere presumption on his part. The friars, because it is the Franciscan spirit to refuse nothing to which one can possibly accede, and also because they knew Pietro to be a true son of their founder, gave him a cell near their infirmary. It would appear that this must have been at the newly established friary within the city walls, erected soon after the death of St Francis, and where the great fourteenth-century church of St Francesco now stands. The first settlement of the *frati* at Siena had been in 1212—outside the Porta Ovile, at the little chapel known as Alberino. To this same church on a previous occasion Pietro had once made his way with a piece of paper or parchment in his hand. On it he had written all the sins of his life that he could remember. When he arrived at Alberino and climbed the steps to the chapel, he unfolded the sheet and read out its contents with bitter tears and contrition. Our Lord sent an angel to assure him that his sins were forgiven. Suddenly all that he had written disappeared; the page was blank. Thus Pietro knew that his forgiveness was complete.

Although he lived as one of the community in the friary he still went on working in his shop every day. But from now onwards the poor could receive all the profits for he was content to share the crusts of the friars. This steadfast love of the place where Providence had put him, makes Pietro one of the most significant saints of the Third Order.

We have said that Pietro spent all his life in Siena. Strictly speaking, this is not quite true, for he was in the habit of making frequent pilgrimages to certain favourite shrines. We can picture him setting forth from the city about the middle of July, making his way on foot along the dusty roads of southern Tuscany into Umbria, so as to arrive in Assisi to gain the Portiuncula Indulgence at St Mary of the Angels on the second day of August. After a week or two in the seraphic city, he would strike northwards up the valley of the Tiber with the object of reaching Mont' Alvernia for the feast of the Stigmata of St Francis on September 17. From La Verna on his road homewards, by way of Arezzo, he would pass close to his native village of Campi, where the vintage would then be in full swing on the slopes of the Chianti hills.

Much as he wished to be left alone in his cell at the friary when he was not working in his shop, persons of every class and from remote parts of Italy came to ask his advice and prayers—bishops and priests, monks and friars, as well as his fellow citizens. Pietro began to receive heavenly favours. It is recorded that Our Lady, the Angels, the Apostles, and St Francis appeared to him. He was given the power to work miracles, and he could prophesy future events. As he

advanced in holiness by the most ordinary means, and so far as externals were concerned, living an unspectacular life, he was subjected to fierce trials of the spirit. But he went on saying his simple prayers, and trusting implicitly in God's providence.

To a friar who asked him what he considered to be the surest way to obtain the grace of God he replied—reluctantly, so we are told, for he considered it unsuitable for a tertiary Brother to give advice to a priest—" My Father, in my humble opinion, nothing can be wanting to anyone who applies himself with fervour and earnestness to holy prayer. There we learn to know the greatness of our Sovereign Master. There we discover our own baseness. There our weakness is helped, and we become strong against temptation and all evil."

He told another friar who was suffering much from dryness and disgust in prayer that he must persevere, saying : " Often Our Lord holds back consolation till a more favourable time. It is not profitable for us to be consoled. Sometimes we do better to have to wait for it, than to receive it. Thus weariness becomes a source of precious grace."

Many of his sayings were recorded and have been handed down. They may be accurate enough in detail, but they are without life. Only one of them seems to ring true and to convey the actual voice of the man who spoke. When someone praised him, he replied : " You are only exposing some poor dust to the wind." What Pietro meant was that it is a waste of breath blowing on what is only dust.

Pietro was a very old man when he died. He had seen the Franciscan and Dominican friars settle within his native city. He must have been there on the feast of the Assumption when the people held high festival, lighted bonfires and closed the shops to celebrate the fall of Grosseto to the Sienese troops. As the years rolled by, he watched the great cathedral, with all its many coloured marbles, rise from its foundations almost to completion. He had lived in Siena under the power of the Ghibellines, in Siena of the bankers, in Siena that in the next century was to be the cradle of so many famous painters. Sorrowfully on his death-bed he prophesied that Siena, Florence and other cities would suffer for their invincible pride. His prophecy was fulfilled. Maurice Hewlett notes that a certain lady named Sapia, who cried out when the Sienese were being massacred by the Florentines, was saved by the prayers of Pietro. He adds in a footnote that Pietro " sold combs on the bridge of Pisa and was a famous fakir of Siena ". Such accuracy was good enough for a saint in the mouth of a romantic writer in 1900 ! [1]

Pietro or Pièro lost his surname beneath his trade. For he is known invariably as " Pettinaio ' or ' Pettignano ' which means a comb-maker. The day of his death was December 9, and the year was 1289. He was buried in the church of San Francesco and his fellow citizens paid for a magnificent tomb. He became a great worker of miracles, and, like St Anthony of Padua, is still invoked locally as the restorer of things which are lost. His cultus was formally approved by Pope Pius VII in 1802. The feast of Bd Peter of Siena is now kept in the Roman-Seraphic Calendar on December 11, in conjunction with Bd Hugolino Magalotti.

His whole life is an example and an inspiration to those whose vocation is to remain in the world, and who are content with the hum-drum road that leads to God.

[1] Cf. *The Road in Tuscany.*

BD NOVELLONO OF FAENZA (1200-1280)

THE scene now changes from Tuscany to Romagna, that province of Italy which lies north of the Apennines with the Adriatic on one side and the long range of mountains on the other. The great Roman road—the Via Emilia—runs through its midst. About half way between Bologna and Rimini, at the lower end of the Limone pass that gives access to Florence on the south, is the city of Faenza: "A quiet and delightful little place, full of antiquity, and many a pleasant day may be spent among its churches, palaces and pictures, and wandering about its old world streets."[1] Today—if its name means anything to the tourist—it is for the glazed and coloured earthenware, generally known as majolica, but in France as *faience*, from the name of the Italian city of its origin.

In Novellono's time—he was born in the year 1200—Faenza was not famous for anything in particular. Its many great potteries were not established until the next century, nor was the cathedral built until later. Only the older church erected over the tomb of the first bishop of the city—San Savino—stood there. Still, it was a proud little town even then. It boasted a fine palace for the *podestà*, and the ninth-century campanile of Santa Maria Vecchi, which was Faenza's first cathedral, must have been familiar enough to Novellono.

He was just a simple shoemaker, probably as lazy about his job as we know him to have been about his religious duties: interested, of course, in politics, but more interested in his own affairs, his daily life, his luck, his chances in the lottery, his flirtations and feastings.

Then he fell sick. He was twenty-four when he realized that it lay at the mercy of his Maker to keep life in his body and to give him the energy which, hitherto, he had wasted on his own pursuits.

When he came downstairs, to the delight of his wife and mother, he was a changed man. Out in the sunny streets again, he heard, not the idle gossip of neighbours or the market news, but the new note with which Italy was ringing: of the joy and the heroism of the first Franciscans. The Order had been refreshed with the blood of its first martyrs, who laid down their lives in Morocco. The Third Order had been established three years before. The friars had found their way to England and to Germany, and that same autumn St Francis received the Stigmata on Mont' Alvernia.

Novellono resolved to become a tertiary.[2] His wife found his new habits of devotion to the poor as tiresome as Bd Luchesio's wife had done at first. But unlike Luchesio, Novellono could have told himself that he deserved her reproaches —not for giving alms to the poor and tending the helpless—but for having wasted his money with idle friends before his conversion. Like Luchesio, he brought her round to his way of thinking. One story goes that she herself was converted when she found a cupboard that she knew to have been empty, full of bread. Her husband had asked her for the love of God to see what it contained, because there

[1] Edward Hutton, *Cities of Romagna and the Marches*, p. 97.

[2] Another reason can be found for this shoemaker deciding to become a tertiary. In 1221 the majority of the citizens of Faenza rushed into the Third Order as a body, so that they could claim the status of what we would now call 'conscientious objectors'. The average merchant or shopkeeper felt no call to take up arms at the orders of his prince, to enable him to join forces with the Emperor Frederick and wage war against the Pope (see p. x).

was a beggar at the door. It may be presumed that he made up for lost time, and also for the generosity of which his wife complained, by working hard at making and mending shoes. A shrewd woman of the Romagna would require more than miraculous loaves in a cupboard to convince her that an improvident husband was on the way to becoming a saint. Yet it must be remembered, in these stories of relatives who complained of excessive tertiary generosity, that a living was fairly easy to get by a tradesman in those far off times. It was not necessary to work fingers to the bone to earn enough and more than enough for the needs of a household. Also, as one knows, the working-class Italians are, even today, inclined to be close-fisted.

When his wife died—we do not know how long this was after his conversion—Novellono sold his house and contented himself with a mere hut close to the monastery of Saints Ippolito and Lorenzo in Faenza, which in 1146 had been taken over by the white-habited Benedictine family of Camaldoli.[1] There is a tradition that Novellono joined the Camaldolesi. His name finds a place in their calendar. As we have seen in the case of Bd Gerard, it was possible in the Middle Ages to pass from one religious family to another without much difficulty. However, it seems that in this case Novellono—like Gerard—and for convenience, went to live as a sort of extern oblate at this Camaldolese monastery. It is certain that he did not lead an eremitical life for the rest of his days, content with pilgrimages to churches within a mile or two of his retreat. He made longer pilgrimages from time to time, at least once to Rome and no less than ten to far-distant Compostella. Had he been a monk, or even a lay-brother, it would have been impossible for him to wander about Europe in this manner, even in the Middle Ages when Canon Law was far less rigid than it is today.

It is not likely that he left Faenza merely in search of peace, because, though it is true that in the year 1241 the city was captured by the Emperor after a siege of eight months, yet the whole country, through which he journeyed on his way to the far west of Spain, was full of fighting men. Federigo, by this time, was employing Saracen mercenaries as well as his own barbarous Teutons, and such companies roved about Italy, making up for often-lacking pay by plunder. Most of the Italian cities were then engaged in civil war. Gregory IX had excommunicated the Emperor ; the Mongols were pressing into Poland and Hungary. This Pope was succeeded by Celestine IV, who occupied the Chair of Peter for no more than eighteen days, after which the Papacy was vacant for nearly two years. The greater part of Europe was in a state of turmoil : France, Germany, England, the Netherlands, and Spain. So it is fairly certain that—like Bd Gerard—Novellono made pilgrimages in order to pray for peace ; returning now and then to the life of a hermit, lest he should become too much attached to wandering.

There is a tradition that when Novellono happened to be in Faenza between two of his many pilgrimages, he used the old cathedral as his favourite place for prayer. Once the Canons came in for the midnight office and found him rapt in ecstasy before the high altar. When they inquired whether the sacristan had forgotten to shut the doors at nightfall, many witnesses testified that the doors had opened of themselves to let Novellono in, and had shut behind him. This miracle is recorded in the inscription on his tomb beneath the altar of the Madonna del Popolo in the cathedral at Faenza. He is described as a " hermit of Camaldoli ".

[1] Another Camaldolese foundation—the monastery of San Maglorio—was made at Faenza in 1253.

Novellono died in his cell on July 27, 1280. His contemporary, Cantinello, says that crowds assisted at the funeral with great joy. He had gone to heaven as the patron saint of shoemakers. His cultus was approved by Pius VII in 1817. The Roman-Seraphic Missal and Breviary celebrate his memory on August 13, in company with BB. John and Vincent, also of the Third Order.

BD TORELLO OF POPPI (1202-1282)

LIVING on the other side of the Apennines at the same time as Novellono of Faenza was another holy tertiary—Torello of Poppi. Both were hermits and both died at the age of eighty.

Poppi is a typical little Tuscan town, situated in the heart of the Casentino—that beautiful country of mountains, forests, castles, and monasteries lying east of Florence, on either side of the upper valley of the Arno, so often mentioned by Dante in the *Divina Commedia.* Within the boundaries of the Casentino are the three famous shrines of Vallombrosa, Camaldoli and Mont' Alverna—that " harsh rock between Tiber and Arno ", as Dante calls it, where St Francis " received from Christ the final seal ". Poppi huddles beneath the dominating mass of its castle, where Dante wrote part of the *Inferno.*

When Torello was born in 1202 the little houses were not protected by the castle, and had only the walls of the town as a means of defence. He came of the noble family of Torelli, and lost his parents when he was eighteen. He had determined to give himself to God, and when he came into possession of the family goods, he gave large alms to the poor and needy. He seems to have been very much of the usual type of Tuscan youth, quick fuel for enthusiasm, but he did not sufficiently distrust his own weakness, so we are told. He had two bad friends, and very soon, far from having given himself to God, he became the scandal of the town. One feels one knows him already: young, energetic, impressionable, unwary, passionate and tender.

Then, one day, when he must have been about thirty-six years of age, playing at bowls with his friends, he heard a cock crow thrice. We may surmise that his conscience had been unhappy for some time, or that a blasphemous jest had made him realize his own denial. Tuscan impetuousness is far from being wrong. He left the game at that moment, and went straight, like a thief, to seek sanctuary in the abbey of San Fedele, that belonged to the Vallombrosan Benedictines.

Here he was received with charity, and after he had made his confession, received Holy Communion. His conversion was sincere; complete, and as deep as it had been sudden. Torello decided that he must spend the rest of his life in solitude. He approached the Abbot of San Fedele and asked him for the habit of a poor hermit. The monks, when they heard of Torello's desire, did their best to persuade him to join their community—had not St Giovanni Gualberto, their founder, lived an eremitical life at Vallombrosa? But Torello seems to have realized that his vocation was not to any form of monastic life, for, as Wadding remarks, " at the first exhortation made by the Abbot, he had firmly determined to go and do penance, either in the Order of Friars Minor, or in the Third Order. In fact he embraced the Rule of the Third Order in the fourth year of his conversion."

So the Abbot of San Fedele gave him a habit of rough undyed wool, three barley loaves, and let him go off into the mountains to find a place where he could

live as a hermit. Eight days later, after much wandering around the Casentino, he found a cave not very far from Poppi, situated in a remote spot called Avellaneto. Thence, after a week of solitude, he returned to the town and to his home, gave away his goods, and having returned to the cave, set about to build himself a small cell. He also made a garden so that he could live on the vegetables it would produce.

After what we may presume was a time of probation, Torello seems to have made up his mind to count himself among the members of the Third Order of Penance rather than of the Vallombrosan family of Benedictines, although it is possible that he may have been enrolled as an oblate or confrater of the abbey of San Fedele previous to becoming a Franciscan tertiary.[1]

There must have been a very strong attraction towards the Third Order, then in all the glory of its first fervour, whereas the Vallombrosans had grown, not exactly slack, but just a little too respectable, after nearly two centuries since their founder had decided that he was called to be a hermit. The monastic life was not severe enough for this recent convert. It is recorded that he slept only three hours, and that his bed was of brushwood and thorny twigs. He wore a shirt of half-shaven pigskin under his woollen habit. He fasted, even from his usual meagre diet, for days on end. We are told that he had terrible fights against his flesh and against the devil; but in overcoming them, he gained the power so many saints have over the animal creation.

It can be bitterly cold in the Casentino during the winter months. In some of those valleys, as well as on the loftier peaks, the snow may lie for weeks on end. In the Middle Ages wolves often ventured down to the towns and villages from their normal retreats in the forests, seeking food where it could be found. One day Torello heard the screams of a child who had strayed into the country and who was being carried off by a wolf. He commanded the famished beast to drop its prey, and when it obeyed him, cured the child of its wounds and gave the wolf a more suitable meal. After this the wolf came daily for such fare as the hermit could provide, and was content with it.

Some years later Torello happened to be at Bibbiena, another small town not far from Poppi. Here he performed another miracle on behalf of a poor widow whose son had been carried off by a wolf. Many other miracles were attributed to his intercession, and are recorded by chroniclers.

Forty years after his adopting the life of a hermit, Torello was warned of the approach of death. He had reached the age of eighty, and he went to the abbey of San Fedele, where he made a general confession, asking to be buried in the place where he had first been freed from his sins. Then he returned to his cell, in spite of the entreaties of the monks to remain with them. They wanted to give him whatever care he should need in his last hours. But Torello replied that he was not worthy to die among the servants of God, and that it was his duty to go back to his disciple, Pietro da Poppi, and to end his days in the cell beside the cave where the greater part of his life had been spent.

When he was dying, knowing that the town regarded him as its protector against wolves, he prayed that it might never be molested by them. The inhabitants of Poppi have not forgotten the story of how a wolf came and laid its prey on Torello's coffin as a token that the wolves would obey him from then

[1] Fr Thurston, S.J., states in the new edition of Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, that " though Torello took the habit of a penitent from the Abbot of Poppi, he belonged to no Order ".

onwards. His death took place on March 16, 1282. There was nearly a battle between the secular clergy, the Friars Minor and the Vallombrosan monks as to the place of burial. But the Abbot of San Fedele was able to prove his prior claim, and so the hermit's body was borne in procession from the cave outside the town to the abbey church, where Torello was laid to rest amid a vast concourse of people. He continued to perform miracles. For instance, in 1288 some men were attacked by wolves when working in a remote spot in the Casentino. All of them were bitten, except those from Poppi, and these brought the others to Torello's tomb where they were healed of their wounds. Another man, exiled in Poppi from Siena, prayed at the shrine that he might be allowed to return to his native city, promising to celebrate the feast of Bd Torello every year, and to have his picture painted and make him better known in Siena. The prayer was granted, and the Sienese kept his word, giving instructions to an artist. But the latter, never having seen the old hermit, was at a loss how to make a likeness. Then came a dream or vision of Torello, wearing the habit of the Third Order and holding a wolf-cub in his arms. The picture was painted.

Benedict XIV approved the cultus of Bd Torello. His feast is kept on March 16 in the dioceses of Forlì and Arezzo, also by the Vallombrosans, but it does not find a place in the Roman-Seraphic Missal and Breviary.

BD BARTOLO (1228-1300) AND BD VIVALDO (d. 1320)

"SAN GIMIGNANO DELLE BELLE TORRI, on the hills on the other side of the Elsa. . . . You come at last into her quiet and shadowy gates, as to a forgotten shrine. . . . The road from Certaldo is as lovely as any in the world. . . . You climb hill after hill between the olives and the vines, where the grain and the grapes grow together. Often you descend into delicious valleys where the vineyards are still in summer . . . often too you look back on the Val d'Elsa . . . till suddenly at a turning of the way, San Gimignano rises before you on a lonely hill-top, covered with the silver of the olives, the gold of the corn, the green mantle of the vine, like a city out of a missal, crowned with her trophy of thirteen towers." [1]

The above is a perfect description of San Gimignano as seen from afar off. Maurice Hewlett has painted an equally vivid word-picture of the town itself, which is worth quoting, especially as the present generation seem to have forgotten this once popular writer, who knew Italy so intimately. He says: "Blind towers, windowless houses, blank walls present an inscrutable front. You think, a town cut in blocks, like something out of the East, where men built against the sun. . . . You can well imagine it to have been hacked out of the solid by huge contrivers, a fortress dug from the live rock, the towers and square towers and square barbicans and double walls pared down to that semblance: open spaces cleared by the force of the pick, and about these, the streets drilled into busy tracery of tunnels, galleries, archways, stepways. . . . All is one weathered silver or hollow of dark, and all of one age. It sounds grim, so described, yet it is anything but that. A friendly and gentle race inhabits it." [2]

The best known of the "friendly and gentle race" who lived here in past ages is Santa Fina. The little girl died at fifteen—'*un anima vittima*'. Her story has

[1] Edward Hutton, *Siena and Southern Tuscany*, pp. 26, 27.
[2] *The Road in Tuscany*, Vol. II, 54, 56.

been told by Domenico Ghirlandajo in his frescoes around her chapel in the church of La Collegia.

Ten years before the death of Santa Fina, in 1228, Bartolo was born in this little city of the thirteen towers in answer to the prayers of the hitherto childless Giovanni and Gentina Buonpedoni, the Count and Countess of Mucchio. They had prayed to St Peter to grant them a son who would carry on the illustrious and Catholic traditions of their families. One night in a dream, Gentina saw the Fisherman apostle, who said to her: "Your prayer is granted. You will bring into the world a son who will despise and forsake all earthly goods for God, and who will gather up great riches for heaven."

Bartolo's childhood called forth the wonder of an Augustinian friar who wrote his biography from information supplied by those who knew him when he was alive. As a boy, Bartolo was an angel of peace. No, not a prig, for did a prig ever make peace? Find a Latin without a fighting spirit when he comes to the age to double his fists. Atavistically, his standards are imperial, and barbarians hesitate before his glances. He regards others as men in their own right, and makes them to be such if they have forgotten their dignity.

San Gimignano, like all other Tuscan hill-towns, was strung taut between Guelfs and Ghibellines. Daggers whipped out at a word. Hatred and revenge quartered in the city, with edges endlessly against injustice; injustice made up like sandstone or grains of matter cohering in a hard mass. A boy could—and what boy would not?—add a grain of matter for revenge with his cat-calls or party-cries, his badges and untiring joy of battles.

When he was nine years of age Bartolo would have heard one November day in 1237 that the Emperor Federigo had defeated the Guelf party in the battle of Cortenuova. His boyhood was passed in a never ending rumour of wars over Europe. With a saint's heroic virtue of mental honesty, Bartolo faced the fact that the immediate, everlasting duty of every Christian is to be at peace with his neighbour—a task requiring the long-distance valour that is called patience. He must not, by word or by deed, do anything to set two individuals at variance with each other. He must not separate himself in a critical spirit from anyone. On the contrary, Christ sets him as a sentry to keep from His outpost of Christendom every invader who will attack its unity.

In 1246, the Guelfs, led by a noble, Guido Ardinghelli, making the excuse that the taxes on the churches had become too high, destroyed the towers of the Ghibelline families, whose leaders were the Salvucci. The streets of San Gimignano were their battle ground.

It is known that Bartolo, leaving his father's house, went penniless to Pisa. Pisa was Ghibelline. Did he refuse to defend the towers of his home, asking impatiently what towers mattered when men were falling into hell, laden with hatred and for all the furies? Probably by this time he was preparing to take minor orders, and it seems likely that he was already thinking of becoming a tertiary: two reasons for not turning partisan in the street fighting. He left San Gimignano for the moment to the little 'Fina de Ciardi', who in 1248 began her life of vicarious suffering and prayer for her native city. She was then ten years old.

Bartolo is heard of next serving the sick in the Benedictine abbey of San Vito, near Pisa. There he prayed to know God's will. Doubtless Benedictine peace attracted him. But one night Christ appeared to him, His Body wounded, and a symbolic scourge in His hand, saying: "Bartolo, it is not in the monastic habit

that you are to win the crown that is prepared for you, but in the suffering which will wound your body for twenty years." It was a strange answer. As a shield against delusion, Bartolo's director gave him the habit of the Third Order and consecrated his body for sacrifice by receiving his vow of virginity. Then he left him to go on serving the sick and to perform other work in the monastery, where he waited indefinitely for a further indication of God's will.

Bartolo was thirty years of age when the Bishop of Volterra, in whose diocese San Gimignano was situated, heard of his virtue and invited him to return home and take holy orders. Bartolo accepted the bidding of his Bishop as the beck of God.

He was sent at first to Paccioli as a curate. He remained ten years in this small town about half way between Volterra and Pisa. Then for twelve years he was in charge of the hamlet of Pichena, a few miles south of San Gimignano. His parish was indeed his care. He regarded himself as its father, depriving himself of everything to provide for those who were sick or in need. He delighted especially to give hospitality to travellers, pilgrims, and to the friars. He cherished his ability to do so, and for a day these strangers were part of his flock. Once, when he had received into his house a poor beggar, he heard at midnight, a voice saying : " Bartolo, you have been the host of Jesus Christ." Hastening to the room where he had lodged the beggar, he found it empty.

A young man of San Gimignano, named Vivaldo Stricchi, was so impressed by the nobleman who had renounced such an inheritance to become the follower of the Little Poor Man of Assisi and of Christ that he asked to be clothed in the same habit and to become the disciple of this country parish priest.

Bartolo was to need such a disciple. At the age of fifty-two, more than twenty years since he had been granted the vision of the wounded Christ, he found that he was a leper. He recognized this as his mystical vocation, late though it came. Wounds white as snow : strange wounds to make up in the body of Bartolo the sum of the sufferings of Christ—" for we are His Members ". The Passion of Christ left no whole spot in His Body. He is driven by the immense sin of the world to require more room to suffer ; and so He suffers, not only in hands and feet, but in those other members, His obedient saints—in Fina and in Bartolo. Fina was long dead. She had died in ecstasy in 1253, having rotted indescribably to death, leaving a torn body which filled the room with the sweetness of the soul which, with Christ, had inhabited it. And peace was not yet won. Her task was left for Bartolo to finish.

Unable to serve the parish of Pichena with his leprous hands, Bartolo left it with the Bishop's permission, and with his disciple, whom immemorial devotion has beatified, removed to a hospital for lepers outside the walls of San Gimignano. He became its director, and was able to say Mass for the inmates. There, under the scourge of leprosy, his flesh fell in shreds. He rotted alive in reparation for those, who, by sins against charity, work like gangrene in the Mystical Body of Christ which is Christendom. He must have borne that additional suffering, the mental depression which is a symptom of the disease. He " began to be sad ", and saddened for Christ's sake. Yet, with his will and his lips, he never ceased to praise and bless God who laid this load on his heart and mind.

And God worked miracles through him. Healing came from the touch which might have been expected only to taint. Instead of an offensive smell, his sores had a heavenly odour which no one could explain. *It was during his years in the leper house that San Gimignano found peace.*

" On a May morning in the year 1300 . . . an embassy from the allied cities of the Tuscan League came up the long road to San Gimignano ; and when the gates were opened, Dante Alighieri, just thirty-five years old, rode into the town with his company, with trumpeters gay with silver and gold, and heralds all in scarlet and silver. In the great hall of the new Palazzo del Comune he gave his message to the ancients of San Gimignano : to wit, that a council was called of the League to elect a Captain of Tuscany, and that San Gimignano was invited to send deputies." [1]

Did Dante—who a year later was driven into exile, when Charles of Valois overthrew the Guelfs in Florence and who was to die in the tertiary habit—set eyes on the old leper ? Did Bartolo see him afar off that May morning ? It was the last chance for the singer and the ' Tuscan Job ' to meet, for Bartolo died on the twelfth day of December that same year, his mystical work being done. An immense concourse of people flocked to revere his body which was removed from the leper hospital the following day, and borne to the church of San Agostino, then newly erected. Bartolo had a devout servant, a woman named Stella. She was kneeling close to his coffin, in the press of the crowds, weeping for the loss of her master, when the saint stretched out his hand to hers, " to show her ", says the old biographer, " how grateful he was for the services she had rendered, holding her hand for five hours ". At the west end of this church is the chapel of San Bartolo with the fifteenth-century shrine of marble and bronze, the work of Benedetto da Maiano. Above it are three panels depicting the good works of this holy man and an exquisite relief of Our Lady and her Child.

Vivaldo left his master's wasted body in the church of San Agostino and went to end his days as a hermit. His retreat was near the village of Montajone, a few miles north-west of San Gimignano. In this remote spot, surrounded by the forest of Boscorotondo—" the round wood "—a little chapel, dedicated to Santa Maria in Camporena, was consecrated in 1416. Adjoining it is the Franciscan friary of San Vivaldo. The relics of Bartolo's disciple are still venerated in the parish church at Montajone.

As for San Gimignano, she fell to politics again. In 1353 Florence took over her government, and her freedom was lost for ever, because she would not know the things that were to her peace. Neither the Ardinghelli nor the Salvucci won her, but the last of the Counts of Mucchio—the ' Tuscan Job '—not forgetting Fina and Vivaldo, whose city she is forever.

The cultus of Bd Bartolo was approved by Alexander VI, and confirmed with that of Bd Vivaldo by Pius X in 1910. Neither of them has a proper office. In recent times Bartolo has been pooled with two other *beati* on December 14, while Vivaldo is now commemorated in the Roman-Seraphic Calendar with two holy tertiaries on May 21.[2] In the diocese of Volterra the feast of Bd Bartolo is celebrated on December 14 ; that of Bd Vivaldo on May 11.

BD JANE OF SIGNA (1244-1307)

GIOVANNA, or Jane as she would be called in English, was born in 1244 at Signa, a village situated on a hill-side on the north bank of the river Arno, about seven miles west of Florence. She was five years old when the Ghibelline nobles, under

[1] Edward Hutton, *Siena and Southern Tuscany*, p. 29.
[2] Third Order Regular, May 10 ; Capuchins, December 12.

the leadership of Federigo, rose in arms and gained possession of the city which had adhered to the Guelfs hitherto. Those of the Guelf nobles who were not slain passed into exile and their palaces with their towers were destroyed. But this lasted only two years. In 1250, Florence freed herself and organized her people under the long-desired democratic constitution. This brought peace for a decade. Federigo died in September 1250, and was succeeded by Conrad IV.

Giovanna must have watched the comings and goings on the roads from the vantage point of the hills above her village, where she tended sheep. She was the child of poor parents, and had to contribute towards the support of her family as soon as she could. Florence, in the latter half of the thirteenth century, the greatest of centuries, was to be the cup of the finest wine of human genius, encouraging the search for material beauty in architecture, sculpture, painting, literature: bringing the human intellect to bend its power to the expression of ideas well nigh angelic. What must it have been like to live among creatures so splendid in their pride of life, women of whom poets sang as half-divine, men who lived as though creation were their duchy? Behind these beings fell long shadows of injustice, cruelty, and crime. The poor were at their mercy, for an alms or for death. But this period was rich even in saints, shining among the magnificence of it all. Florence offered liberty even to the holy.

But Giovanna, on the meadows by the river or on the low hills from which she could see the towers of Florence, knew none of them. She knew very few people. She could neither read nor write, she had not a *soldo* to spend, and no liberty, because she had to mind her sheep from early morning till nightfall.

She might have become very much like an animal herself, since she had nothing to occupy her mind except finding something to eat and a sunny or shady spot for her siesta, according to the time of year. Around her, life went on very much as it does even today in rural Tuscany—full of old primeval things. " Here are the littered farmyards, stone pigeon-houses, and Madonnas flowering in old walls; here the ox-teams creep along—Titans caught and yoked—their heads close to the ground, their horns a cause of entanglement and grief . . . here are pigs in the clover and geese on the grass, beans in flower and golden-tipped vines in the bullace-trees; here are the peasants in the field, men and boys and girls, in rags which fold about them like bronze, and with glossy brown legs which Donatello might have copied, and indeed did copy. What he also got of theirs, was the dignity of these dumb creatures, their slow reposeful eyes, measured motions, patience, akin to the great beasts, their fellow labourers." [1]

Yes! A life like that of the Tuscan peasants, pictured so vividly by Maurice Hewlett when writing of the countryside around Signa, must of itself become akin to that of the animal or that of the angel. Giovanna, instead of developing into an animal, grew up to be one of those angels of whom Christ said that they " do ever behold the Face " of His Father. Accepting the fact that she heard in the Gospels that Christ bade His disciples ask His Father for whatever they needed, she did so. Her wants were as simple as she was. Sometimes, bringing her sheep home from the rich riverside pastures in the spring, when the Arno was swollen by the melting of the winter snow on the Apennines, she would find some low-lying ground had been flooded since she had passed that way in the morning. The sheep could swim, but Giovanna could not. So taking off her rag of a cloak, she

[1] Maurice Hewlett, *The Road in Tuscany*, Vol. II, 334.

would spread it on the water, kneel on it, and be borne safely on to higher ground. And when a torrential rainstorm threatened, Giovanna would collect her sheep under an oak as best she could, and then would ask God that neither she nor they, who were at the mercy of the weather, might be harmed by it. The rain would flood the pastures, but not only was Giovanna's frock kept dry, but the fleeces of her sheep as well.

Such strange happenings came to be known, so that the other shepherds of the neighbourhood, when they saw a storm coming, would hurry to a certain oak which Giovanna made her headquarters; and they too would be protected, though the tree itself could not have kept the storm off more than three or four people, let alone their flocks.

Not so very long ago this tree was still venerated by the country people—a great oak, more than six hundred years old, with wide-spreading branches.

When she was twenty-three, Giovanna made her way up to the Franciscan friary at Carmignano in the Alban Mountains, on whose eastern spur her native village is situated, and asked for the habit of the Third Order. She told the friars that God was calling her to live as a recluse. It is possible that she may have heard of Veridiana; although she was not born until two years after the death of this anchoress. But Castelfiorentino is not so very far away from Signa. Maybe Giovanna's special vocation was to continue that of Veridiana.

Florence needed prayers badly enough. Seven years previously the city had suffered complete defeat at the hands of her rival, Siena. The Guelf nobles had fled and their houses had been razed to the ground. But for the eloquence of the Ghibelline, Farinata degli Uberti, who loved his city, Florence would have been destroyed. For six years the people lay crushed under their government. In 1266, thanks to the victory of the brother of St Louis, Charles of Anjou, champion of the Church, at Benevento and at the battle of Tagliasco, two years later, the Ghibelline cause was utterly defeated, and Florence did not take long to throw out her rulers of that party. From St Martin's day that year, she was free again. Free to enjoy her own genius. In the midst of the rejoicings over this Liberty regained, Giovanna asked to renounce her own. Her vision had longer sight.

The next forty years of her life-history can be written in the pious cliché of Père Léon: "Her life was spent between prayer, penance, and the exercise of charity." [1] She had been given a little cell below the village of Signa, close to the bank of the Arno. The sick and sorrowful limped to her window. We are told that she restored the sight of one who was blind, and brought back to life a child, and multiplied bread for a woman who had been kind to her, because these facts have been recorded. But what else went on in that tiny place which had no door for any but Death to enter by?

She could not read. Her own vocal prayers must have been those of the unlettered—so many *Paters* and *Aves*. Mass she heard from her window, looking into the chapel beside the cell. Of the food brought to her as alms, she gave away all but the minimum required to sustain life. What, then, did she do all day for forty years? She looked on the will of God. When, in the city of Florence, the people kept a festival, she was "alone with the Alone". When they mourned some public calamity, she rejoiced that God is God and all else dust before the wind. Through what floods of natural rebellion her will came unshaken, none

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. IV, 163.

shall know; through what waters of desolation, none shall guess. To all who leave father and mother, brothers and sisters, houses and lands—even the sunny common-lands where a shepherdess may rule over her sheep—for Christ's sake, is given a hundredfold in *this life:* a hundredfold of joy which the world cannot give. But to all who have in any degree the mystic's selflessness, bitterness comes to wash the soul yet more. In her narrow cell by the river, Giovanna must have said again and again: "The waters are come even unto my soul", praying that as she had been kept safe in the floodtime of that same river, so too might she be kept from the heaviness of this agony. And in her Franciscan habit, as once in her threadbare dress, she found herself carried safe to the everlasting hills of faith and hope.

Meanwhile Florence was becoming the chief power in Tuscany. Dante Alighieri walked its paved streets. "Modern history was born with Giovanni Villani. Great palaces were built for the officers of the republic; vast Gothic churches arose. Women of rare beauty, eternalized, as Beatrice, Giovanna, Lagia, and the like . . . adorned the social gatherings in the open loggias of the palaces. Splendid pageants and processions hailed the Calends of May and the Nativity of the Baptist, and marked the civil and ecclesiastical festivities and state solemnities. The people advanced more and more in power and patriotism." [1] At that date, so historians tell us, Florence must have seemed a great forest of towers, for the palace of each great family boasted one, as did the mansion of the Cerchi, in Umiliana's day.

But Giovanna could not see them. Yet some of the *campanile* knew her, for on November 9, 1307, the bells of three neighbouring churches started to ring of themselves as for a wedding. A visitor who knocked at the door of the little window of Giovanna's cell on that autumn morning received no answer. The alarm was given, and the wall was broken through. The anchoress was found lying as though asleep with a block of wood beneath her head. Some say that she died of the plague, and this is why she is invoked against it by piety's dear process of reckoning.

She was buried in a side chapel of the church of San Giovanni Battista at Signa. Many miracles were worked at her tomb, and it is believed that her body is still incorrupt. An oratory was built over her cell and the place is known as *il Beatino.* In 1348, the preservation of that part of Tuscany from the plague was ascribed to the intercession of Giovanna the anchoress. She is invoked also for protection against drought, hail and lightning. Her cultus was approved by Pope Pius VI in 1798. The feast of Bd Giovanna is observed in the diocese of Florence, also by the Friars Minor, in conjunction with two other virgins of the Second and Third Orders, on November 17.[2]

ST ROSE OF VITERBO (1235-1252)

VITERBO, situated on the Via Francigena that leads from Rome to Siena, had been a young braggart of a city, taking a hand in the siege of Rome under Barbarossa, and carrying off the bronze gates of the Vatican Basilica as a trophy. She had given them back to the Senate, and Innocent III himself saved her walls from the fury of the Romans. But when Barbarossa's successor, Federigo, who had spent some of his boyhood at Viterbo, wanted to garrison the city with his German

[1] Edmund Gardner, *Florence,* p. 36.
[2] Conventuals and Capuchins, November 9.

troops, her stomach turned, and she showed the same courage against him that she had shown for the imperial cause a little while before. With the Germans inside her walls, Viterbo withstood the Master of Germany who had the greater part of Italy behind him, and whose cruelty was a by-word—her own force not more than sixty thousand strong.

Rose was of such. She is a little St John the Baptist of a child, standing against the background of that ancient and somewhat forgotten rose-red city, half as old as Time, on the eastern slopes of Monte Cimino, situated in the south-west corner of Umbria. Viterbo is not among the Italian cities on the regular itinerary of tourists, despite her wealth of medieval architecture, now sadly decayed from its former splendour.

Our first glimpse of Rose is as the smallest of children, preferring the solitude of the woods outside the city to the cheerful life of the streets, and there keeping so still, that the birds came around her as they had come to St Francis. There was nothing unfriendly about Rose. Her first miracle was the mending of a playfellow's pitcher when she herself was not much higher than the pitcher, and at the age of three—a mature Umbrian woman in most respects at this age. God put the power of life into her small brown hands, when, dismayed by the family's grief at the death of her mother's sister, she touched the corpse and restored her to life.[1]

After that, of course, the people of Viterbo watched this extraordinary child, and probably followed her out of the city into the woods and on to the rolling plains, hoping for more miracles. One is pretty sure that they helped heaven to entice her into the wilderness. Rose was needed, not to help them, but to help Italy and the Church. The then Pope, Gregory IX, was redoubling his efforts to save the Guelf party from ruin. " He saw, with alarm, an Emperor, master of the two Sicilies and of Germany, on the point of vanquishing all resistance in Upper Italy. He anticipated that this monarch, whose Mussulman soldiers were constantly passing through the states of Rome, would escape the influence of the Church, and so evince no respect whatsoever for a religion which he was constantly accused of not believing." [2] This is Sismondi's anti-clerical understatement of the condition of affairs.

It was Federigo, irresponsibly caring for nothing but immense knowledge and immense power, who was against peace—peace represented by that historic and deathless unity of Christendom, guarded by an aged but energetic Pope. Gregory IX was over eighty when he was elected. Beneath all this was the opposition of city to city, and the feuds between the great families. There was no unity in Italy, except in so far that all parties recognized the Papacy, granted that they did not always obey the Pope.

One finds it difficult to get any clue as to how much of all this strife Rose must have known after she retired to a little room in her father's house to live there in solitude. One has the impression of her being beckoned from the woods by those who feared for safety, now that Federigo's Saracens were roaming over the countryside. Living in seclusion little Rose would have been free from miracle-begging starers, and alone with God who told her stories that were eternal, and found her things to do that were supernatural. One day " children ran out of their houses.

[1] Throughout this chapter it has been presumed that the traditions of Viterbo, where St Rose is still loved and her body still incorrupt, are based on contemporary evidence, even if practically all documentary confirmation for the authenticity of the miracles, etc., has perished.

[2] Cf. Sismondi, *Italian Republics*, Chap. III.

Grown-ups gathered on the streets. The news spread rapidly throughout Viterbo. Those troops arriving with the colourful uniforms—they were the Imperial forces. They would lay siege to the town, subdue the Papal sympathizers, and the town would fall to the Emperor, away from Papal Authority.

" A pale little face framed in fluffy blond hair peered out of the window of her father's house, and the five-year-old girl in the coarse woollen frock interrupted her prayers and penances. ' Who are they ? ' she asked of her parents. Imperial troops representing enemies of God and the Church, she was told.

" Enough for the child. Back to her tiny cell, to redouble her prayers and penances. From that day Rose prayed incessantly for the Church, and three years later she was ready for her apostolic career." [1] Maybe she was told that the dreaded Saracen troops had dared to make their way to the Convent of San Damiano outside Assisi, where in June 1241 they were put to flight by St Clare holding up the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance from an upper window.

After a year deprived of sunlight, it is not surprising to hear that Rose fell ill. Yet there is no more than a hint that whatever the means used to bring about this state of weakness, the cause was the Church's need of a saint to suffer for it. For on the Vigil of St John the Baptist she had a vision of Our Lord, who bade her join the Third Order of St Francis, and combat evil in the city without respect of persons, fighting without ceasing for God and the Church. Then, having prepared her for great persecutions, He blessed her and restored her to health. It seems that she had been ill two years.

Rose was ten years of age when she reappeared in the streets of Viterbo, now clad in the Franciscan habit. At the same time the first Council of Lyons had assembled, where Pope Innocent IV solemnly deposed Federigo, determined to destroy the power of the Emperors. The struggle would go on five more years.

The child-tertiary was shown, mystically, Christ crucified for sin. She knew, therefore, the truth about evil as far as any human being is capable. With the light of this vision transpiercing her heart, she began to preach in the streets. There is no record of clerical approval or disapproval, but this ten-year-old little girl could not, and would not have continued for more than a day had the Church frowned on such unusual behaviour. Her miracles witnessed to the power behind her words. Besides, what danger was there in Rose ? However, it is recorded that the learned—which means the clergy—were amazed at her apparently infused knowledge.

Viterbo was among the cities of the Papal States. Federigo protested, an explanation which does credit to his sense of humour, that he proposed " to do a work of charity in taking away (from the Popes) the treasures with which they are filled for their eternal damnation ". He went on to say : " God is our witness that our intention has always been to force Churchmen to follow in the footsteps of the primitive Church, to live an apostolic life and to be humble like Jesus Christ."

Rose began to preach against the Emperor's theft of a city. " The little fluffy-haired girl set out against this man armed in the tertiary habit, which she had recently adopted, a cross in hand and bare-footed. On street corners and in market places people gathered to listen to the child exhort them to do penance and be converted. She told them of the terrible tortures which Our Lord had suffered, and she told them how horrible sin is. Some laughed, some scoffed, some were

[1] Muriel S. O'Neill, ' The Girl Preacher of Viterbo ', in *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, Vol. XXVII (September 1948), 271.

converted." [1] And her preaching was supported by more miracles. When she had finished her open-air sermons, she visited the sick and healed them, helped the poor and consoled the afflicted. Those who lounged in the doorways listened to her childish voice coming to them on the clear air across some *piazza*, saw the stone on to which she had climbed for lack of a pulpit. Then she would rise in the air and support herself several feet from the ground, having been granted the power of levitation. Seeing is believing, and those who had not seen in the struggle between Pope and Emperor anything more than party strife, came to their senses. Whether they were Guelf or Ghibelline in tendency, the words 'justice' and 'peace' and 'Church' came to have for them new meanings. Viterbo was a changed place.

The citizens came at last to the realization that Rose's preaching was no child's play. Those who sided with Federigo insisted that she must be kept off the streets. So she remained indoors. Eventually she and her parents were banished. One dark night, Rose, barefoot as ever, had to lead her sad and bewildered father and mother out of the city, comforting them with Christ's promises to those who are persecuted for justice's sake. They took the road which leads eastwards through wooded country until they arrived at Soriano, a small town about seven miles from Viterbo, surrounded by a forest of oak and chestnuts, covering the lower slopes of Monte Cimino. Here, so she said, she must stay and preach penance.

On December 5, 1250, it was revealed to Rose that the Emperor was dying and that peace would be restored. She announced the news with great joy. A fortnight later, a messenger riding through the countryside, confirmed that Federigo had died at Fiorentino in Apulia on December 13. Rose did not return in triumph to Viterbo, possibly because she knew that the peace was no peace, but merely an interlude in which Guelf and Ghibelline would fight the more freely in party interests. Towns, submitting themselves to nobles whose militias they thought to make their own, lost that liberty about which there had been so much fine talk.

Although the people of Soriano tried to detain her, Rose left them and moved to Vitorchiano, a village lying north-east of Viterbo, perched on a steep cliff above a deep ravine; a place soaked in the pagan superstitions of its Etruscan founders in remote times. At that date Vitorchiano was under the influence of a woman who claimed magical powers, and who, by playing upon the superstitious fears of the inhabitants, had enticed many people away from religion to put their faith in charms and witchcraft. There is indeed something sinister about this country between Viterbo and the Lake of Bolsena, where the "giant Apennines of Sabina loom far off, dim through the hazy noon; and the nearer Ciminian, dark with its once dreaded forests, stretches its triple-crested mass across the southern horizon," as Dennis describes them in his *Cities of Etruria*. The old gods of the Volsini, whose great temple, the *Fanum Volumnae*, stood somewhere among this wilderness of low hills, still exercised their power in the thirteenth century.

Rose preached at Vitorchiano, but in vain. So she asked that a great pyre of dry wood might be built in the centre of the village and lighted. As the fire crept up, she climbed to the top, and stood among the flames and smoke, praying for those who were in danger of hell fire. There, in sight of the horror-stricken, dumbfounded crowd, this girl, little more than fifteen years old, remained for three hours, while the fierce flames surrounded her like a scarlet mantle, bowing back

[1] Muriel S. O'Neill, 'The Girl Preacher of Viterbo' in *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, Vol. XXVII (September 1948), p. 272.

from her feet and not so much as blackening her tertiary habit. When she came down, it was to lead the witch and her followers to the sacrament of penance.

At last, after visits to other towns in the neighbourhood, where she preached penitence and worked miracles, Rose, with her parents, returned to Viterbo. She knew that her work was done, and that she might spend the rest of her life alone with God.

That she was no wilful visionary is proved by her instinctive turning in search of a cloister where she would be under obedience. But the Abbess of the Poor Clare convent of Our Lady of the Roses was chary of receiving one who had created such a stir, and declined to admit her to the novitiate. We are told that Rose remarked: "Perhaps she will be more willing when I am dead—when I can be no danger to the humility of the convent. Then she will know that I only did what God bade me."

If she might not have an abbess, at least she might have a community, so she felt. Gathering round her such young girls of Viterbo who were moved to join her, Rose took a small house, where they began to live in community, observing the Rule of the Sisters of Penance. Thus the Third Order *Regular* might have then been founded, two hundred years earlier than it was, had not the Abbess of the Poor Clares thought it dangerous for young girls to make a foundation with no other guide than the far too notorious Rose. The Abbess was perturbed, and took steps to obtain a brief from the Pope forbidding any other community dependent on alms to live within four miles of Viterbo. If not for the good reason of charity, and to give a woman who had chosen the most penitential of lives the benefit of the doubt, at least for the equally good reason that the Second Order of St Francis was then in the glory of its first fervour, this action should not be regarded as necessarily reprehensible. Had Rose's little community been intended to flourish, its members would have recovered from this pruning. But it was evidently humble obedience to the divine will that was required of them, for, without any thought of appealing against this papal decision, they quietly dispersed, returning to their own homes to live there as faithfully as they could.

Rose did not remain long in her parents' house. She died at the age of seventeen. Her last words, so it is recorded, were those which had been her first—"Jesus, Mary".

Her first tomb was in her own parish church, but she is said to have appeared three times to Pope Alexander IV, when he was in Viterbo as a fugitive from Rome with all his court. She told the Pope that it was God's will that her body should be taken to the Convent of the Poor Clares. Its solemn translation took place on the date now observed as her feast—September 4. The convent and its chapel were destroyed by fire in 1557, and although the very vestments in which Rose's body was wrapped were burnt to a cinder, once more the flames only caressed her. Her incorrupt body now rests in one of the chapels of the Church of Santa Rosa.[1]

Edward Hutton, writing some fifty years ago, tells us that the festival of St Rose was still kept with tremendous enthusiasm. "The whole province of Viterbo flocks into the city for love of Santa Rosa. . . . Even now, on the third of September, sixty men carry a great car, weighing three thousand kilogrammes, bearing her image, from the Porta Romana through the Piazza del Popolo to the Piazza

[1] On February 25, 1952, Pius XII addressed a letter to the Bishop of Viterbo extolling the supernatural gifts of St Rose, and making her a special patron of Italian Catholic Action for girls (cf. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1952, pp. 218 ff.).

San Rosa before her church. And whenever you come to the city, that church will be the first place that your *vetturino* will take you to. Nor will he let you enter alone. He will leave his horse, and climbing the steps with you, kneel at the shrine which guards the incorrupt body of the little Saint. There you will be given roses, and for sure he will beg one of you. And in truth, of all I saw in Viterbo, as it seemed to me, it was only these few fading roses that I cared to remember." [1]

OTHER SAINTLY TERTIARIES OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

THERE were other saintly men and women of the thirteenth century who seem to have belonged to the Third Order, but who find no place in the Roman-Seraphic Calendar. Among them are the following.

BD AMATUS RONCONI. He was born at Saldezzo, not far from Rimini, about 1238. Left an orphan when a boy, he felt his vocation was to be a hermit, so he joined the Third Order, and retired to a solitary place where he lived in prayer and penance. Like many other Franciscan hermits, Amatus made pilgrimages to Compostella and other famous shrines, and like them, devoted himself to the care of the sick and poor. There is a tradition that he founded a hospital near Rimini, where his latter years were spent as a nurse. He died in 1304. His cultus was approved by Pius VI. His feast is kept at Rimini on May 15.

BD CHRISTINA MACABAI. Otherwise known as Oringa of the Cross, this tertiary was the child of poor parents in the village of Santa Croce sull' Arno, situated between Florence and Pisa. The story of her life has much in common with that of her contemporary and neighbour, Bd Jane of Signa, for both of them were shepherdesses. Christina refused all offers of marriage and fled to Lucca, where for a time she earned a living as a servant. Her penances and prayers were on a heroic scale. She and her mistress went on a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi. Her beauty attracted several would-be husbands, but she rejected them all. There is a tradition that it was St Veridiana of Castelfiorentino who advised Christina to join the Third Order, but as the former died in 1242, this seems doubtful, unless she spoke to the latter in a vision. Christina is reputed to have formed a community of Tertiary Sisters at Santa Croce, where she died in 1310. Her local cultus was approved by Pius V. Like St Clare of Montefalco, she is claimed by the Augustinians, and her feast is kept by them on January 4, also in the diocese of Lucca and San Miniato. She is called ' The Missionary of Lucca '.

BD JAMES OF PIEVE. He is often known as ' The Almsgiver ', and was born at Pieve di Cadore in Lombardy about the middle of the thirteenth century. His parents were wealthy and gave him the best of educations. After his ordination he founded a hospital near his native town, where he nursed the sick and lived in great austerity. His legal knowledge was always at the disposal of the poor. When he protested against the misappropriation of part of the revenues of his hospital, the case was decided in his favour. Revenge was taken, and James was killed by a band of ruffians on January 15, 1304. Both the Servites and the Third Order of St Francis claim him as a member. His cultus was approved by Pius VII in 1806. The Third Order Regular in some places observe his feast on January 19. At Pieve di Cadore it is kept on January 15.

BD JOHN PELINGOTTO is still talked of as ' The Holy Man of Urbino ', in which

[1] *The Cities of Umbria* (1905), p. 114.

city of Umbria he was born in 1240. His father, finding that it was impossible to teach him any trade, allowed him to join the Third Order. For some years Pelingotto lived as a hermit, then, to please his parents, he came home. It is recorded that he made a pilgrimage to Rome in 1300. At Urbino he devoted himself to penance and prayer, and to works of charity and mercy. He died on June 1, 1304. Many miracles are said to have been performed at his tomb. His local cultus was finally confirmed by Benedict XV in 1918, and his feast is celebrated at Urbino on June 1. In the Roman-Seraphic Calendar he is pooled with two other Confessors on June 2.

ST ZITA, for many centuries, has been regarded as the patroness and model of domestic servants. She was born in the village of Monte Sagrati, near Lucca, in 1218. At the age of twelve she entered the service of the Fatinelli family at Lucca, and worked for them for forty-eight years. At first her employers seem to have treated Zita with cruelty, but she never complained, and by degrees even the other servants began to appreciate her virtues. Although she used to feed the poor who begged at the door of the Fatinelli mansion, she managed to prevent much extravagance in the running of this big establishment. In her later years she was promoted to the position of nurse. Zita died on April 27, 1278. After her death many miracles were wrought at her intercession. Her tomb in the church of San Frediano at Lucca was discovered in 1580, which led to further devotion to ' Santa Zita '. Her cultus was formally approved by Innocent XII in 1696. Her feast is kept at Lucca on April 27. It is more than probable that St Zita belonged to the Third Order of St Francis.[1]

These are the first men and women whose lives came to perfection as Brothers and Sisters of Penance. They are the true primitives of their Order, akin to those wild flowers whose simplicity has not been adapted to glorify a garden. Their simplicity and their perfection is that of purslane and tormentil, comfrey and sorrel, woodruff and the burnet-rose. Luchesio and Buonadonna—hospitallers ; Gherardo—the old crusader ; Veridiana—a recluse ; Davanzato—a parish priest ; Umiliana—a Florentine widow ; Pietro the comb-maker, and Novellono the shoemaker ; Torello with his wolves ; Bartolo the leper ; and Vivaldo in his chestnut tree ; Rose—the child prophetess ; Giovanna—a shepherdess turned anchoress.

What all have in common is a passion for peace : each in his or her own sphere was a peacemaker. It may be said that they gave up everything in the hope of making others live in peace. But how strangely different were the methods employed by these first Franciscan saints from those of the typical pacifist of our own generation ! Yet, how much more these men and women of the thirteenth century achieved by prayer and penance. For this reason alone they have something to teach us in the twentieth century.

Now we move on to the Patron Saints of the Third Order—St Louis of France and St Elizabeth of Hungary. But those who are in Coventry Patmore's words :

> . . . singularly moved
> To love the lovely that are not beloved,

will turn back to these earlier saints, sometimes, to meditate on the flowering of the first spirit of the tertiaries.

[1] Most of the brief facts about these tertiaries, and all those which appear at the end of subsequent chapters, have been taken from *The Saints and Blessed of the Third Order of St Francis* by Louis Biersack, O.F.M. Cap. (Paterson, N.J., 1943).

CHAPTER II

ROYAL CRUSADERS (1200-1315)

INTRODUCTION

BY the time that the Third Order of St Francis came into being the word *crusade* had been taken to mean any war undertaken as the result of a vow and directed against non-Christians, e.g. Moslems, pagans, heretics, or excommunicated Catholics. Between 1095 and 1270 eight crusades were organized by the Christian rulers of Europe to regain possession of the Holy Places in Palestine, and to check the increasing power of the Moslems. Although it was laid down in the First Rule of the Continent Brothers and Sisters of Penance that they were " not to take up lethal weapons, or bear them about, against anybody ", yet an exception was made in cases where the Pope had commanded the faithful to make war to promote the peace of the Church, or to bear witness to the Faith. The Crusades fitted in with the whole idea of doing penance, because in 1095 Urban II had proclaimed that all who confessed their sins before embarking on a voyage to the Holy Land could be sure that they had gained a plenary indulgence.

At the Whitsuntide Chapter of the Friars Minor in 1219 St Francis had said to the assembled brethren: " My sons, God has ordered me to send you to the land of the Saracens to make known there His faith." Within a few weeks the Little Poor Man and twelve other friars had boarded a ship at Ancona, bound for Palestine. The idea of trying to convert the infidel, when hitherto the only object of the crusaders was to kill them, must have seemed fantastic. The quixotic mission of St Francis was a failure, but his example inspired not only the First but the Third Order to become crusaders.

We have already told the story of how Bd Gerard of Villamagna took part in the Crusades before he became a tertiary hermit in Tuscany: now we will go on to other more illustrious members of the Third Order who waged war against the infidel. First we have King Ferdinand III, King of León and Castile, who reconquered a large part of Spain from the Moslems. King Louis IX of France, by his own saintly life, set an example to all other crusaders, but few of them tried to follow in his steps. Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal, belonged to a later generation, and her crusading was carried on at home, mainly as a peacemaker. Her great-aunt, Elizabeth of Hungary, was a victim of the Crusades, in the sense that she found herself a widow on the death of her husband, the Landgrave of Thuringia, when he was about to set sail for Palestine with the forces of the Emperor Frederick II. Finally, we have Ramón Lull, whose life-long object was to convert the Moslems and not to slay them.

The crusaders, above all those who belonged to the Military Orders, had not a little in common with the sons of St Francis. Difference of nationality was no bar to intercourse among knights than it was among the Friars Minor or the Order of Penance. One and all looked upon themselves as Christian warriors, soldiers

of Christ fighting for the Christian faith. The first conception that St Francis had of his own vocation was that of the *miles Christi*—the knight of Christ—and he called himself " the herald of the great King ", and named his first disciples " companions of the Round Table "—a proof how the ideas of medieval chivalry were bound up with Franciscanism in the thirteenth century. For this reason alone, there was nothing incompatible with the spirit of the Third Order that it should have included many great warriors who bore the Cross on their shields.

ST FERDINAND III, KING OF LEÓN AND CASTILE (1200-1252)

FROM the open spaces of rural Tuscany and Umbria, we now pass suddenly into the shadows of a Spanish palace where, for the moment, we can see nothing in that sombre splendour. Ceremonial silence comes down about our ears. We are far from the merchant, pilgrim, hermit, or ordinary parish life. We move into a world which seems strangely alien to the Franciscan spirit.

Ferdinand III, King of León and Castile, is before us, but there is something unreal about him—the portrait of a king, overlaid with many coats of varnish. Out of the darkened painting a pale face appears, sad yet selfless, and the firm hands discernible against the black velvet of his dress. Otherwise there is everything to recall the meaning of the Phoenician word for his country—" Spania "—remote. Yet, as our eyes become accustomed to the background, we shall see in him the simple virtues of the Franciscan family. Like his Italian brethren, he fulfilled the duties of his state of life. He was an anointed Christian king, ruler of that nation in whose spirituality, in whose manifestations of love and enjoyment even, there is a kind of sinless cruelty like a clear black shadow. To the Christian Spaniard, sin is an evil, but pain only a means of eternal merit. He flinches neither for himself, nor for those to whom he is an instrument of pain.

San Fernando Rey is not a saint for the sentimental or the soft-hearted, but for those who have to sacrifice their own liberty to protect that of others. The burden of his kingdom lay on his own shoulders, and he refused to allow others, unconsecrated for the task, to share it. He was the heir of the Roman genius in Spain for law-giving and administration. Looking back centuries before the Roman conquest, and remembering the belief that the early peoples of Spain were akin to the Chaldeans and the Assyrians, we can see him as one of the Magi about the Franciscan crib, laying his crown and his myrrh before the Infant in the manger. Many ancient writers ascribed to the Spanish peoples physical endurance, heroic valour, fidelity (even to the point of death), love of liberty, and a lack of discipline as salient traits. Such were the men and women over whom Ferdinand was called to rule.

He was born near Salamanca about the year 1200—an illegitimate child of excommunicated parents. His father, Alfonso IX of Léon, had married Berenguera of Castile without dispensation, although they were within a third degree of consanguinity, knowing probably that the dispensation would be hard to obtain. Alfonso seems to have been a vicious man. When Ferdinando was born, his kingdom was put under an interdict. The background was indeed dark.

When he was ten years old, Fernando, very ill, was taken to the shrine of Our Lady at the Cluniac abbey of Osma, and there he was cured. The cure was remarkable enough to bring his father to the shrine to acknowledge what was regarded as a miracle.

Henceforward, Fernando was the miraculously restored heir to the throne. But not his father's heir. Innocent III obliged Berenguera to separate from Alfonso. As the union had been contracted in good faith on her part, the Pope declared her children—she had another son and two daughters after Fernando—to be the legitimate heirs. Berenguera returned to the protection of her father, Alfonso VIII of Castile, one of the finest and most fearless of Spanish kings, whose throne nearly came to her on his death. She knew the Castilian mind well when she invested her son with her own rights and bade him take the place of his grandfather.

Fernando was then aged eighteen. Berenguera, the sister of Blanche of Castile, played the same part in the life of San Fernando as Blanche did in the life of her son, St Louis. She was at his side, shrewd counsellor in turbulent times and among treacherous nobles. By her advice, Fernando married Beatrice, daughter of Philip of Swabia.[1] Like the marriage of Louis to Marguerite, which was his mother's choice, this was a happy one. Like Louis, Fernando needed happiness. He needed it more than the King of France, for his country was not a happy one.

He was King with supreme legislative, judicial and administrative authority; but his nobles were kinglets rather than feudal lords on whom he would count to help him against the Moors who still, and with a new religious zeal and military skill, countered his Roman and Christian civilization with their proud new science. His kingdom—what remained to him from the Moors and the estates of the nobles—merely the central portion of the Iberian peninsula—suffered from difficult communications, even though the Spaniards were ever making new roads. Many towns enjoyed more liberty than their charters gave them. Yet the real burden of the kingdom remained with Fernando. He must defend Christian Spain against the Moors, and the pride of Spain in the courts of Europe. He must handle the nobles; employ, if necessary, the new nobility of *caballeros*—cavalrymen who equipped themselves free-lance knights. He must be the meeting place of the aims of the Church which had anointed him and of the State whoes head he was. He must call the *Cortes*, the parliament of townsmen, nobles and clerics, to their duty. He must decide on the punishment of serious crimes.

Fernando fulfilled all this righteousness. From the first, he seems to have had a cool head and a firm hand, an intense feeling for justice, his grandfather's courage and an ability to keep the peace. His inherited characteristics satisfied the pride of the nobles, and his firm administration of just laws satisfied the townsmen and serfs. His high spirituality pleased them both, for a capacity for valuing it existed beneath their quarrelsomeness, laziness and cupidity.

The account in the old edition of Butler's *Lives of the Saints* puts the secret in a nutshell: "Rodriguez, Archbishop of Toledo and Chancellor of Castile, was, during thirty years, at the head of all his councils, and so perfectly united with Berenguera and St Ferdinand in all their deliberations as to have but one soul with them."

His behaviour when his father, Alfonso of León, claimed and invaded his dominions was entirely admirable, courageous, generous. He would not quarrel if he could help it, a rare virtue, when one considers how easy it was to draw a Toledo blade. Yet his policy of consolidation and peace at home was far from

[1] Philip was elected by the Ghibellines, while a rival Emperor, Otto of Brunswick, was set up by the Guelfs. The former was murdered in 1208, and the latter formally declared Emperor.

being negative. He was a thousand years ahead of his time—he was ahead of present-day Europe—in seeing that excessive nationalism was fraught with as much harm to civilization as invasion by the enemy of the Faith. Nevertheless he fought the Moors so vigorously and persistently that he took from them vast territories. Only Granada and Alicante remained to them at the end of his reign. In this, he was as great a crusader as his cousin, Louis of France.

King Ferdinand was as great a lawgiver at home. He would not lay a heavy tax on his subjects to raise money for the Crusades. When it was necessary to fight a rebellious noble, Berenguera sold her jewels. When the Moors were the trouble, he rejected the suggestion of a special subsidy, to which the ordinary citizens must contribute, saying: " God, it is true, will not fail to provide in other ways, but I fear more the curse of one poor old woman than the whole army of the Moors." And in that sentence, you have your San Fernando.

In his time, Castile began to have some industrial and commercial life. It was a period of cultural awakening, when Leonese and Castilian Spanish were becoming written languages. The serfs were acquiring more justice and liberty, and had even a modicum of comfort in their cottages. Fernando and his sons enforced justice with a heavy hand, but they visited their states like saviours, seeing justice—albeit sometimes rough justice—done to all who cried to their authority. Those who asked mercy found it. The King's word was inviolable. He drove out heresy with extreme vigour, as a man who keeps wolves from his children. With the help of his Chancellor, he established bishoprics, built great Gothic cathedrals (after the style of those in France), churches and monasteries, and founded hospitals for the plague-stricken and the helpless. He encouraged the Orders of St Dominic and St Francis to settle in his kingdom. The date of his joining the Third Order does not seem to be known.

When his wife Beatrice died, he remarried by the advice of Berenguera and Blanche of Castile, wedding Jeanne de Ponthieu, who was of the royal blood of France. One of his children by her married Edward I of England.

His devotion to Our Lady was enduring. He is said to have carried her picture before his army as a banner of justice; and at Córdoba in 1236, turned its famous mosque into a cathedral dedicated to the Mother of God. He died, kissing the wounds of the Crucifix, on Thursday, May 30, 1252, having received the Last Sacraments on his knees, and having said this most royal prayer:

> Lord, You gave me a kingdom which You did not owe me, and to that You have added more glory and power than I have ever merited. Such has been Your holy will. I give thanks to You, and I give back to You, with this kingdom to which I have added as much as I could, my soul, which I pray You to receive into Your Hands.

Fernando asked pardon of all before he died. He was buried in the Cathedral of Sevile, vested in his tertiary habit, before the altar of Our Lady. Miracles were worked at his tomb—fifty were cited when his Cause was introduced—and his body, exhumed in 1668, " exhaled a nameless scent which rejoiced and fortified the heart ", in spite of humid Andalusian weather, the marble coffin and the dropsy of which he died. Pope Clement X canonized this great king in 1671. His feast is kept on May 30 by the Friars Minor and the Capuchins, and on July 10 by the Conventuals. He is the principal patron of Sevile, also of the *Ingenieros* of the Spanish army. His feast is observed as a double of the second class throughout Spain.

ST ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY (1207-1231)

HER picture is as brightly coloured as San Fernando's was sombre. Her life is set to the songs of minstrels and minnesingers. The birth of this princess at Bratislava in Slovakia in the year 1207 was announced at the far-away court of the Landgrave of Thuringia in Germany. Klingsor, the wise man who was called a magician, foretold on the night of her birth that here was a saint who would console all Christendom.

The Landgrave made enquiries and discovered that Andrew II, King of Hungary, had indeed a daughter born on the night of Klingsor's prophecy; whereupon he asked that she might be betrothed from her cradle to his eldest son, Hermann. So, when she was four years old and Hermann seven, Elizabeth, wearing a golden dress and carried in a silver cradle, was escorted through Moravia and Bohemia to Thuringia. Thirteen Hungarian maidens of noble birth, and eleven others from Thuringia, including Hermann's own sister, Agnes, made up the court of this infant. One of them, Guta, shared her life until five years before the end, and is the careful chronicler to whom we owe most of what is known of Elizabeth's private life.

Guta records that Elizabeth was so gay and so innocent that the other children declared that the infant Jesus came and played with her, but that she strictly forbade them to say such things.

The story is all the fairy tales in one. The Court, at that period famous for its magnificence, dwelt in the great castle of the Wartburg, high above the town of Eisenach on the borders of the Thuringian forest; one of the most famous medieval castles in Germany. Strange coincidence that it should have housed Martin Luther two centuries later, and that within these same walls he should have worked on his translation of the Bible! But at the time of which we are writing it was occupied by the Landgrave Hermann I, the patron of poets and minnesingers with whom he loved to surround himself, and who sang his praises in the *Sänger-Saal* of the twelfth-century Romanesque *Schloss*. His eldest son died in 1216 when Elizabeth was nine years old, and she was then betrothed to Ludwig, the second son. The Landgrave died the following year, excommunicated and unreconciled with the Church. He was succeeded by Ludwig. Some of the more worldly-minded and frivolous of his courtiers tried to induce him to send Elizabeth back to her native country. The charges brought against her were that she loved the poor too well and gave them everything she could, and loved to talk to them and make them smile, and that she loved the young Landgrave too well. Both traits, so they maintained, were undignified, and Elizabeth would never make a proper Landgravine. Ludwig would have none of their advice, and finding that his Cinderella had been made to doubt his love for her, sent her a little double-faced mirror as a token. Opening it to find the face Ludwig loved and to wonder whether he meant her to take more care of her beauty, Elizabeth found within a crucifix.

When she was old enough they were married. Picture the new Landgravine, only fourteen, with her clear brown complexion and her black hair, in her gay dresses with the bright sleeves that she loved, riding leagues through the Thüringer-wald—that dark forest lying to the south of Eisenach—or through the narrow winding gorge of the Schwarzatal, rather than be separated from her husband when

he had business in the outlying parts of his dominions. Joy seemed to her to be the flower of God's goodness, and she would surmount all obstacles in order to gather it and press it to her heart. She would rise in the night to pray. As she knelt she clasped the hand of her sleeping husband. She fasted often, according to the dictates of her Franciscan confessor, Brother Rodeger. But when it was not a fast day, she would clap her hands, crying: "Today everything goes well! We can both eat and drink!" She loved to sing and dance, but sometimes she would stop, saying breathlessly as the music left her behind: "One dance is enough—the rest for God!"

Elizabeth had been married four years when the first Franciscans came to Thuringia, and with her aid established a friary in Eisenach. There is no need to describe the way in which they were welcomed. To what heart could the Franciscan spirit of joy and poverty and spiritual simplicity wing its way more directly than to hers? Nothing would serve but that she must join the Third Order; and her happiness brimmed over when Cardinal Ugolino, protector of the Order, prevailed upon St Francis to send her a beggar's cloak which he happened to be wearing. Elizabeth kept it to put on whenever she had a special petition to make to heaven.

She carried her own babies, soon after their birth, to the altar of a church where she would dedicate them to God, kneeling alone in the dress of a peasant. She would also go to help mothers in childbirth. When she obtained for some poor man the restoration of his cattle that had been taken from him unjustly, she mused: "His cattle indeed are restored, but who shall restore to him his tears?"

Like all Franciscans of true lineage, Elizabeth loved the Five Wounds, Our Lady, and the lepers. Like any human being, she was not content to love, but sought to be loved in return. Ludwig loved her to her heart's content. God broke open her heart so that it might know more love than it could otherwise have held. Ludwig went off to Italy to attend the Diet at Cremona on behalf of the Emperor, Frederick II. Elizabeth, left at home, saw flood, pestilence and famine devastate Thuringia. Homeless children in the streets ran to her crying: "Mother! Mother!" She sold her jewels and court dresses. She established a hospice in Eisenach and fed nine hundred people there daily. She exhausted the revenues of the Landgrave. Still the famine continued. The State granaries contained corn "to the value of several cities and castle"—so a chronicler records. She gave it all to the hungry. And when that was not enough, she emptied the Treasury of its sixty-four thousand gold pieces.

When the Landgrave came riding home from Italy, tale bearers went out to meet him and poured forth an account of all his wife had done during his absence. His response was: "All I want to know, gentlemen, is: is the Landgravine well?"

Before he had been back very long, Elizabeth, sitting close to Ludwig, and amusing herself by turning out his pockets, perhaps to thieve some silver for the poor, found a strange object there. It was a cross—one of those given to those who had promised to go on the Crusades.[1] Elizabeth turned it over in her fingers, and then looked into his face. His eyes met hers with such pleading of love and pride and sorrow that no words were needed to admit what hitherto he had not dared to tell her. She fainted with grief.

[1] It was in 1222 that the Emperor Frederick and Pope Honorius decided on a new Crusade. The date (1225) was settled the following year, but its departure was delayed until 1227.

The parting was an agony. There were no regular mail services in those far off times, and a man might be away for years, exposed to the cruelty of the Moslems, to dangers on land and sea, and to the diseases which were prevalent among the fighting men. He could not communicate with his family with any certainty that a letter would ever reach them. Elizabeth rode beside her husband for the first two days of the journey. Then one of the Landgrave's knights came up to them and said: "The time has come for our noble Landgravine to leave us!" And obediently she clung to Ludwig in that last farewell.

Ludwig had a signet ring—a sapphire engraved with an image of the Lamb of God with His banner. He told Elizabeth she might believe a messenger who brought her this ring with news of him. On her return to Eisenach she laid aside her gay dresses and put on the habit of a widow. It was the midsummer of 1227—the year after the death of St Francis.

The Landgrave, surrounded by the cream of the knighthood of his court and the barons of his countryside, rode into Italy to join the Emperor's army of sixty thousand men, gathered together at Brindisi. Here the crusading forces remained in idleness until the following year. The Pope then excommunicated the Emperor, who nevertheless decided to proceed with the Crusade. But Ludwig got no further than Otranto, where, stricken with fever, he realized that death was not far off. He called one of his knights, gave him the signet-ring to be sent to Elizabeth, and pointing towards the waters of the Adriatic, said: "See, the doves; I must fly away with them!" His chaplain thought him delirious, but then he too saw white doves, flying—not northwards to Thuringia, but east to the Holy Places. When he looked down, Ludwig was dead.

The news came to Thuringia just after the birth of Elizabeth's third child—a daughter. She could not be told for some time. When at last the ring was put in her hand, she understood and cried aloud: "O Lord my God, now indeed is the world with all its joys dead to me!" And like a wild animal, dazed with sorrow, she ran through the Wartburg, moaning and crying: "He is dead! He is dead!" She was only twenty years of age.

You remember the crucifix on the mirror? And the image of the Lamb of God on the ring?

The death of Ludwig was the moment for which the enemies of Elizabeth had waited. His brother, Heinrich, became regent for her son, then only five years old, and took possession of the Wartburg. Elizabeth retired to live at Marburg in Hesse-Nassau, where the castle was hers by dower right.[1] She was accused of having wasted the revenues of the Landgrave during the famine. Her enemies, even now, would not leave her in peace. One winter night she was ordered to leave the castle that stands high on a rock above the town. She obeyed at once, and carried her little baby in her arms. The other children followed her. Not a door opened to receive the Landgravine for fear of incurring the wrath of the new Regent Heinrich. Elizabeth was forced to take shelter in a tavern, where she spent the night in the stable. But before retiring to rest she made her way in the darkness to the Franciscan church where she bade the friars chant a *Te Deum* in thanksgiving for all she had been made to suffer.

Accompanied by her faithful companions, Guta and Ysentrude, she remained in the cold church while the community recited the midnight office, and then only

[1] Some historians state that the young widow was driven from the Wartburg by her brother-in-law—not from the castle at Marburg.

did she return to the tavern. She had no friend but her stern confessor, Master Conrad of Marburg, who had become her director in place of Brother Rodeger. He belonged to no Order, and was a hard, rigorous priest. She had lost all her riches, and had no dress but the habit of the Third Order. Her children were taken away and cared for by relatives. Elizabeth herself, having now no home to call her own, sought refuge with her aunt Matilda, who was Abbess of the Benedictine convent at Kitzingen in Bavaria. But she did not remain there for long. Orders came that she must move on to Bamberg where her uncle Eckbert was bishop. This prelate tried hard to arrange another marriage for his young niece, although she had taken a vow of continence during the lifetime of her late husband. The bishop treated her as befitted her rank and gave her a neighbouring castle to live in. He even offered to send her home to Hungary. Meanwhile Ludwig's body had been brought back from southern Italy by his faithful knights. The coffin was opened, and once more Elizabeth was able to gaze at the beloved face of her husband. So great was her grief that she nearly died from weeping. She assisted at the funeral which took place in the family vault of the Landgraves in the abbey of Reinhardsbrunn in Thuringia.

Now, at last, Elizabeth was able to live in peace. With the aid of her confessor she managed to obtain her lawful dowry, half of which she gave away to the poor without delay. Then she returned to Eisenach, where on Good Friday, 1228, in the Franciscan church, she definitely renounced the world, henceforth living as a true child of the Little Poor Man of Assisi—in complete poverty, devoting herself to works of mercy and charity. Her two companions, Guta and Ysentrude, remained with her. That same year she founded a hospital at Marburg, and when the buildings were completed, gave herself to the care of the inmates, above all to those afflicted with the most loathsome diseases.[1] Her stern confessor, Master Conrad, did not spare her. He added to her penances and mortifications, and finally ordered her to dismiss the faithful Guta and Ysentrude. She was now quite alone, with no companion but God. Fearing that people might canonize Elizabeth before she was dead, Conrad did all he could to humiliate her, and eventually replaced her former handmaids with two sour old women.

But God gave her miracles to give away. She healed the dumb, the paralysed, the possessed. When had she parted with the mirror and with the sapphire ring? On her death-bed she even gave away the old cloak of St Francis.

Elizabeth died to music. The old women heard a heavenly singing. It was the night of November 19, 1231. She was only twenty-four. She was buried in the chapel of the hospital at Marburg, where so many miracles took place that four years later Pope Gregory IX, having been driven from Rome, canonized her at Perugia, in the presence of her brother-in-law, Conrad, who had now become

[1] It was the example of St Elizabeth of Thuringia that served as an inspiration for the foundation of communities of the Third Order devoted to works of charity in countries north of the Alps. The Franciscan nursing sisterhoods which originated in the thirteenth century were styled Sisters of St Elizabeth in Austria and Germany, Soeurs de la Misericorde in France, and often Grey Sisters, or Hospitaler Sisters in Belgium, France and Germany. All observed the rule of the Third Order, even if they did not call themselves Franciscans. After 1289 the members of these independent communities followed the rule of the Third Order as revised by Pope Nicholas IV, and recited the full Divine Office. Several of the medieval tertiary communities are still in existence and carrying on their works of charity. (Cf. Marion Habig, O.F.M., 'Franciscan Charity Sisters' in *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, Vol. XX (October 1941), 299-305.)

Landgrave of Thuringia. In 1236 her body was translated to the newly-erected St Elizabeth-Kirche—the earliest pure Gothic church in Germany. Her shrine —now empty—was plundered by the French during the Napoleonic wars. But it seems that the relics had disappeared as far back as 1539 when they were removed by Philip of Hesse, a Lutheran Landgrave. Nevertheless in 1578 some of the relics were discovered at the Poor Clare convent in Vienna, founded by Queen Elizabeth of France. Her feast is kept by the Universal Church on November 19. She is the special patroness of the Sisters of the Third Order of Penance and of the Teutonic Knights.

It may be wondered why the story of St Elizabeth of Hungary has been told so briefly. It has been done in this way, because it is a brief story, and must be told quickly as it was lived, to give any right impression of her fleeting feet on their way to perfection. She remains the most brilliant of the saints of the Third Order, and needs neither comment nor borrowed light from any background a writer can put behind her personality to show up its beauty. Hence our tribute of brevity.

ST LOUIS IX, KING OF FRANCE (1214-1270)

WHEN the arduous life of a man has been written by one of his comrades, no other biography is needed save that which can be read between the lines by the attentive student. No hagiographer can do much harm to Louis of France because Jean de Joinville, who knew him as a very dear friend and master, has prevented this by first-hand memoirs that are almost unique in hagiography. Would that other saints who have suffered more at the hands of their biographers than at those of the devil had been lucky enough to have their lives written within a few years of their deaths, and with such a passion for truthful detail.[1] Jean de Joinville " was a man whose generous spirit was easily moved to admiration ; particularly was he moved when he saw a man of high rank sacrificing all that was dear and devoting even his life to what was to him the greatest of all causes : the armed fight against the enemies of the faith and the protection or rescue of the ' humble folk of Our Lord ', the poor nameless pilgrims who aided Christendom only by their suffering. When his King was canonized, there was but one thing that clouded John's joy —that Louis had not been enrolled among the martyrs." [2] In the limited space available here it is impossible to deal with every aspect of the career of St Louis. It is better therefore to try to visualize him first and foremost as a Franciscan tertiary.

He was tall, blue-eyed, with corn-coloured hair. He was strong-minded, strong-willed, determined on justice for every man. His word was utterly to be trusted, his courage of word and deed remarkable, even among knights. What would be called colloquially his physical make-up was accountable for his natural gifts of leadership. For godparents he had a King of France, a Princess of Flanders, a King of Castile and an English princess : for parents, Louis VIII of France and Blanche of Castile. It rather looked as if he had taken after his Flemish grand-

[1] *The Life of St Louis* by John of Joinville, translated by René Hague from the French text edited by Natalis de Wailly (London, 1955). The first of other English translations was that of Thomas Jones (1807), reprinted in *Chronicles of the Crusade* (1848). Sir Francis Marzials' *Memoirs of the Crusades* (Everyman's Library, 1911) also contains his translation of Villehardouin's memoirs. See also translation by Dr Joan Evans (1939). Throughout this chapter the Hague version has been quoted.

[2] *Ibid.*, Introduction, p. 1.

mother, but it was his Spanish mother who had moulded his character, and the first thing to consider in studying St Louis is this Spanish strain : this inheritance from that grandfather, Alfonso VIII of Castile, the great conqueror of the Moors. Louis might so easily have been vain, proud, ruthless, jealous, malicious and fanatical ; for he was heir to those tendencies in one or other strain as well as to the gifts of leadership and to the Catholic tradition.

Louis was born on the feast of St Mark, April 25, 1214.[1] He was only eleven years old when his father died, and his mother became Regent. Blanche hastened to the coronation of her son to forestall the disaffection of the restless feudal lords. So the little boy went to Rheims at the same age as Christ went up to the Temple at Jerusalem. The new cathedral, erected on the site of the ninth-century basilica, which had been destroyed by fire, had been begun in 1211 and was not yet completed. Louis took his coronation on that Advent Sunday of 1226 with the energy of seriousness of which only a boy is capable. He bound himself by oath to behave as God's anointed, as the father of his people and feudal lord of the King of Peace. Some of the greatest of his barons refused to be present at this function, planning to maintain their independence in Brittany, Picardy and Champagne. They hated and feared his Spanish mother, whom they regarded as a foreigner. The whole of the young King's minority was a period of skirmishes and negotiations with these rebellious nobles. Blanche showed herself Regent in more than name. She made a truce with Henry III of England, who was an ally of the Count of Brittany, and the supremacy of the West remained in the hands of France and of the young King.

Meanwhile, Louis grew in the grace of God, and in the gaiety so natural to his nation ; the ring-leader of his three brothers—wise Alfonso, troublesome Charles, and the brilliant scapegrace, Robert. His one sister, Isabel, was a creature after his own heart. Seeing her making a hood one day, he begged to have it when it was done. " No ", she replied, " because it is the first I have ever made, and so it must be for God." [2] So Louis had to watch her give the hood to a beggar. Isabel withdrew later on from the pages of his life, because escaping marriage that would have brought her to a throne and a crown, she founded in 1252 the famous Poor Clare Convent at Longchamp, near Paris, and dedicated it to ' The Humility of Our Lady '.[3]

Blanche took care to choose a wife for her son—Marguerite, daughter of the Count of Provence, who was descended from the royal house of Aragon. Her sister, Eleanor, was married to Henry III of England. The wedding took place in May 1234 in the cathedral at Sens. Louis was then nineteen, and Marguerite a mere child of twelve. Yet it proved to be a true love-match, despite his wife's arrogant and restless nature. She bore him eleven children.

It is to be feared that although Blanche had chosen Marguerite for her son, she was intensely jealous of this child daughter-in-law. For as de Joinville puts it, Blanche treated her " with great harshness ; so much so that, as far as she could, she prevented her son from being in his wife's company, except at night when he slept with her. The palace in which the King and Queen liked best to live was Pontoise, because the King's room was over the Queen's on the next floor. They had a plan by which they used to talk together on a winding staircase which led

[1] The date has been disputed between 1214 and 1215. Most recent historians accept the former.

[2] Marius Sepet, *St Louis* (Eng. trans. London, 1799), p. 40.

[3] She was beatified by Leo X in 1520.

from one room to the other, and they arranged that when the ushers saw Queen Blanche going to her son's room they knocked on the doors with their rods; the King then used to run up to his room so that his mother might find him there; and when the ushers at Queen Marguerite's door saw Queen Blanche coming they did the same so that she might be found in her own room.

" Once the King was with the Queen, his wife, who was in great danger of death in childbed. Queen Blanche came, and taking her son by the hand, said to him, ' Come away, you can do no good here.' When Queen Marguerite saw her taking the King away she cried out, ' Alas ! You will not allow me, dead or alive, to see my lord.' Then she fainted and it was thought she was dead. The King, who thought she was dying, came back, and with great difficulty she was revived." [1]

Blanche's character is one of the problems of medieval history. The most charitable explanation of her behaviour is that she soon came to see Marguerite as a growing distraction to Louis from his duties of state, child as she was, appealing to the young King's gaiety-loving nature as a playmate, though she had come to him by an alliance which was meant to be for the good of his kingdom rather then the delight of his heart. Blanche lived for her son, and was to live for him and his kingdom until the day of her death in 1252, and this jealousy was the long Spanish shadow thrown by that maternal love.

She ceased to be Regent in 1236 when Louis came of age, but she continued to watch over the political affairs of the kingdom, feeling, no doubt, that her son was still too young to hold his own against the malcontent barons and their allies. It was not until 1242 that peace was restored to France by the victorious battle of Taillebourg.

There was another side to Blanche's character which must be mentioned—her fervent piety. In the words of de Joinville it was she " who taught him to believe in God and to love Him, and chose for him the company only of men of religion. Child though he was, she made him hear all the hours of the Office and listen to sermons on feast days. He used to recall that his mother had sometimes told him that she would rather he died than that he committed a mortal sin." [2] Thus it was due to the influence of his mother that Louis developed those habits of piety which he kept up for the whole of his life.

It is doubtful if any king or queen has ever built or endowed as many religious houses as did St Louis IX of France. As de Joinville remarks : " he loved all who devoted themselves to the service of God and wore the religious habit, and none such came to him and failed to find what he needed for his support." [3] He erected a friary for the Carmelites at Charenton, and established a community of Austin Friars in Paris. Other orders of friars benefited by the royal generosity, including the Brothers of the Sack and the Brothers of the Holy Cross. " Thus the good King surrounded the city of Paris with men of religion ", de Joinville remarks. Louis had begun to build churches and monasteries as soon as he came of age. The chief of these royal foundations was the Cistercian Abbey of Royaumont. He installed Dominican nuns at Rouen, and later on established a Poor Clare convent at Longchamp. The Charterhouse of Vauvert, outside Paris, was built and endowed by the King. His mother founded the Abbey of Le Lys, near Melun-sur-Seine, but it was Louis who provided the endowments. Several Béguinages were among his other foundations. As if all this was not enough, the King built

[1] Hague, *op. cit.* pp. 179-80. [2] *Ibid.* p. 41. [3] *Ibid.* p. 210.

a house outside Paris, known as the House of the Daughters of God. It was a home for reformed prostitutes, and the royal founder took care that the establishment was well endowed. Hospitals at Paris, Pontoise, Compiègne and Vernon were built by the King, and communities of nursing sisters installed in them. It is difficult to say just how many Dominican and Franciscan friaries he did not found. He favoured both Orders, and in any town in his kingdom in which he had not been before, he visited the Friars Preachers and the Grey Friars before going anywhere else, and asked their prayers.

We are told that the courtiers often grumbled at the giving of such generous alms, and so much spent on monks, nuns and friars. The King would answer: " I would rather my extravagance should be in almsgiving for the love of God than in the pomp and vain glory of this world." [1]

De Joinville writes that " in addition to all this, the King daily gave countless generous alms, to poor religious, to poor hospitals, to poor sick people, to other poor convents, to poor gentlemen and gentlewomen and girls, to fallen women, to poor widows and women in childbed, and to poor minstrels who from old age or sickness were unable to work or follow their trade. So we may well say that he was happier than Titus, the Emperor of Rome, of whom the old books tell us that he was greatly cast down and grieved on any day when he had done no act of charity." [2]

Louis was only two years old when the Friars Preachers were founded in the south of France. By 1219 the sons of St Dominic had a large and flourishing community at Paris. The first group of Friars Minor arrived in Paris that same year. They were suspected of being Albigensians, and treated badly by most of the clergy, until one day orders came from Pope Honorius III that they were orthodox Christians and worthy of every respect. St Francis had chosen as their leader the former troubadour, Fra Pacifico, who had been crowned as poet laureate in Rome, and held the title of *Rex Versuum*. This friar returned to Italy about 1224, but he was sent back to Paris, and there is a tradition that he was appointed tutor to the boy-King Louis. If so, then the future tertiary absorbed the Franciscan spirit direct from one of the closest followers of the Little Poor Man. It is not recorded when Louis joined the Third Order. He obtained permission from the Pope to keep several Dominican and Franciscan friars at his court. We are told that, when his eldest son came of age, Louis even thought of giving up the throne and ending his days as a Friar Minor. But it was made clear to him that this was not his vocation, so he had to be content with observing the Rule of the Third Order, which cannot have been easy amidst all the pomp and ceremony of court life.

De Joinville writes that the King " loved God with his whole heart and it was on Him that he modelled his actions. This would be seen in that, as God died for the love of His people, so did the King more than once put his own body in danger of death for the love he bore for his people; and this although, had he wished it, he might well have been excused." [3] From the same authority we learn that in eating Louis " was so temperate that never once in my life did I hear him order any dish for his table, as many rich men do. He was content to eat what his cook prepared for him and what was set before him. In his speech he was restrained. Never in my life did I hear him speak ill of any man, nor name the devil

[1] Hague, *op. cit.* p. 210.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 27.

—whose name is much heard in the Kingdom now, a thing which I think can hardly be pleasing to God." [1] We are told that the King always mixed water with his wine, and often warned his biographer what " a mighty ugly thing it was for a good man to get drunk ".

These external practices of piety were based on a firm hold of the Christian religion, as de Joinville is never tired of stressing. The King used to remind his loyal friend that belief in the articles of faith should be so firm that " neither fear of death nor for any hurt that might come to our persons should we be willing to transgress them in any way either by word or by deed ". But he felt it was imprudent for a layman to argue with heretics or unbelievers, and said once : " A layman, as soon as he hears the Christian faith maligned, should defend it only by the sword, with a good thrust in the belly, as far as the sword will go." [2] Louis carried out this advice when dealing with heretics. In 1249 he ordered his barons to treat them " according to the dictates of duty ", and this certainly included death at the stake for those who refused to recant their errors of belief. By that date Gregory IX had appointed Dominicans and Franciscans as inquisitors. They were forbidden to condemn anybody to perpetual imprisonment or death at the stake without episcopal consent.

The story of the visit of Louis to the Friary of Monteripido, outside Perugia, is best told in the actual words of *The Little Flowers of St Francis* (Chapter XXXIV). It reveals how intense was his grasp of the Franciscan spirit. He had heard of the great holiness of the aged Brother Giles, who had been one of the first disciples of St Francis, and resolved to meet him. " Coming to the door of the House of the brothers, like a poor pilgrim and unknown, with a few companions, the King asked with great earnestness for Brother Giles, without telling the porter who it was that asked. So the porter went to Brother Giles and told him that at the door was a pilgrim that asked for him : and being inspired of God, it was revealed to him that it was the King of France : so straightway and with great fervour he left his cell and ran to the door ; and without further questioning, albeit they ne'er before had seen each other, kneeling down with great devotion they embraced and kissed each other, with such signs of tender love as though for long time they had been close familiar friends : but for all that, they spoke not, nor the one nor the other, but continued in this embrace, with these signs of love and tenderness, in silence. And when as they had a long time continued together in the manner set forth above without have spoken together, they parted the one from the other, and St Louis went his way on his journey, and Brother Giles returned unto his cell." [3] After the King had left Monteripido, word went round the community about the strange way in which he had been received. Brother Giles was reproved by his brethren, but he replied gently : " Dear brothers, marvel not thereat, for neither I to him nor he to me could speak a word ; sith so soon as we embraced each other, the light of heavenly wisdom revealed and showed to me his heart, and mine to him, and thus through divine working, each looking on the other's heart, we knew what I would say to him and he to me, far better than if we had spoken with our mouths, and with more consolation than if we had sought to show forth in words the feelings of our hearts. Through the weakness of human speech, that cannot express clearly the secret mysteries of God, it would have left us all disconsolate

[1] Hague, *op. cit.* p. 27. [2] *Ibid.* p. 36.

[3] *The Little Flowers of St Francis*, translated by T. W. Arnold (1st edn., London, 1898), pp. 105-7.

rather than consoled; wherefore know ye that the king departed from me with marvellous content and consolation in his soul." [1]

Yet Louis found time for much more than works of mercy and charity, and fulfilling the purely spiritual obligations binding on every Franciscan tertiary. He was essentially a peace-maker, eager for any peace that contained the hope of endurance. Justice was his causeway from the beginning. He could be very obstinate and even angry at times. Fundamental as was his devotion to the Church, when he had to judge any dissension between bishops, priests and citizens, he favoured neither the one nor the other; only when the reigning Pope begged him to do so, did he use his influence to sue for European peace. There were several occasions when his policy was almost 'anti-clerical', but when the King felt there was good reason to levy heavy taxes on bishops, priests and monks, he obtained permission from successive popes to take this line.

Let the Sieur de Joinville paint a vignette of him at this period. "Once in the summer, I saw him as he went in the gardens in Paris to give judgment for his people. He wore a tunic of natural wool, a sleeveless surcoat of cotton, and a black satin cloak round his shoulders; he wore no cap, but his hair was well combed, and on his head he wore a hat of white peacock's feathers. He had carpets spread so that we could sit about him, and all who had business with him would stand around." [2] This is an informal picture, vivid and happy. But de Joinville records that he kept Court with pomp and splendour, saying: "It was the best ordered court that I ever saw." He describes an occasion when the King of Navarre dined at Saumur in Anjou, where there was a great gathering of princes, barons, nobles, knights, also twenty bishops and archbishops—"such a concourse at table that I could not possibly count them." He tells us that "the King wore a tunic of dark blue satin, a surcoat and cloak of scarlet velvet lined with ermine, and a cotton cap, which did not suit him at all well, for he was then a young man".[3] In fact, with a mixture of impatience with Spanish formality and a pleasant royal insolence of his own, Louis wore his scarlet velvet, blue satin and ermine, but no better crown than a favourite cap. Somehow the eye of the narrator always seems to go affectionately to that head with the ruddy Hainault hair, whether to take pleasure in seeing it with white peacocks' feathers glint against it, or to complain of the cotton cap. It was in the cotton cap mood that Louis once changed the subject, when a friar chose too grave and religious a matter to discuss at dinner. It was said of him that he spent at his devotions the time usually spent by kings at their diversions; but he would not have dogma for dinner.

But there were other things besides dogma to talk about at dinner. In 1240 the Albigensian heretics again became active in Languedoc, where Queen Blanche, who had assumed control of affairs, was encouraging the inquisitors to stamp out this danger to faith, morals and the political peace of the kingdom. Four years later the King, who had returned to Paris, was attacked by "a grievous sickness" —probably dysentery. In the words of de Joinville: "he was brought so low . . . that one of the ladies who were nursing him said he was dead and wished to cover his face with the sheet. Another lady, who was on the other side of the bed, would not allow her, and said that his soul was still in his body. While the King was listening to their argument, Our Lord worked in him and soon sent him back his health. He had lost the power of speech, but as soon as he was again fit

[1] Brother Giles died in 1252, so St Louis must have visited him before he set out on the Crusade in 1248. [2] Hague, *op. cit.* p. 38. [3] *Ibid.* p. 48.

to speak, he asked for the Cross to be given to him, which was done. When the Queen, his mother, heard that he could speak again she was overjoyed." [1] But her joy did not last long. Louis revealed to her that when he kissed the Cross he had made a vow to go on the Crusade which Pope Gregory IX was urgently recommending to the rulers of Europe. As de Joinville puts it, when the Queen heard this, " she was as miserable as if she had seen him dead ".

Seven years were spent in preparing for this Crusade. France showed little enthusiasm to subscribe to the King's vow. Few people believed that the Mongols, who had carried fire and sword into Poland, South Russia and Hungary could ever penetrate further west. They were not really interested in the fate of the Holy Places in Palestine, defiled by a fierce horde of Turcomans, called in by the Sultan of Egypt. It was not until the spring of 1248 that an army had been raised and everything else made ready. Having left Blanche as Regent, and his infant son among nobles who had sworn fealty to him; having received the oriflamme or pennon of St Denis from the Papal Legate in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame, Louis set out from Paris. The Queen accompanied him on the Crusade—a brave thing for a woman to do.

Fra Salimbene has left us some vivid memories of visits paid by the King to several Franciscan friaries which lay on his road to the Mediterranean coast. The royal party arrived at Sens in time for the feast of Pentecost. The Franciscans went out to meet the King, whom the ever observant Salimbene describes as " spare and slender, somewhat lean, and of a proper height, having the face of an angel, and a mien full of grace ". To the astonishment of the crowds the King " came to our church, not in regal pomp, but in a pilgrim's habit, with the staff and scrip of his pilgrimage hanging at his neck which was an excellent adornment for the shoulders of a king. And he came not on horseback, but on foot." We are told that when he entered the church " and had made a most devout genuflexion, he prayed before the altar ". Then the King retired to the Chapter House with the community, where, having spoken of private matters, he knelt down again and " besought the prayers and suffrages of the Brethren ". Salimbene adds that some of the French friars who stood by his side " wept so sore for devotion and pity, that they could scarce be comforted ".

On Whit Sunday the King dined with the community in their refectory. It is interesting to note that strict abstinence from flesh-meat was observed, even if the dishes were rich and abundant.[2]

Fra Salimbene, always on the lookout for gossip to pass on to his Poor Clare sister, managed to find an excuse to follow the royal party, and was among the crowd when the King halted at Ugeliac in Burgundy. He tells us that the King arose before sunrise and made his way to the Franciscan church, accompanied only by three of his friends and a few grooms to hold their horses. " When they had knelt and made obeissance to the altar, his brethren looked round for seats and benches. But the King sat on the ground in the dust, as I saw with my own eyes,

[1] Hague, *op. cit.* p. 51.

[2] Salimbene, with his amazing memory for trivial detail, records that " the fare that day was, first cherries, then most excellent white bread and choice wine, worthy of the King's royal state. . . . After that we had fresh beans boiled in milk, fishes and crabs, eel-pasties, rice cooked with milk of almonds and cinnamon powder, eels baked with most excellent sauce, tarts and junkets, and all the fruits of the season in abundance and comely array. And all these were laid on the table in courtly fashion, and busily ministered to us." (G. G. Coulton, *From St Francis to Dante* (London, 1907), pp. 140-2.)

for that church was unpaved. And he called us to him, saying, ' Come unto me, by most sweet Brethren, and hear my words ; and we sat round him in a ring on the ground, and his blood-brethren did likewise. And he commended himself to us, beseeching our suffrages ; and after we had made answer, he departed from the church to go on his way." [1]

Both these first-hand stories convey the same impression of the royal tertiary in his relations with the Friars Minor—his intense humility in their presence ; treating them as his superiors, kneeling before them, or making them sit around him.[2]

It is probable that the King and Queen and their courtiers went on to Lyons, where most of the stores and equipment for the Crusade were loaded into boats. As they sailed down the Rhone the great war horses were led beside the boats. It was now realized that the only hope of winning and holding Palestine was by transporting large armies across the Eastern Mediterranean, and this meant horses as well as soldiers. The King embarked at Aigues-Mortes, but for some reason or other de Joinville boarded his ship at " the Rock of Marseilles " in August, 1248. No doubt very much the same things happened while the King was about to sail as what are described so vividly by his biographer who writes : " When the horses had been embarked, our Master Mariner called to his sailors, who were in the prow of the ship, ' Is all fast ? ' ' Aye, aye, sir ', they answered ; ' the clerks and priests may come forward.' As soon as they had done so, he called out to them, ' In the name of God, strike up a song ! ' They all sung in unison *Veni, Creator Spiritus ;* the master called to the sailors, ' In the name of God, make sail '. And so they set the sails. Soon the wind filled the sails and had taken us out of sight of land, so that we could see nothing but sky and water ; and every day the wind took us farther from the homes in which we were born." [3]

It is impossible for us to understand what a terrifying experience that voyage from France to Palestine must have been for most of the crusaders. The ships were small, and lacked almost everything in the way of comfort. However, the King took good care that the spiritual welfare of their crews and passengers was not neglected. Never perhaps in history has a vast army crossed the sea so well supplied with chaplains. There appears to have been at least one priest on every little ship. Many of them were Dominican or Franciscan friars. In the two-masted vessel in which were the King and his wife, the Blessed Sacrament was reserved in a cabin fitted up as a chapel, and hung with cloth of gold. Those tubby little ships wallowed through the sea ; one suspects that more often than not, the rolling and pitching made it necessary for a ' Dry Mass ' to be celebrated, that is a Mass without the Canon. De Joinville tells us that before the fleet reached Cyprus, " about the time of Vespers ", the sailors feared they would be attacked by pirates. One of the priests on board advised that three processions should be made, and de Joinville writes : " We made the first procession round the two masts of the ship. For my part, I had myself carried round, as I was very sick."

[1] G. G. Coulton, *From St Francis to Dante* (London, 1907), p. 143.

[2] Strictly speaking the King was under no obligation to regard the Friars Minor as his spiritual superiors. It was only in 1247 that Innocent IV placed the Third Order in Italy and Sicily under their immediate jurisdiction, and it was not until some time after the death of St Louis that the Third Order everywhere was entrusted to the spiritual care of the First Order of St Francis. The First Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance implies that they were subject to the bishop of the diocese in which they lived. The choice of a Visitor for each fraternity was left to the local Ordinary (see p. xvi).

[3] Hague, *op. cit.*

During the course of the voyage the King went about on deck among the sailors, urging them to attend Mass and make their Confessions. " I will gladly give my hand to pulling a rope or anything else ", he told the Master Mariner. He visited the sick, and made sure that they received the Last Sacraments if they were in danger of death.[1]

The rest of the story of this Crusade, which lasted six years, can be read in de Joinville's *Life of St Louis*, and in other contemporary chronicles. Suffice to say that it was not until June 1249 that the fleet arrived off Damietta in Egypt, and not until the following May that it reached Acre in Palestine. Many fierce battles were fought on the delta of the Nile, and the King was in the thick of every fight. The Saracens made a legend of his courage and honoured him while they lied to him at the same time. As for his own army, when the first enthusiasm had cooled down, the men slackened their discipline. They used their own judgment, or rather the lack of it, in the carrying out of orders, and the result was short of absolute defeat only because of Louis' genius and steadfastness. Both officers and men had fallen an easy prey to the cupidity attendant on preliminary victories. Life in the camps was such that even the Saracens despised these invaders who called themselves Christians.

Not even dismay at this knowledge would reach high enough to destroy Louis' courage. He prayed, negotiated, fortified from behind ramparts ; he buried the stinking corpses of his men even in the blazing heat of noon when necessary, because they had been the temples of the Holy Ghost by baptism, however defiled by sin. He went to Nazareth and heard Mass there, but he would not set eyes on Jerusalem because there was no hope of delivering the city.

Neither plague nor dysentery, nor spears and darts, and the Greek fire of the Saracens, neither captivity nor the torture with which he was threatened—not death itself could defeat Louis' determination. The Saracens said that the King was the most steadfast Christian that could be found. They respected him as a holy man, worthy to be compared with the prophet Mahomet.

The mind of Louis can have found no thought on which to rest during those six years he was absent from France. News reached him after many months that England was invading his country. His mother begged him to return and abandon the Crusade. Queen Marguerite, shut up in the fortress of Damietta for safety, endured tortures of fear. The report that her husband had been taken prisoner reached her three days before another son was born. De Joinville—who was no psychologist—wonders why Louis, in the years they were together in camp and in prison, did not once speak of his wife and children. Early in 1253 the news of the death of Blanche, the Queen Regent, reached Palestine, and for two days no one dared speak to the King. Louis, like the husband of St Elizabeth of Hungary, who, when dying did not send any message to his wife, dared not let human tenderness find utterance, knowing its power over him. Again and again de Joinville mentions incidents which stress how closely the King kept to the spirit and letter of the Rule of the Third Order. He never forgot his beloved Franciscans. There is an amusing story of his telling his friend that he could make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Tortosa on the coast of Syria, " being the first altar in the world to be built in honour of the Mother of God ". Before de Joinville set off from Sidon, Louis asked him privately to buy for him a hundred lengths of camel-hair cloth of different colours to give to the Friars Minor when he got back to

[1] Cf. Winifred Knox, *The Court of a Saint* (London, 1909), p. 206.

France. " This cheered my heart ", says de Joinville, " for I thought that he would not be staying long. When we arrived at Tripoli, my knights asked me what I meant to do with the camelhair and begged me to tell them. " Perhaps ", I answered, ' I stole it to make some money.' " [1]

On April 25, 1254, thirteen galleys and ships set sail from Acre, bound for France. When off Cyprus the fleet ran into a dense fog, and the King's ship struck on a submerged sandbank. There was a great panic on board. A certain Brother Raymond, a Knight Templar, who was in command of the sailors, told one of them to cast a lead, and he found that the ship was aground. He feared that the eight hundred persons who were aboard this little ship would lose their lives, even if they took to the boats. Then the lead was cast again, and it was found that the ship was afloat. " Brother Raymond went to tell the King, who was lying prostrate in the form of a cross on the ship's bridge, barefooted, just in his tunic, his hair dishevelled, before the Body of Our Lord which was reserved in the ship ; he was like a man who expected to go at any moment." [2]

Having escaped death by drowning, the King and all those on board feared they were likely to be lost when a great storm arose a few days later. The Queen promised St Nicholas that if he would save them from danger, she would have a silver model of a ship made and hung up before one of his altars in France. Her prayers were answered, but not long after this her cabin caught fire. These are but a few of the miraculous escapes from death on that homeward voyage. On July 17, the King and Queen landed at Hyères on the coast of Provence.

Here Louis sent for that famous Friar Minor, Brother Hugh of Digne, who for many years had been the leader of the extreme Spiritual party within the Franciscan Order, and who was a disciple of Abbot Joachim of Flora. It was another proof of the King's humility and veneration for Franciscans that he did not protest at the sermon Brother Hugh preached. The Friar started off by saying : " My Lords, I see too many religious at the King's Court and in his household ", and added, " To begin with, I am one too many myself, and I say that, unless the Holy Scriptures lie to us, which is impossible, they are in no state to save their souls. For the Holy Scriptures tell us that the monk cannot live outside his cloister without mortal sin, any more than a fish can live out of water. And if the religious who live with the King say that they are living in a cloister, then I tell them that it is the widest I have ever seen—for it stretches right across the sea. If they say that in this cloister a man can live an austere life for his soul's salvation, I do not believe them ; but I can tell you that in their company I have eaten great store of different flesh meats and drunk good wines, strong and clear ; and so I am certain that had they been in their cloister they would not have enjoyed such comfort as they do with the King." Finally, he turned to Louis and warned him that he " should be careful, now that he is returning to France, to do justice to his people that he may thereby retain the love of God, so that God may not deprive him of his Kingdom during his lifetime ".[3]

Instead of being angry at this denunciation in the presence of a congregation made up of his courtiers, the King begged Brother Hugh to remain with him. But he refused to consider the royal invitation. De Joinville pleaded in vain, only to get the answer : " Indeed, sir, I will not do so. I will go to a place where God will love me better than in the King's company."

The return of Louis to France was the inauguration of a golden age. For many

[1] Hague, *op. cit.* p. 178. [2] *Ibid.* p. 185. [3] *Ibid.* pp. 193-4.

years the nation was at peace, and prospered under the rule of an utterly just sovereign. "After his return from overseas", de Joinville tells us, "the King led so devout a life that he never again wore ermine or miniver, or scarlet, or gilt stirrups or spurs. His clothing was of undyed or dark-blue wool. The lining of his blankets and clothing was of doeskin, or fur from the legs of hares, or lambs'-wool; he was so temperate at table that he ordered no dishes beyond what his cook prepared; it was placed before him, and he ate it. He mixed his wine with water in a glass goblet, adding water in proportion to the strength of the wine, and while the wine was being watered behind his table he held the glass in his hand. Every day he fed the poor, and after dinner provided money to be given to them.

"In the houses of the great, when the minstrels came in after dinner with their viols, he waited to hear grace until the minstrel had finished his song; then he rose and the priests stood before him and said grace. When we were at home in private, he used then to go and sit on the foot of his bed; and if the Dominicans or Franciscans who lived with him recommended some book that he ought to listen to he would say to them, 'No, you are not to read it to me; after dinner there is no book so good as *quodlibet*, that is, conversation where every man says what he pleases'. When any great men from abroad dined with him he was good company." [1]

A babble of facts bear witness to his never ending charity. Already he had built cathedrals, churches and monasteries; now he built libraries, more hospitals, almshouses and orphanages. He tended and kissed lepers—just as did St Francis. He gathered France together: lords and townsfolk, peasants, priests and knights—with the whole force of his life. He preached Christ to them by his personal example. How rotten most of them were, none knew better than the King. But he was newly come from the far off country where Christ had died for them.

During this period the religious observances imposed by this royal tertiary on his clerks and chaplains were quite as rigid as those to which they would have been bound in their monasteries and friaries. The King rose at midnight and summoned the clerics to join him in chanting Matins and Lauds of the day, also the Office of Our Lady. It is recorded by the Queen's confessor that very often the night offices in the royal chapel were so long that after the chaplains had returned to their beds, their was no time for sleep before the bell summoned them to join the King in singing Prime. Then began a series of daily Masses at which Louis assisted. First, there was always a requiem, followed on different days of the week by votive Masses of the Angels, Our Lady, the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Cross. After this came a sung Mass of the feast of the day. In Lent the last of the many Masses was not celebrated until midday. Even when he was on a journey, it was seldom that the King was satisfied without at least three daily Masses. Before dinner he sang Tierce and Sext with his chaplains. The office of Nones was chanted either before or after the meal, according to the season. Just like a Cistercian or Carthusian today, this royal tertiary recited the Little Office of Our Lady as well as the Divine Office. When he was travelling, he and some of the chaplains recited the Hours as they rode on their horses. Vespers were sung solemnly before supper; after the meal came Compline of the day, followed by that of Our Lady, at the end of which the *Salve Regina* was chanted. Then the King went to his room where one of the chaplains gave him the *Asperges*. If he happened to be on a journey, and it was impossible for him to close the day with a sung Office in church or chapel, Louis recited the two Complines with one of his Chaplains. Even when he was ill and

[1] Hague, *op. cit.* pp. 196-7.

confined to his bed, the Divine Office had always to be recited in his room by priests and clerics. If he was too weak to speak, he had a cleric near his bed to say the verses of the psalms for him.

Not content with the normal round of liturgical worship, the King took care that there was always a solemn High Mass, preferably pontifical, on all the greater festivals. We are told that " he caused divine service to be celebrated with such solemnity and fulness that he may be said to have wearied those who took part in it, because of the length of the office. And the pious King was so resolved that divine service should be held with order and solemnity, that it did not suffice that his chaplains and clerks should arrange who should sing the Mass, or who should read the Gospel, or who should do other things, but he often took order for these things himself, and sent word by one of his chaplains to those whom he considered most fit for the offices they undertook. And in order that our Saviour might be honoured in all things, he had in his chapel vestments for the priests and the other ecclesiastical orders, and vestments also for the bishops, made of samite and of other costly stuffs embroidered, and others of divers colours according to the season and the festival." [1]

Queen Marguerite's confessor recalls that Louis, even in the coldest weather, always knelt on the floor of the chapel without any cushion, leaning on a bench in front of him. After he returned to his room at night he would continue his prayers in private, kneeling beside his bed. The excessive penances he practised undermined his health after his return from the Crusade, and his spiritual director insisted that he took more sleep. One curious devotion much fancied by the King, and which he made every night, was to make fifty genuflexions, repeating slowly an *Ave Maria* each time he stood up.

He went to confession every Friday, but in accordance with medieval custom, only received Holy Communion six times in the year—at Easter, Pentecost, the Assumption of Our Lady, All Saints', Christmas, and the Purification. So fervent was his devotion on these rare occasions that he crept on his knees up to the altar and when he was at the footpace, having said the *Confiteor* " with clasped hands, with many sighs and groans, he received the true Body of Jesus Christ from the hand of a bishop or priest ".[2]

The average courtier must have dreaded every Good Friday, because on that day their royal master visited many churches and went barefoot. " For this purpose he wore shoes without soles, so that the flesh might not be seen, but he placed the soles of his feet upon the ground. He made large offerings on the altars of the churches visited by him. He was present throughout the office of Our Saviour, and always remained barefoot until after the adoration of the Holy Cross, and he went to adore it in this manner : he laid aside his robe and remained in his doublet or coat [an under-tunic with tight sleeves], and thus, without belt or hood, bareheaded and barefooted, he knelt down and devoutly worshipped the Holy Cross. . . . He kissed it with great devotion and reverence, and prostrated himself in the form of a Cross to kiss it, and it is believed that he shed tears in so doing." [3] But the King did not content himself with satisfying his personal piety on Good Friday. When he went along the streets, he was followed by sergeants with money in their hands, and he often took coins from them and gave the money to the poor who pressed round him. It is recorded that at least on one occasion he stepped aside to a leper, gave alms to him and kissed the diseased hand.

[1] Sepet, *op. cit.* p. 101. [2] *Ibid.* p. 105. [3] *Ibid.* p. 160.

No Franciscan tertiary had a greater love for visiting hospitals than had Louis. It is recorded that " when some were more ill than others, he was the more ready to wait on them, and kneeling before them he cut up their bread and meat, placed the morsel all ready cut in their mouths, and then wiped them with the napkin he carried. Some of the sick were so disgusting that the pious King's officers were revolted and withdrew backwards, and sometimes they could not abide in the place because the air was so foul and the stench from the sick so abominable, yet he would remain there as if conscious of nothing." [1]

There is a tradition, which sounds genuine enough to be believed, that when Louis was staying at Vernon in Normandy he often crept out from the castle after dark without the knowledge of his courtiers, and used to sleep in the hospital he had founded. The bed which he is said to have used, was preserved as a relic, and became known as ' The Bed of St Louis '. Another story which has been handed down relates how he loved to serve in the big refectory of the Cistercian Abbey of Royaumont. " When the dishes were too hot, he wrapped his hands in his robe, and the food was sometimes spilled upon it ; and when the Abbot said that he was spoiling his robe, the pious King would answer, ' It matters little, I have others '." [2]

Louis shared the opinions of St Francis as to the ultimate value of the Crusades. Each felt that it was more important to convert the Saracens than to kill them. It is recorded that a certain number of baptized Moslems were brought back to France and maintained by the King. The royal treasury also had to contribute to the support of converted Jews, but there were not many of them. Louis—like St Francis—had visions of the whole world being won for Christ, and we are told that he sent presents to " the great king of the Tartars ", hoping by such means to break down prejudice and even to draw these warlike tribes into the Catholic Church.

At last the long truce ended. The Christians lost Antioch in 1268. Down came the wave of Saracen armies once more. Louis resolved to take the Cross again. He appealed to his barons and knights, but there was no more than a half-hearted response. Even the wandering minstrels made fun of the Crusades. Europe knew by now what had gone on in the camps during the last one—how it had been a holy war only in its original intention, and for the rest, defiled by every human weakness, used by merchants for their own advantage, and soldiers returning to infect France and Italy with the diseases due to the vices of the armies.

But Louis cut short these objections. The last Crusade was over and done with. God was its judge. The question still remained for Christians to answer : were the Holy Places to be left open for infidels to desecrate without a sword being raised in their defence ?

The King summoned de Joinville to Paris, but this faithful friend explained that he felt it was his duty to remain at home to look after his own people. " I thought that all who advised him to go committed a mortal sin ", writes de Joinville, " for while he was still in France the whole kingdom enjoyed peace at home and with all its neighbours, but after his departure its condition grew constantly worse. In view also of his great bodily weakness it was very wrong of them to give him such advice ; for he could not endure either to go in a carriage or to ride ; he was so weak that he allowed himself to be carried in my arms, when I took leave of him from the Count of Auxerre's house to the Grey Friars. Weak though he was had

[1] Sepet, *op. cit.* p. 112. [2] *Ibid.* p. 114.

he stayed in France, he might have lived for some time longer and done much good and profitable work." [1]

Louis was a dying man. Somehow or other he managed to reach Marseilles, where he had to be carried up on to the ship. He landed at Tunis in the heart of the summer of 1270. Dysentery—his old enemy—struck him again. " He asked for the sacraments of Holy Church and received them, it could be seen, in sound mind and with full understanding, for when he was anointed and they said the seven penitential psalms he recited the verses with them. At the approach of death he called upon the saints to help him, and especially on my Lord Saint James, saying his prayer which begins *Esto Domine* which means, ' God, be the sanctifier and protector of Your people '. He then called upon my Lord Saint Denis of France to help him, saying that prayer of his, which means ' Lord God, grant that we may so despise the prosperity of this world that we may fear no adversity.' . . . Afterwards the holy King had himself laid on a bed covered with ashes, crossed his hands on his breast, and, looking up to Heaven, gave back his spirit to our Creator, at the very hour when the Son of God died on the Cross for the salvation of the world." [2] It was the day after the feast of St Bartholomew, August 25, 1270.

His body was placed in a casket and brought back to France, where it was laid to rest in the Abbey Church at St Denis, the place he had chosen for his burial. In 1282 the process of canonization was started, and in 1297 Boniface VIII raised King Louis IX to the altars of the Church. The following year the relics of this royal tertiary were translated from St Denis to the Sainte Chapelle in Paris. This marvel of medieval Gothic architecture, whose tall narrow windows still glow with the brilliant mosaic of thirteenth-century glass, had been built by the King as shrine for the Crown of Thorns, given him by the Emperor of Constantinople. Here the relics were venerated until 1793, when they scattered by the revolutionary mob.

The feast of St Louis is kept on August 25. In the Calendar of the Roman Missal and Breviary it has the rank of a semi-double only, but it is a double-major in all French dioceses, except that of Paris where it is a double of the first-class. The First and Second Orders of St Francis keep the feast as a double of the second-class, but with the Third Order, of which he is the principal patron, it is a double of the first-class with a common octave. In certain French dioceses there are also feasts of the Patronage of St Louis and of the Translation of his Head.

BD RAMÓN LULL (*c.* 1232-1315)

As we have pointed out already, St Francis thought of the Crusades as a means of converting the Moslems, not of killing them, and such was the point of view of Ramón Lull. " He dreamed of a Crusade ; what fervent Christian did not ? St Louis was still alive ; there were yet hopes of rescuing the holy places. But Lull's ideas of a Crusade were not only military ; he saw the whole matter in the light of that spiritual common sense which always distinguished him, for he could say : ' Wherefore it appears to me, O Lord, that the conquest of that sacred land will not be achieved save by love and prayer and the shedding of tears as well as blood. . . . We must put an end to the material war between Christians and Saracens, because so long as it lasts neither side can begin those peaceful discussions which will certainly result in the triumph of the Cross.' Those words come from

[1] Hague, *op. cit.* p. 213. [2] *Ibid.* p. 216.

a singularly enlightened mind ; and all his life Lull never wavered from the conviction that the Moslem world must be won, not only conquered ; won by personal sacrifice, and by the Spirit of God working through knowledge and preaching." [1]

He was a very mixed character—courtier and gallant, hermit and mystic, alchemist, novelist, scientist, poet, missionary and martyr. A Daniel, a man of desires, who prayed at a window looking to the east, who cast off his sins and mistakes like a soiled and torn garment—without more ado about them because he desired not justification but to love the Just.

Ramón Lull was born near Palma, Majorca, some time between 1231 and 1235. He came into the world on an estate which his father, who belonged to a noble Catalonian family, had received as a reward from Jaime I of Aragon for having helped to recover the Balearic Islands from the Saracens in 1229. Ramón's youth was spent at the court of King Jaime, where he revelled in the gay science of romance and was the playmate of the young princess. He returned to Majorca, escorting the heir to the throne who had been appointed as governor of the Islands, and was given the position of Grand Seneschal. His parents hoped that he would marry and settle down, for his already numerous love affairs were notorious. Eventually he did agree to marry a young lady who had large estates, and she bore him two children, but this did not stop him having several mistresses.

Suddenly Palma was ringing with the scandal that the Grand Seneschal had pursued the latest lady of his admiration into a church, riding on horse-back after her to offer her his homage. She was a great lady, and a match for this would-be lover. She bade him wait on her that evening, and he was confident he would win her. Ambrosia de Castellò looked at the young man and said : " So you think that I share your criminal passion ? Is it worthy that a soul created to know and love God should so allow itself to be misled as to adore a creature ? I have told you that I am ready to show you the body whose beauty you have sung, if a sight of this miserable flesh may move you and make you mindful of all the duties that you forget." Whereupon she tore aside the lace of her dress, and revealed her breast devoured by cancer. " Look ", she said, " there is the beauty you admire ! Already the work of the worm is begun, writing on human flesh that God alone is Beauty, the Sovereign and Eternal Perfection. Now go, and cease to tremble at a rotting carcase and a soul that must soon appear before God ! "

Ramón has left on record that his actual conversion was caused by the four times that he had seen a vision of Christ on the Cross, suffering His Passion—which visions he had forced himself to believe were figments of his imagination ; but this incident may well have driven him back to face the truth, and to pray Christ to cleanse him from the cancers of his spirit. Christ appeared to him a fifth time, saying : " Ramón, follow Me ! "

The first thing to do was to go to confession and receive absolution for the sins of his past life. He resigned his position at Court. He was absorbed in his new discovery of the reality of sin and of its redemption. From that moment to the day of his death, Ramón would only give his mind to two things : that the Christian Faith is the key to all mysteries and that God is Eternal Beauty. The expectation of his own martyrdom seems to have been with him.

Miss Nesta de Robeck has pointed out that Ramón Lull and Jacopone da Todi have many things in common, and that their conversions took place within a few years of each other. But " Jacopone's mentality was very different from Lull's ;

[1] Nesta de Robeck, *Among the Franciscan Tertiaries*, p. 132.

his interests were not so wide, his intellectual field more restricted. Each went through the fire of conversion with its violent reactions, each was a poet of the Love of God. Both were seized by the fire of Love that St Francis had known and preached, and it transformed their whole lives. The magnificent concentration and swing of Jacopone's finest *laudi* with their sustained sweeping power find a counterpart in Lull's religious verse, which at times is closely akin to that of his Umbrian brother. Jacopone's lyrical talent was nurtured by the Provençal tradition developed in an Italian *milieu*, just as that of Ramón Lull was influenced by the Spanish troubadours and by the Arabic poets. Jacopone's only literary self-expression was in his *laudi* into which he poured all the molten stream of his genius; whereas Lull, the teacher, scientist, and philosopher, spread his inspiration over a vast field of learning and speculation." [1]

There is a tradition that soon after his conversion, Ramón found himself in church on the feast of St Francis, and how, as he listened to the sermon and heard the story of the Little Poor Man, he knew he had found the spiritual master he sought, but his formal reception into the Third Order did not take place until many years later. He boarded a ship, and sailed across to the mainland, making his way as a poor pilgrim to the shrines of St James at Compostela, Our Lady of Montserrat, Rocamadour in France, and so on to Rome. For nearly two years he was a wanderer, begging his bread and speaking to those who would listen, of the Love of God. It is possible that he even got as far as Palestine. By 1265 he was back again in Spain. At Barcelona he put himself under the spiritual direction of St Raymund of Peñafort, the famous Dominican, who advised him to give up the idea of going to the University of Paris to study science and theology: Ramón must return to Palma and there give a good example where once he had given so much scandal. It was the advice of true wisdom and sound theology; but one cannot help thinking that the keen-witted saint must have looked after his penitent with a twist of the mouth. Ramón had agreed that it was the right thing to go back to his wife and his position, just as absent-mindedly as he had accepted them both at the King's wish. A vocation for married life was not apparent.

Having reached Palma and explained his long absence from home, Ramón put on his robes of Grand Seneschal again—an obedient turncoat. Did he notice that he was ridiculed, distrusted? No one knew what to make of him. He spent most of his spare time learning Arabic from a Moorish slave, who, realizing at last that his master wished to learn only that he might confound the Moslem religion tried to murder him. It was about this time that Ramón started to write his enormous book, *The Art of Contemplation*. For he was completely absorbed in God, so much so, that he forgot the reason for his return to Palma. A God-filled man is only temporarily impressionable to advice. He must have been an impossible husband, and it is not surprising that his wife very wisely applied for an order which would allow his temporal affairs to be taken over by a relative and administered for him. His estates were going to rack and ruin because he refused to bother about them. The greater part of his lands were handed over to his wife and his two sons. All he asked to be allowed to retain was an estate on Mount Randa, "the one spot on Mallorca above all others which suggests itself as a retreat for the would-be hermit".[2] Here he was to spend nine or ten years in solitude.

[1] Nesta de Robeck, *Among the Franciscan Tertiaries*, pp. 129-30.
[2] E. Allison Peers, *Ramon Lull: A Biography* (London, 1929), p. 103.

Ramón could no more help becoming absorbed in his ideas—quite apart from his contemplative and apostolic vocation—than Mozart could have helped composing. He had one of the most original minds of the thirteenth century. His mental capacity, as we have pointed out already, was extraordinary; its ruling passion was co-ordination, and this because he rightly saw creation as the act of a Creator who is Unity. If, as Plato says, "a sense for the whole is the sign of a sound mind", then Ramón Lull's was sound, even when his ideas suffered from the limitations of his education and of his age, and were strangely worked out, and even when his only heroic virtue was—or looked like—absent-mindedness. If, as Coventry Patmore says: "Absolute genius would be the sight of all things at once in their relation and origin", we are bound to appreciate that this passion for co-ordination was fired by genius in Ramón.[1] With no training in logic, philosophy or theology, he now set out to prove by logic that the Christian philosophy was self-evidently true in all its branches. The source of Ramón's knowledge was intuitive. Alone with God in his hermitage on Mount Randa, his mind was illumined, and he was free to devote himself to writing down what was revealed to him in prayer. When he left his solitude in 1275—five years after the death of St Louis—it was because logic had driven him to decide that he must set right the great mistake of the Crusaders who thought to overcome the Saracen by the sword: he must enlist missionaries who would learn Arabic and go among them to discuss philosophy and natural mysticism with their philosophers and mystics. It was far from his mind to condemn St Louis or other holy crusaders. The invasion of the Holy Places and the wanton attacks on Christians demanded the defence of fighting men. But Ramón was a thinker, not a king or a soldier, and he saw that it was his duty, first of all, to defend right thinking, and to carry an attack into the enemy's camp. Besides, the only complete conquest of an enemy is the conquest of his mind and heart.

Ramón put his method into practice with some Jews at Palma, and with immediate success. The natural sharpness of the Jewish mind was alive to his genius, and its religious temperament responded to his teaching because he had the vision of a prophet. Before long word of what was going on reached the ears of King Jaime I, who bade his old friend visit him. The King was so impressed that he arranged for Ramón to go to the University of Montpellier, where a learned Franciscan, Bertrand de Béranger, examined him. A *nihil obstat* was given to what might well have proved to be heretical doctrines, and Ramón was asked to lecture to the students. But he was not a success, because he persisted in talking about the Love of God, which bored his listeners.[2]

[1] It is worth noting that the *Summa* of St Thomas Aquinas was started about the same time as Lull began to write his *Art of Contemplation*, each being an attempt to correlate human knowledge. It was St Raymund of Peñafort who was indirectly responsible for the writing of both these great outpourings of the medieval mind. Lull's scholasticism was mainly Franciscan in nature. "The point of contact between him and St Bonaventure is the deep mystical strain in his soul. With Duns Scotus he is connected by his intense insistence on the mystery of the Incarnation as leading up to the idea of the Kingship of Christ; he is connected with Bacon by his burning zeal for missions to the heathen" (Agostino Gemelli, O.F.M., *The Franciscan Message to the World*, p. 64).

[2] It was mainly due to the Dominicans that the charge of heterodoxy was levelled at Lull's writings after his death. For several centuries there was a fierce struggle to have 'Lullism' condemned. The Friars Minor never ceased to back the doctrines of this tertiary scholastic. In the seventeenth century the Minister General ordered Lull's teaching for the Franciscan province of Majorca. "In 1633 Pope Clement X raised the studium

During this brief sojourn at Montpellier, Ramón found time to write several books, including the *Doctrine for Boys*. In this is set forth his ideas on education. It was written for his own son, and witnesses to the fact that he had not altogether forgotten his obligations as a parent.

Meanwhile, thanks to the practical interest taken by his former lord and master, Jaime II, who had become King of Aragon and Catalonia on the death of his father in 1276, Ramón was able to establish the College of the Blessed Trinity at Miramar in Majorca. Pope John XXI confirmed the foundation in a Bull issued from Viterbo. The object of this college was to train friars for the mission field, under Ramón's direction. He still went on writing books, dreaming dreams all the time of extending his apostolate. The next we hear is that he is off to Rome to arouse the interest of Pope Nicholas III in his many schemes. Here he had a vision, thus summed up in his own words : " The Lover had a long journey before him, hard and difficult, and the moment had come to start, and to shoulder the heavy burden that Love asks His friends to carry. Therefore the Lover put off from his mind all thoughts and from his hands all comforts, that his body might be the better able to bear its load and that his soul should journey only in company with his Beloved."

So this man in his late forties set out on a journey from Rome which lasted about five years. He crossed the Alps and reached Germany, where he had talks with the Emperor, Rudolph of Habsburg, whose more easterly dominions were in danger of being overrun by the Cuman Tartars. Ramón has left us no record of his journeys in company with his Beloved, but the tradition is that he moved on from Germany into Eastern Europe, through the Balkans, and crossed into Asia Minor. It is supposed that he visited Armenia, and went south to Syria and Palestine. Hence he penetrated into the heart of Arabia, and so back into Egypt. It is possible that, like some of the earlier Franciscan missionaries, Ramón found his way further east and engaged in a peaceful crusade among the wandering tribes of Central Asia, in what was then called Tartary. From Egypt a ship took him to Morocco. There is a tradition that his next voyage was to England, but documentary evidence is lacking. In a sense there was nothing new in such long journeys by land and sea at that date, because they had been undertaken already by many Friars Minor. For instance, there was Fra Giovanni dei Carpini, who by 1246 had managed to reach Manchuria by way of Lithuania, the Urals and Turkestan. Rather later than Lull there was Fra Giovanni da Montecorvino, who went to India, and on foot got to China. Then there was his contemporary, Bd Odoric da Pordenone, who covered many thousands of miles by sea, visiting Ceylon, Java, and other islands in the East Indies. But when one considers what were the material conditions of travel in the thirteenth century, one wonders how any man could have survived the hardships and privations. " There were plenty of wandering preachers in those days ; many who passed Lull on the road or who heard him preach at street corners, in fairs, anywhere and everywhere that he could find a few listeners, doubtless thought him a crank, though quite often enough

generale at Majorca to the rank of a university and confirmed the erection of Lullist chairs. The holders of these chairs even took precedence over the Thomist and Scotist professors " (Ladislas Siekeniec, O.F.M., ' A Universal Genius ', in *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, Vol. XXI (July 1942), 244). In 1688 Lullism was ordered to be taught in all the studia generalia of the Friars Minor in Spain. Fr Junipero Serra, O.F.M., the apostle of California, was a graduate of the Lullist university of Majorca.

they might be struck by his eloquence and picturesque, direct language. Travel-stained, ragged, despised, and lonely, the famous courier held on his way, made a fool gladly for the sake of his Beloved." [1]

When Ramón found himself at sea in one of those little ships, few of which were more than a hundred feet long, and most of them smaller, we may be certain that he would have lived in close contact with the crews. On those long voyages he would have had plenty of opportunities to talk to the sailors. Even the most primitive form of compass, either a loadstone floating on a piece of wood, or the needle floating inside a straw, was not in general use among mariners during the thirteenth century. There is a tradition that Ramón invented a compass and instructed the seamen how to use it. It is more than probable that he also made a simple form of astrolabe by which the altitude of the heavenly bodies could be determined. By such mechanical inventions he would turn men's minds to the Creator of the Universe.

Having returned to Europe in 1283, Ramón made Montpellier his headquarters for two years, but he could not keep still, and by 1285 he was in Rome. Here he was able to establish a college for training missionaries, similar to that at Miramar. Next we hear of him in Paris, lecturing to the students at the Sorbonne.

He tried hard to interest the Dominicans in his missionary schemes, but with little success. Meanwhile he had completed the strange book *Blanquerna*, in which he set forth his ideas for the Church, the world, and the whole human race. " Although Ramón had not yet turned from the order of St Dominic towards that of St Francis, no one will fail to recognize in *Blanquerna* the true Franciscan spirit which shines through the book from its beginning to its end. The ideal of poverty is extolled, from the account of Evast's wedding in the first chapter, to that of the emperor's renunciation in the last. That beautiful phrase, ' the poor of Jesus Christ ' rings in the ears ; ' bread of alms ', Ramón would say with St Francis, is the food of angels." [2]

At Whitsuntide, 1287, Ramón attended the General Chapter of the Friars Minor at Montpellier, where he failed to arouse much enthusiasm for his spiritual crusades. Two years later he took part in another General Chapter at Rieti in Italy, which was presided over by the new Minister-General, Raymund Gaufredi, who showed much kindness to him. This is not surprising, because Gaufredi was a loyal supporter of the Spiritual Franciscans. He had a scheme for getting them out of harm's way in Italy, and sending them as missionaries to Armenia, which would have pleased Lull.

Now we come to an incident in his life which is not easy to understand. Early in 1291 he found himself at Genoa, and in what looks like the edge of a bad nervous breakdown. On Quinquagesima Sunday, when he was lying in bed very ill, he arranged to be carried to the Dominican church, where he begged for the pardon of a " great defection ". It was also his intention to be clothed with the habit of a Dominican tertiary, but the friars did not dare do this because the Prior was absent, and there was much gossip going around that Lull was a heretic. Then, in the midst of this mental strain, Ramón looked up on the wall of his room and noticed hanging there a Franciscan cord. Suddenly he changed his mind, sent for the Guardian of the Friars Minor and " begged him the habit of the glorious Messer St Francis, which they promised him forthwith as he was near to death ".

[1] De Robeck, *op. cit.*, p. 145. [2] E. Allison Peers, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

They feared Our Lord would not pardon Ramón, but they did not wish to give a bad example to people, by his dying otherwise than a good Catholic, but rather to make profession of Christianity. Although he was not then admitted into the Third Order, he recovered sufficiently to be taken down to the harbour by his friends, and put aboard a galley bound for Tunis. " No sooner was Ramón at sea than the burden of remorse which had weighed upon his soul fell away from him, and an overwhelming joy took its place ; his mysterious malady left him as mysteriously as it had come, so that within a few days he was as well as he had been in his life." [1]

Within a month or two of Ramón arriving in North Africa, the Moslem troops had captured Acre. By July 1291 the last of the Christian garrisons in Palestine had surrendered, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem ceased to exist. He remained a year or two in and around Tunis, where he made some converts. He was very nearly martyred before he escaped on a ship and reached Naples. Here he got busy again with his pen, and wrote several books, one of which contained an impassioned appeal to Pietro di Morrone, whose pontificate as Celestine V only lasted five months. It is quite likely that Ramón met this poor old man, well over eighty years of age, who had been dragged from his cave in the Apennines, taken to Naples, where he was forced to live in the royal palace, and treated as a prisoner. Maybe, like the Spiritual Franciscans, Ramón regarded this former hermit as a pope sent direct from heaven. In 1295 he made a pilgrimage to Assisi, where at long last he was clothed with the habit and cord of the Third Order. That he took this step will surprise few who have followed his career up to the present time. We have seen how, in the early days of his apostolate, he was attracted rather to the Dominicans, probably through the influence of James the Conqueror and Raymund of Peñafort : we have seen, too, how he gradually withdrew from them his allegiance. They had rejected his God-given *Art ;* his three attendances at their chapters-general had brought them no nearer sympathizing with him ; and for many years he had been comparing them disadvantageously with the Friars Minor. There was much in their ideals with which he was peculiarly at one : it is possible to infer from the Genoa narrative that he had for long been inwardly impelled to become one of them. But the ideals of St Francis triumphed. Since the foundation of Miramar Ramón's heart had warmed increasingly to the Franciscans, by whom his *Art* was being taught. Though we know nothing of his attendances at their chapters-general earlier than 1287, his experiences at these chapters would appear to have been happy, and he received fraternal kindness from Gaufredi. In 1289 a bull of Nicholas IV first gave papal recognition to the famous Third Order which has enrolled so many saints in the glorious course of its history. This may well have drawn Ramón's attention to a foundation much in the public eye and completely in accord with his ideals. . . . It may well be that it was at Genoa, or soon after his illness there, that Ramón decided definitely to join the Franciscans, and that he took the first opportunity of doing so on his return from Africa." [2]

So, clothed with the habit of a tertiary, he set off on the old round again—Montpellier, Paris, Majorca, to far distant Armenia and back again—long troubled by a ' dark night of the spirit ', without consolation save that of the friendship of the great young Duns Scotus, the Franciscan from Scotland and the theologian

[1] E. Allison Peers, *op. cit.*, p. 241. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 268.

who had the joy of fighting for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.[1] On and on he went, to this king and that, to this pope and the next, to this university and the other. We hear of him at the Council of Vienne in 1311, with plans for the conversion of the Moslems. Then he cleared off to Sicily, where he found time to write some more books. He was here, there and everywhere during the last ten years of his life. Palestine again, Cyprus, Rhodes, Malta, and North Africa.

In April 1313 he sailed from Palma, and for the last time set foot on the shores of Morocco, landing at Bougie, where he preached to the Moslems for several months. Then he moved east to Tunis. He was received quite cordially, but when he returned to Bougie, the situation changed. One day between December 1315 and March 1316, Ramón went out into the streets and began to preach, indifferent to the obvious hostility of the crowds. A stone was thrown by somebody, and that was the end. It seems that the mob left his bleeding body on the ground and ran away.

The tradition is that two Genoese merchants—Esteva Colon and Luis de Pastorga—having heard of the incident, asked permission from the authorities to take away the body. They searched for it in the swiftly falling darkness and found the dusky Franciscan habit because a column of light rose from it. To their joy Ramón was still breathing. They carried the dying man down to their ship, and passing out of the bay, set sail for Genoa, but the wind veered to the sou'east and drove the vessel towards Spain. Before he died, so the story is told, Ramón whispered into the ear of Esteva Colon that beyond the curve of the sea which girds the coasts of Europe, there lay another continent which would be discovered one day by sailors—a world which is ignorant of God. This Genoese merchant is believed to have been an ancestor of Christopher Columbus. As the mountains of Majorca rose up above the horizon, Ramón consummated his martyrdom.

His body was laid to rest in the church of San Francisco at Palma, where he worked many miracles by his intercession. His cultus spread rapidly in the Balearic Islands. The first petition for his canonization was sent to Rome in 1612, but had no result. During the eighteenth century a Dominican bishop, Diaz de la Guerra, went so far as to order that the feast of Bd Ramón must be removed from the Ordo of the diocese of Palma. Lull's writings were denounced as heretical and dangerous to faith and morals. To ensure that their author would be forgotten the Bishop even gave orders that no baby boy was to be baptized with the name of Ramón! It was not until September 1847 that Ramón Lull was formally beatified by Pius IX, and a special Office and Mass composed for use in the diocese of Mallorca, the date being fixed for July 31. Later the feast was extended to the whole Franciscan Order. Until a few years ago it was observed with the rank of a semi-double on July 4. At the present time Bd Ramón is honoured as a semi-double with other martyrs of the First and Third Orders on September 5. In 1915 his coffin was re-interred in a new one of cedar wood, on which is engraved his own chosen epitaph: "Here lies a Lover who has died for his Beloved and for Love." As is most fitting, his tomb is decorated with seven

[1] The story is told that the seventy-five-year-old Ramón sat at the feet of young Brother Duns Scotus, and that one day the latter turned to his disciple with the following apparently simple question: "*Dominus, quae pars?*—What part (i.e. of speech) is *Dominus* (Lord)?" The old tertiary answered quietly: "*Dominus non est pars, sed totum*—the Lord is no part, but the whole." This improvisation on the Divine name is characteristic enough of Lull to be true.

panels representing the liberal arts, and further adorned with fantastic beasts and flying angels.

" Lull's life was one of Catholic action. For him to be Catholic meant to act. For him to love meant to do. For him Catholicity was not only theory, but also action. Catholic action ! Till ripe old age he persisted in preaching his ' Beloved ' Christ. Even the Moors decided there was too much action in his theory—so they stoned him ! In word and deed the Catalan missionary, mystic, and martyr was the ideal herald of Christ the King, which is to say, he was an ideal follower of Assisi's St Francis, the patron of Catholic Action." [1]

[1] Fr Ladislas Siekeniec, O.F.M., ' A Universal Genius ', in *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, Vol. XXI (July 1942), 246.

CHAPTER III

TWO MYSTICS AND PENITENTS OF TUSCANY AND UMBRIA (1247-1309)

INTRODUCTION

AS Father Agostino Gemelli has pointed out, "the reason why the Three Orders spread so rapidly was because in their Founder they possessed a rich vein of devotion, of communication, that is, with the Godhead. By reverting to the Gospel, St Francis had restored to intercourse between the soul and its Maker that feeling of personal contact with the Father which Jesus Christ had taught to men, and that sense of absolute, unwavering trust which the pages of the Gospel reveal as having existed between the Master and His disciples. Before St Francis entered the world, the monks had indeed taught men to meditate in the solitude and isolation of their cells, to pray together in choir, and chant solemn, stately hymns. The cell of St Francis, though, was to be found anywhere and everywhere—on a mountain-top, at the bottom of a cavern, in the most comfortable corner of a fine chamber placed at his disposal by his Cardinal host, on the back of the donkey he was riding, or in the midst of the din and bustle of a thoroughfare. External surroundings were no distraction to him, for his cell was his own body. No one had ever before dreamed of putting forward such an idea; for men had always looked on the human body as a dangerous house, with five windows, through which the dust of the world was blown by every gust of wind. But no brick wall, St Francis discovered, was high enough to shield a soul incapable of holding itself in check. And he made this discovery because he loved God and realized that the power of love alone is strong enough to wean the soul from worldly things, and concentrate all its energies on to the one central thought." [1]

In this chapter we can study the lives of two members of the Third Order who realized and put into practice the power of love, concentrating all their energies on the one central thought after they had been converted by the Divine Love. Both Margaret of Cortona and Angela of Foligno were converted from a life of sin. Both were given a revelation of the ugliness of their former state, and inspired with a keen sorrow for it. Each "stripped herself of worldly possessions and gave herself up to prayer and meditation on the Christian mysteries, above all on the Passion of Christ".[2]

St Margaret of Cortona and Bd Angela of Foligno show us that it was possible for women of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to live lives of heroic sanctity, and to reach heights of mystical union with God without entering a Poor Clare convent, or that of any of the older Orders, all of which were enclosed at that date.

[1] *The Franciscan Message to the World*, translated and adapted by H. L. Hughes (London, 1934), pp. 76-7.

[2] P. Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality in the Middle Ages*, English trans. by S. P. Jacques (London, 1924), p. 191.

ST MARGARET OF CORTONA (1247-1297)

WE leave kings, courtiers and crusaders, and return to rural Italy—this time to a small village situated on the borders of Tuscany and Umbria—Laviano by name. Rising out of what, on a misty morning looks like the sea, is a long island of low hills—the Poggi di Petrignano—set between the Val di Chiana on the west and Lago Trasimeno on the east. Today the Valley of the Chiana is a fertile plain of good land yielding corn, wine and oil. During the Middle Ages, before it was drained, it was a pestilential swamp, as Dante reminds us in his *Inferno* (XXIX, 45). Laviano is raised up above what used to be marshes : just a typical hamlet, with nothing very interesting about it, other than the house where Margherita was born in the year 1247. Her father was a prosperous farmer. Of her mother we know nothing except the prayer she is said to have taught her daughter : " O Lord Jesu, I pray You for the safety of all those for whom You would that I should pray ! " She died when Margherita was only seven, leaving her to run wild, until her father married again two years later. The stepmother seems to have been a hard and impatient woman. Margherita, unhappy and resentful, longing to have her beauty admired, her liberty unhindered and, above all, to be loved, fell an easy prey to the fine gentleman from Montepulciano who came riding by one day. He made love to her very differently from the lads of Laviano. The look in his eyes, his lazy laughter and disdain for village notions, the things he whispered into her ear when she stole out, eagerly, hesitatingly, to meet him as he had demanded in the darkling blue of dusk, when the nightingale sings in the lemon trees, when the breeze stirs the ghostly wisteria above the door—these things made her breath come so quickly that she seemed to live where before she had only moved and wondered. What harm was she doing to God by being happy ? To what was she to listen—to the shouted curses of her stepmother and the clumsy compliments of the young farm-servants and goat-herds, to the admonitions of the parish priest, who himself may not have been unconscious of her rare beauty ? One night, at curfew, the farmer's wife shouted in vain for Margherita. By that time this seventeen-year-old girl was seated like a queen on the saddle-bow of a horse while a man smiled down at his booty and Margherita trembled and laughed at his triumph.

She had fled away unseen, and when she and her lover were crossing the marshes in the darkness they were nearly drowned. Then, safe on hard ground, the horse began to climb the long winding road that leads up the hills. Far away to the east were the everlasting mountains of Umbria. The graceful mass of Cetona and the exquisite lines of Mont' Amiata rose up against the star-lit sky : the lakes of Trasimeno, Chiusi and Montepulciano shimmered silver far below. But the lovers had no eyes for such beauty or for its Creator.

Dominating as it does the wide-stretching valley of the Chiana, and one of the trade-routes of central Italy, Florence and Siena fought for the possession of Montepulciano from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century ; the former generally being victorious. Montepulciano is a city of fierce climatic contrasts at all seasons of the year—a spinning top of the winds, a finger of the world poked in the sun's eye. Few cities in Tuscany are its equal when it comes to natural situation. For, as Mr Edward Hutton says : Montepulciano " sits there on her hill-top today above her lawns and vineyards and woods like a queen sure of her court and her own beauty—still a medieval city ". He adds that one is " struck by the splendour of her walls and gates ". As to the many churches, " they are as lovely as one

can wish, from San Agostino to Santa Maria and the Cathedral, which is as should be, the best of all ".[1]

Here, for nine years, Margherita flaunted herself to the public scandal, but remarkable more for beauty and courage than for any moral standard. She flaunted what others hid. Mounted on a superb horse, the wind taking her silks and velvets and the sun catching her jewels, her beauty was for all to see. Sometimes, so it is related, she would ride out alone, out of the city and into the countryside. When she pulled up, it was in some grove of sweet chestnuts or before some hillside cave, and when the servants joined her, she would remark how peaceful it looked, and what a place for a hermit to say his prayers. She would linger, and be silent, or be hard to please when she turned home. Even the respectable women of Montepulciano, who lost no opportunity to gossip about the mistress of this nobleman, had to admit that she always showed great reverence for religion, and was ever tender towards the poor, the sick and unhappy.

As the years went by, shut out by her own mortal sin from receiving the sacraments, Margherita held on to two virtues, charity and hope. The glory of youth gone, she could see that if her stepmother had broken the divine order by sinning against love, she had done no better. To buy joy, she had sold herself into captivity. Her son had been born an outcast—a bastard. The mother and child were like sheep in the briars, unable to move from the position into which they had wandered. She had not the strength to shake herself free—perhaps with the risk of being parted from her son. She could only hope that God would save her from herself. But responsibility had been less hers than that of her lover, the Lord of Montepulciano. One day he did not return from a visit to part of his estates. A search was made, and it was Margherita's pet dog which eventually scented out the body—murdered in a wood by an armed band of enemies. Her lover had died unshriven. She was fetched to the spot, and gazed at the corpse. She might have committed the final sin of despair, but it was the heroic virtue of hope which rescued her at that moment. So happened the almost miraculous conversion in the year 1274.

Margherita gave up to her lover's family all his property, set his affairs in order, and after remaining long enough in Montepulciano to let the whole city know that she was truly penitent, she took her little son and set out down the road to Laviano. Here she was received with pity by her father, and if it may be conjectured, also with contrition for his own neglect, which had led to all the trouble. But it is recorded that the stepmother raised an outcry at the idea of having to harbour the now notorious Margherita, who, exhausted by the journey, by the tragedy and her own grief, and now by this new misery ; hindered by a frightened and crying child, only managed to creep out of sight of the farm. There she sat down beneath a fig-tree and tried to hide her own tears as she comforted the little boy.

Later in her life, when she was accustomed to have Our Lord speak to her, He said : " Remember, *poverella*, my poor little one, the day when thy father, lacking fatherly pity and urged on by thy stepmother, did drive thee from his house. Not knowing what to do, and being without any adviser or helper, thou didst sit down under a fig-tree in his garden, and there thou didst seek in Me, a Guide, a Father, a Spouse, and Lord ; and with a humble heart thou didst confess thine utter misery of soul and body. Then, he the serpent of old, seeing thee cast out, sought to his own shame and thy destruction, to make thy comeliness and youth an inducement

[1] *Siena and Southern Tuscany*, pp. 221-2.

to presume upon My mercy; putting it into thy heart that, since thou wast now cast out, thou mightest excusably go into sin, and that, whercasoever thou shouldst come or go, thou wouldst not lack lovers among the great ones of the world, because of thine exceeding beauty. But I, who created the beauty of thy soul, and desired again to restore it—I, who loved thee still, by My inspiration, enlightened thee and admonished thy conscience that thou shouldst go into Cortona, and put thyself under obedience to My Friars Minor. And thou, gathering up thy soul, didst straightway set forth upon the road to Cortona, and there didst place thyself under the care of the brethren, as I had commanded, and with all solicitude didst submit thyself to their counsel and guidance." [1]

So it was that Margherita and her little boy set off on their walk to Cortona, which is about twelve miles from Laviano. Built upon its mountain top, Cortona is a city which cannot be hidden, and it would have been visible by the two travellers several hours before they started to climb the long winding road leading up from the flat marsh-lands of the Val di Chiana. Then, as today, she would have found herself in a maze of narrow, precipitous paved streets, confined within the massive encircling walls—so old that nobody can be sure when they were built. She dragged herself past stately palaces built on the rock, and many churches, some of them even in the thirteenth century no longer new. By the time she and her son reached the centre of the city they must have been very weary. She was homeless and penniless, wondering where to spend the night. Two noble ladies, Marinaria and Ranaria Moscari, happened to notice this stranger. Seeing that she was in distress, they spoke to her, asking what they could do by way of help. Margherita told them her story, with many tears, explaining how she had been ordered by God to go to Cortona and there do penance for her past sins. The Moscari ladies took her to their home, and the child must have enjoyed his supper, even if his mother had little appetite. Here they spent the night.

It is more than probable that these two ladies were Franciscan tertiaries. St Francis had visited Cortona several times during his life, and must have gathered round him many disciples. Outside the city was the little hermitage of Le Celle, built over some caves which had sheltered the Little Poor Man and his followers. In 1239, after Brother Elias had been forced to resign the office of Minister-General of the Friars Minor, he retired to Cortona. Having rebuilt the hermitage of Le Celle, he started to erect a church and friary within the city, which were not completed until about four years after his death in 1253. The Moscari ladies took Margherita to the church of San Francesco and introduced her to one of the community, to whom she made a general confession. This holy priest—Fra Giunta Bevegnati—became her spiritual director, and it was he who wrote her life after her death. She begged to be clothed with the habit of the Third Order, but Fra Giunta decided that her vocation must be tested. He kept her waiting three years before granting her wish.

Shriven and at peace. Margherita lived for a time in the house of her two benefactresses. She supported herself by payments received for attending the noble ladies of Cortona in their confinements, not to be a financial burden on the Moscari household. The only things she had brought from Montepulciano were her jewels, which the relations of her dead lover may have been too respectable to covet, or which she had hoped to turn to reparation for his sin and hers. Feeling

[1] *Antica Leggenda . . . di Sta. Margherita di Cortona.* Translation in Fr Cuthbert's *A Tuscan Penitent* (London, 1907), pp. 77-8.

that the palace was no place as a permanent home for a penitent, she resolved to sell her jewels, and with the money was able to buy or rent a small house. Here she remained three years, keeping her little boy with her. But as the time passed she began to realize that God was calling her to make the sacrifice of her child, both for his sake and her own. She seems to have given up being a midwife by this time, and earned her living by spinning. The poor of the city had already begun to look to Margherita when they were in trouble or any form of need. We are told that she used to go to the church of San Francesco every morning and remain there until after the Conventual Mass. On Sundays and holy days she listened to every sermon that was preached, for, as her biographer relates, " she was ever a good listener at religious discourses which enlighten and instruct the mind ". For the rest of the day she generally stayed indoors, praying and working, and looking after her son.

One day she resolved to go back to Laviano and make public reparation in her native village. Those who exclaim that her stepmother needed far more to do penance should be answered by the consideration that we do not hear she ever received the grace to do so. Penance is a grace, not a punishment; and a grace that bears fruit with dreadful rareness on the stony ground of the unkind. She returned to Cortona, and then with boldness went to the friars saying: " My fathers, to whom God sent me, do not distrust me any more. You have seen that I have left the world to reform my life by the grace of Jesus Christ. Why do you hesitate ? Why do you delay to give me the habit ? " Touched by her sincerity, they replied that she could now be admitted to the Order of Penance.

She was clothed in the tertiary habit by Fra Reginaldo, Custode of Arezzo, in 1277.[1] Shortly after this she heard the voice of Our Lord, bidding her give up the little house where she had lived for three years, and to find poorer quarters nearer the church of San Francesco. She did so, and it must have been about this same time that she made the great sacrifice of parting from her son, who was adopted by the Moscari ladies, who sent him to be educated by the Friars Minor at Arezzo. Later on he joined the Order, and for a time he was a member of the community at Cortona.

Once Margherita was left alone, her spiritual director found plenty to record on his parchments. He tells us that one day Our Lord appeared to His penitent, saying: " Child, from the lowest abyss of this world I have drawn forth a vile creature. I have chosen you, miserable as you are, to show once more that I know how to raise up and justify sinners, and to change foul and detestable objects into what is most precious." Our Lord went on to say: " I have made you the Mirror of sinners. The most obstinate shall learn, by your example, how willingly I exert My mercy to save them. You shall be the Ladder of sinners, that they may be brought to Me by the example of your life. I have set you as a Light in darkness, a new Star I have given to the world, a Standard under which sinners will return to Me, a Path to the hopeless, a Voice of mercy. . . . I have destined thee to be the Net of sinners. . . . I wish that the example of thy conversion should preach

[1] At that date the Province of the Friars Minor in Tuscany was divided up into seven sub-sections, known as Custodes. Cortona belonged to the Custody of Arezzo. It was Fra Reginaldo's successor in office, Fra Giovanni da Castiglione, who instructed Fra Giunta Bevegnati to take careful note of all the graces his penitent received from God. Fra Giovanni became her confessor extraordinary. Having acted as Inquisitor of the Custody of Arezzo, he had experience of dealing with devout persons who might be tinged with heresy.

hopefulness to those who are despairing, and that it should be to repentant sinners what the morning dew is to plants parched by the sun's heat. I wish that ages to come may be convinced that I am always opening the arms of My mercy."

Then came the message of encouragement: "I have planted you, child, in the garden of My love. For your blessed Father Francis had nothing so much at heart as My love." Margherita asked Our Lord why He called the Franciscans "the garden of His love"—had He not other gardens where charity flourished? The answer came: "I find nowhere else in the world so beautiful a school of divine love. I have given this Order to you, and I have given you to the children of this Order to instruct." Despite its transcribers and translators, some of whom have left a taint of petty partiality to the Order, the words have some of the light that shone seraphically on Alverna. "Wonder not because I once told you that I had planted you in the garden of love, namely in the Order of the Blessed Father Francis which is ever verdant under the rays of My sun, while the rest of the world is dry and barren. In My Father's name I grant you a fresh gift. You, my little plant, shall flourish and spread forth branches which shall overshadow the faithful. It is My Will that Mercy should drop down like dew from these branches to refresh the withered plants of the world."

Day after day when she was alone in her room, she heard the voice of Our Lord speaking to her, and in obedience to her director she did her best to remember what was said, and to relate everything afterwards. So on one occasion Fra Giunta jotted down the following message: "O child, be white with My innocence and ruddy with My love, for you are the third light granted to the Order of My beloved Francis. He, among the friars, was the first: Clare, among the nuns, was the second: and you, in the Order of Penance, shall be the third." Vision succeeded vision. She lived almost entirely in a supernatural world.

Margherita begged to be allowed to become a recluse, but Fra Giunta forbade this. Moreover, one day Our Lord told her that she must go daily to the church of San Francesco, and assist at the whole of the Divine Office, recited by the friars in their choir.[1] It was revealed to her that she must occupy a certain place in the church, near the pulpit, where hung a miraculous crucifix. She accepted the loss of her son, having been told in a vision that he would become a Friar Minor and a priest. She refused to accept alms, but begged her food, just enough for each day, giving away everything on which she could lay her hands, even her veil, her girdle—even the little sticks she had gathered to kindle a fire for cooking, and adding to these the gift of all her spare time to the service of the poor. She lived in the utmost poverty, and was ever trying to add to her penances. Needless to say she found enemies in the city. Many people regarded her as a hypocrite and said she was mad. Others were jealous of the interest taken in her by the Friars Minor, who, so it was whispered, were encouraging a heretic if not a witch. Even the Friars themselves began to wonder if they were being prudent, and at a Provincial Chapter there was a heated debate about how this queer woman at Cortona should be treated. A solution for the problem was found by removing Fra Giunta to another community, and appointing Fra Giovanni as her ordinary confessor. Eventually he was moved, and Margherita was strictly forbidden to enter the church of San Francesco, or to have any contact with the friars. This trial seems

[1] This was merely in accordance with the spirit of the Third Order Rule, which laid down that "all are to go to Matins in the fast of St Martin and in the great fast [Lent], unless inconvenience for persons or affairs should threaten".

to have lasted for several years, at the end of which Fra Giunta returned to Cortona and resumed the direction of his penitent.

When one thinks of all this, it is easy to realize to what depths of loneliness she must have been driven, but she was consoled by her Divine Master. One day He said to her: "Behold and consider with your utmost attention, and you will see how true it is that I am continually crucified by mankind. Child, there are more Jews who conspire against Me among the Christians of the present day than there were around Pontius Pilate at the time of My Passion. Were my Body as vast as the world, and still capable of suffering, not a spot would be found on it that was not torn with wounds caused by the sins of mankind." Desperate with love, Margherita begged to be taken into the Wound of His Heart, for she would then be in all the other Wounds.

It must not be supposed that this poor woman, living alone in the city of Cortona, did not interest herself in what was going on around her. People came from far and wide to ask her advice and to lay bare their souls. There was little that went on in the outside world that did not reach her ears. Between January and September 1276 three popes succeeded each other. Early in December 1277 the friars would have told Margherita that a Franciscan tertiary had been elected as Pope, with the title of Nicholas III. Not long afterwards came the news that he had published a bull dealing with the interpretation of poverty in the Rule of St Francis. It was hardly ever that a civil war was not being waged in Italy during the years that she was living as a poor tertiary in Cortona. In 1281 Pope Martin IV was forced to flee from Rome and take up his residence at Orvieto. He died at Perugia four years later. It is recorded that on one occasion Margherita was told in a vision that she must warn the bellicose Bishop of Arezzo, Guglielmo Ubertini Pazzi, that unless he stopped fighting, God would strike him down dead. He disbanded his troops and peace was restored in that part of Tuscany. She was nothing if not a peacemaker. In the spring of 1288, after a delay of nearly a year since the death of Honorius IV, there was much gossip among the community at San Francesco over the news that the first Friar Minor had been elected Pope—Fra Gerolimo Masci—who had taken the name of Nicholas IV. Three years later Margherita heard that the Saracens had captured Acre, and that the Holy Places of Palestine were in the hands of the infidels. Although she never ceased to be a penitent she had, need it be said, no abiding preoccupation with her own sins. She prayed for sinners the world over, and attracted like a magnet other souls who had lacked the courage to confess their sins. She sent them comforted to the confessionals in the church of San Francesco.

Some time about 1285, the actual date is not certain, she gave up her room and moved to the Hospital of the Misericordia which, according to the generally accepted tradition, she had founded. 'Founded' is hardly the correct word to use, because this hospital evolved spontaneously out of a group of poor women who assisted her with her works of charity. By degrees these women became an unenclosed community of Franciscan tertiaries. Cortona turned to Margherita in her latter years for comfort in all its troubles; brought to her sick children, the tempted, the sad; and she healed them of their diseases, mental and physical.[1]

[1] The group of tertiaries who helped Margherita in caring for the sick, first in her own home and later on in the hospital, became a community of the Third Order Regular after her death, known as "Le Poverelle". This community existed in Cortona until 1810, when it was disbanded, and the Ospedale della Misericordia handed over to the Sisters of another Congregation.

Tempted again and again by the devil to give up her penances, to be contented with the signs of God's favour and the praise of the world, Margherita went her way and ignored him.

She had wanted to be a recluse for so many years, and it is easy to imagine her joy one day in 1288 when Our Lord told her that she could now leave the confines of the city, and spend the rest of her life in a hut adjacent to the then ruined church of St Basil, outside the walls. When the friars heard this news, some of them protested, pointing out that, in the event of her death, they would be almost certain to lose possession of her valuable body. What a loss this would be for the church of San Francesco! Then Our Lord, so Fra Giunta relates, told Margherita to deliver the following message: "Fear not to tell Fra Giovanni and thy confessor why I wish thee to be a recluse, so that they may no longer hesitate to lend their assistance." She did so, with the result that the church of St Basil was repaired, and a priest appointed to serve it. It seems that Margherita had her private oratory, where Fra Giunta used to celebrate Mass and give her Holy Communion. But she was seldom left alone for very long. Crowds came up from the city to disturb her wished-for solitude, seeking her advice and intercession.

Her way from now onwards was from glory to glory, from triumph to triumph of hope. Her humility, founded on hope, was secure, for Christ Himself said to her: "O Margherita, my child, you are indeed a pearl in My Eyes. . . . You are a pearl before God, holy and great by the power of My Love! . . . You are pure; because of your chastity which you so love, I have set you among the choir of virgins!" It is the Resurrection, Innocence risen again, to witness that, in God, all things are possible and all things can be restored.

Margherita lived nine years in that cell high above Cortona, exposed to all the winds of heaven. She continued to have frequent visions and ecstasies, but went on praying for sinners and for the peace of the world. It is more than probable that one day in the late summer of 1294, Fra Giunta or another of her many visitors told her that an old hermit, named Pietro di Morone, who was living in a cave in the Apennines, had been dragged from his solitude and consecrated and crowned as Pope Celestine V at Aquila. He resigned the papacy after six months, and died a prisoner in a castle near Agnani. His last words were: "I have wished for nothing in the world but a cell, and a cell they have given me." Such, too, was Margherita's wish, and like St Celestine V, she was granted it, but in a different manner.

About two years after the death of this hermit-pope, on the morning of January 3, 1297, Margherita heard the voice of an angel telling her that she would join her Beloved in heaven on the twenty-second day of February. For some time she had been very ill, suffering from an abscess in her mouth. She lay on her bed and talked to the countless friends who insisted on visiting her. With a smile she assured them: "The way of salvation is easy, it is just enough to love." Fortified by the Last Sacraments she passed away as the sun rose above the mountains. It was the morning of February 22—just as she had foretold.

The friars at San Francesco, who feared they would not get her body, must have said "we told you so", when the news came that the Bishop had given orders that this saintly tertiary was to be buried within the church of St Basil. Her funeral must have been spectacular, attended by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the city, as well as by such of the inhabitants of the neighbouring towns and villages who could possibly manage to spare the time. Among the vast crowd of mourners

were the two Moscari ladies, who had befriended Margherita when she arrived in Cortona twenty-three years before. After her death numberless miracles were worked at her tomb, including, says her first biographer, the raising of twelve persons from the dead, and many more, we need no telling, from spiritual death. It was felt that the little church of St Basil was not worthy of such a great saint, and within a year it was enlarged. In 1433 St Bernardino of Siena arranged with the Bishop that it should be handed over to the Observant Friars Minor, who have remained there ever since. Around its walls the story of the Tuscan penitent was painted by Bufalmacco and Lorenzetti.

The cultus of Bd Margaret was approved by Leo X. She was canonized by Benedict XIII in 1728. Her feast is kept by the Franciscan Order as a double-major on February 22. In the diocese of Cortona, she ranks as a double of the second class. Here is also kept a feast of the translation of her relics on the Sunday before Pentecost. Within the city of Cortona her feast in February is a double of the first class, for she is its special patron.

Six hundred years have come and gone since St Margaret of Cortona died, but her memory endures in that city to which she fled as a penitent. She is a very human saint, and the people of Cortona love her. It is seldom that one climbs the steep hill and enters the church dedicated to Santa Margherita without finding somebody kneeling in prayer before the high altar above which lies the incorrupt body of the saint in a glass coffin. " Her name is still familiarly dear on the lips of peasants and children, who invoke her, their all-powerful friend, as we may hear any day in the fields or the byways of her home :

O Lily of our fields,
O Violet of humility,
O little Sister of the Seraphs,
Ora pro nobis." [1]

BD ANGELA OF FOLIGNO (1248-1309)

BORN a year after St Margaret of Cortona there was another equally remarkable woman, the greater part of whose life was spent in the heart of the wide valley of Spoleto, about forty miles from Cortona. As we pass from Tuscany into Umbria the landscape changes : the hills become softer and rounder in outline ; the colours more delicate and fragile. Isolated on its hill-top stands the city of Perugia. Then on past Assisi, which, to use the words of Mr Edward Hutton, " kneels on the skirts of Monte Subasio—a religious in a homely brown habit, vowed to God ", and on through little Spello, we come to Foligno, the city of Bd Angela : the greatest of all the mystics of *Umbria Mystica.*

Foligno—unlike most of the cities of Umbria which for purposes of defence perched on mountains and hills—lies in a great fertile plain, with the river Topino, a tributary of the Tiber, flowing past its walls. On one side the lower spurs of the Apennines rise up precipitously ; on the other the less imposing range of the Martano hills. It is a rather dull town, more important as an industrial centre than for its works of art. During the Middle Ages Foligno became powerful, for it was the meeting place of the roads to Rome, Arezzo, and Perugia, and the mountain passes which led to the Adriatic. St Francis visited this city again and again,

[1] Edward Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

but it retains no visible traces of his presence. So far as we are concerned it is honoured for its part in the story of the greatest mystic of the Third Order, who, in the cathedral of San Feliciano, one morning about seven hundred years ago, heard Christ whisper : " I love thee more than any woman in the valley of Spoleto."

Angela was born in 1248 : a time when many of the first disciples of St Francis were still living—Clare, Bernard, Angelo, Ruffino, Leo, Masseo, Illuminato, Silvestro and Giles. Over in Tuscany such tertiaries as Umiliana, Veridiana, Torello, Bartolo and Davanzato were praying and working to bring peace and happiness to their fellow men. Pope Innocent IV was fighting the Emperor Frederick : St Louis was setting out on his abortive attempt to regain the Holy Places in Palestine. Such was the background of Angela's childhood.

The fervour of the primitive Franciscans did not touch her as a young girl. She may have seen more than one of these holy men and women, and there can be no doubt that the doings of the Poor Men, the Poor Ladies, and the Brothers and Sisters of Penance must have been discussed at Foligno in her presence. For this city is only five miles from Assisi. Yet there is a wind that blows the fruited seeds of holiness further than the mind can measure, so that they spring up and blossom and bear fruit in their turn where they might be the least expected to appear.

Angela was the child of wealthy parents. She made what was presumably a good marriage—one where money was not lacking, though, as far as can be judged from what we know, everything else was. Neither from her parents, nor from husband, nor from children does she appear to have received what she always felt to be a necessity—love and understanding.

Little is known about her before that conversion took place in 1285. She says herself, in no unmeasured terms, that she was a humbug : that she liked to play with a few pieties and to have a name for being devout. Strong as the instinct is to dislike a humbug, it is not easy to feel an aversion from Angela at this period, perhaps because it looks as though her make-belief was only a longing for the spiritual life, or she was too troubled with other longings to give her attention to following the grace she admired. Here was an impulsive, impetuous, intolerant nature : she was quick witted and quick tongued, but also, if a word may be coined, quick-hearted. She seems to have seen through her family's concern that she should make this ' good marriage ', and to have suffered because there was no affection in it. As to the marriage, whether she was, in legal terms, an unfaithful wife is not clear ; but she seems to have sought elsewhere the love she could not find at home and to have tolerated *disorderly* affections if not scandalous ones. However, there came a day when, in her own words : " I did begin to reflect upon my sins, the knowledge of which did fill me with so great a dread that, fearing to be condemned into hell, I wept bitterly." She was then about thirty-seven. However it came about, this was plain attrition ; and it sounds as though she was in a state of mortal sin, for she was not saint enough then to see the danger of perdition in anything else.

Angela's conversion took place eleven years after that of Margaret of Cortona. It was a slow, sad business : not in time, perhaps, but in manner—different to the conversion of the Tuscan penitent, because Angela felt, not contrition, but shame. She could not bring herself to confess some of her sins, and she went to Communion after a bad confession, and then had no peace, day or night, from the further terror that she had added sacrilege to all the rest. No such scruples had troubled

Margaret. In desperation Angela turned to St Francis, knowing that at least he, like his Master, was the friend of sinners, and prayed to him to send her a confessor to whom she could explain the worst. The Little Poor Man appeared to her in a dream, saying laconically: " Sister, if you had prayed to me sooner, your prayers would have been granted sooner. They are granted now." The following morning she made her way to the Cathedral of San Feliciano, where she found a friar, her cousin, Fra Arnaldo. Kneeling before him she poured out in bitterness, her shame and grief; receiving, still with those bitter sobs shaking her like a weary child, his absolution. It was this Franciscan who was to fulfil the same office for Angela of Foligno as Fra Giunta had already begun to do for Margaret of Cortona. The very fact that he was a relative would not make matters easier, but whether it was that he would understand some complicated circumstances in her family life or that there was a supernatural assistance which made it possible for her even to confess her sins to a cousin, to him she unburdened her soul, and he henceforth acted as her director, guide and secretary. It is thanks to Fra Arnaldo that we now possess her mystical doctrine.

These writings begin with an account of her conversion which she divides into thirty stages.[1] To the modern reader some of them are not very clear stages, and may have consisted in the bestowal of a grace which, try as she might, Angela could not explain to Fra Arnaldo. But from attrition and shame—real though only faltering steps towards God—she climbed up in perseverance, even if at first she felt little more than disgust with herself and fear of God's judgments. However, grace soon began to suggest to her the thought of God's mercy which had led her to take those steps, and she wept her bitter thanks—still more thankful to find that she could weep, since it meant that she realized what her danger had been and what had been God's goodness to her. Then came the moment when she realized a truth, the realization of which shows the unmistakable development of a Franciscan trait of character—that she had offended also the creatures God had made for her. Wherefore she says: " I did pray all creatures, seeing how that I had offended them in as much as I had offended the Creator, that they would not accuse me before God. Thus did it appear unto me that all creatures and all the saints did have compassion upon me, wherefore with a greater fire of love did I apply myself to prayer unto God more than was customary."

It is as though we saw one of Fra Angelico's paintings of the whole company of heaven and an early pageant of the Umbrian countryside fold itself round the cold and lonely Angela. She realized her kinship with the mountains and the hills that rose up on either side of the valley of Spoleto where she dwelt: the vines, the corn and the flowers that grew by the wayside: and she knew that she and all creation belonged to God, and were loved by Him. In such company she is not lonely any more, nor cold, wrapt in their fervour. It is only the mystic who sees himself as a creature served by a hierarchy of creatures, supported by the goodwife Earth, refreshed by Sister Water, warmed by Brother Fire and Brother Sun, fed by herbs and animals who lay down their lives for the world, for the just and the unjust, obedient to their divinely appointed purpose, feeding with themselves the darling of God, whom God feeds with Himself, for whom God died. Science

[1] The original manuscript found its way to the library of the Sacro Convento in Assisi in about 1381. Its full title is: *Liber sororis Lelle de Fulgineo ordinis continentium sine postibus. Cujus principium est Vere fidelium experientia probat.* For the various printed editions and translations, see Bibliography.

patiently demonstrates the interdependence of all created creatures, but only the mystic truly realizes it.

In the love-hung cloister of this new earth, Angela began to gaze upon the Cross, and she says: " In this beholding of the Cross I did so burn with the fire of love and remorse that, standing before the Cross, I did divest myself of everything, and did thus offer myself unto Him. And although I feared greatly, I did nevertheless promise to observe perpetual chastity, and not to offend in any of my members, accusing my members one by one of past sins. And I did pray Him that He would make me keep this my promise, that is, to preserve chastity and keep guard over my thoughts, for upon the one hand I did greatly fear to promise, and upon the other the aforesaid fire compelled me, and I had no power to resist." Clearly this ' fire ' was not mere fervour, but a grace mystic as well as moral. And then she adds : " There was given unto me the desire to seek out and know the way of the Cross. . . . I was enlightened that I must first pardon all those who had offended me, and thereupon put away from me all earthly things, not only out of mine affections, but likewise in very deed, and all men and women, friends and kindred, and every other things, but especially my possessions must I put away, and even my own self." She tells us that she felt it " a shameful and hard thing " to put away her fine clothes, because she was still living as the lady of her husband's house, and admits that she " did not yet feel much love for God ".

To read this is not enough : it must be pondered, for it shimmers with small thorns of light, on which our mind needs to be caught and be pierced by them. Angela is the antithesis of those saints at whose shrine we wonder rather than worship, for they are so angelic that their light blinds us with fear as we compare our earthly heaviness with their heavenly integrity. On the contrary, Angela is much like one of Boccaccio's lovely ladies—Fiametta with her viol, or Lauretta, with a mouth for wit and kisses, and a grace and a fleetness, a morning brightness and an evening languor, with such capacity for joy that in denying it to her God, she seems to be denying a drop of dew to a lark. Leonardo da Vinci takes the picture from Boccaccio and, while he leaves the mystery in her eyes, he darkens them with sorrow of hope of love deferred, and the gesture with which she gives the hand to be kissed is a gesture of castle courtesy from which her thoughts were far away. That is imagination : but Da Vinci could have drawn Angela on to his canvas and portrayed her in the colours of the dark-rose and grey-green and stormy indigo, with a sops-in-wine gilliflower in her long-fingered hand, magnificent with desire for love and wisdom. Boccaccio could never do it in his tempers. And Christ—the Master Da Vinci did not study under long enough—having looked at her from all eternity, bade her wear sackcloth and stand on stones.

When it was impossible to deny this command, Angela appealed desperately to Our Lord, saying that she was at the mercy of her family and that they were worldly folk. She had her duty to them, and the situation seemed impossible to the point of lunacy, what with their demands on her, and God's demands. But she had to take the step of turning herself into a woman who looked and behaved as though the world was dead to her and she to the world, and brave the resulting comments. This state of affairs lasted apparently for about five years, at a cost to her sensitive nature that may be conjectured.

Then suddenly she was absolutely alone. They were dead—all of them, relations, husband and children—whether in one of the epidemics of fever that were prevalent enough we are not told. Though Angela was later to write of

some spiritual grief that it was " even greater " than her sorrow at that time, which shows she was far from heartless, she only notes that she " had great consolation at their deaths ". Probably they were startled into putting their souls in order, so that Angela, who had reason to fear for their eternal salvation, was as hopeful for them as she had become for her own soul.

In this beginning, the story of Angela almost ends : for here begins the story of God's glory in her and her death to self. The rest of her life is but a long gazing upon the Cross, and an ever-growing realization of how Christ in His members bore the punishment due to our sinful members, and how He stripped Himself of all, putting on holy poverty. By love, more and more, she strips herself of all that is not Christ-in-her.

It is related that she made a pilgrimage to Rome, and by degrees was able to rid herself of all her worldly goods, including a country house for which she had a great affection. As to the money she had inherited, it was distributed among the poor.

One morning in the spring of 1291 she set out from Foligno, by way of the road that brought her to the old walled town of Spello after about four miles. Then she turned right up a less frequented road, climbing all the time, where, so she says, she began to " walk with the Holy Spirit between the vines ". Maybe it was when she got her first glimpse of the towers of Assisi that she heard the words, which later on she repeated to Fra Arnaldo : " I will bear thee company and speak with thee all the way, . . . I will make no end of speaking, and thou wilt not be able to attend to aught but Me. . . . My daughter, who art sweet to Me, who art My beloved and My temple, do thou love Me, for I love thee greatly and much more than thou lovest Me. . . . Thou didst pray to My servant Francis. He loved Me greatly and therefore I accomplished great things in him. If any soul loved Me more than he, in her I would do still more." Angela was afraid that this might not be the voice of God but of the devil trying to tempt her. She passed out of this trance, looked up at the steep slopes of Monte Subasio on her right, and over the wide stretching valley on the left, then cast her eyes on the vineyards again. But no matter in what way she looked, she still heard the same voice saying : " This too is My creature. If the whole world came to thee now, thou couldst not speak to it, for it is the whole world which is within thee."

By this time it was near midday, and the sun was high in the heavens. Angela continued her climb up the steep road through the vines and olive trees, entering Assisi by a gateway which was pulled down in later years when the city was enlarged and encircled with new walls. Passing through the busy market place, she made her way to the church of San Francesco. She had a few friends with her, and they were horrified when she collapsed on the pavement of the Lower Church, apparently in a sort of epileptic fit. For she screamed aloud and nobody could make out what she was saying. Some of the friars gathered round, and tried to pacify her, but to no purpose. Then, probably recognizing her, they called Fra Arnaldo, who happened to be in the adjacent *convento*. It seems that he was much embarrassed by the commotion caused by his cousin, until it dawned on him that this was no mortal madness, but divine ecstasy. After Angela had recovered she told her confessor that she had been overwhelmed by a realization of the omnipotence of God, and her own baseness.

Once again, she heard a voice reminding her of all that Christ had suffered for her, and her soul was overcome with joy. She came back to the church later

on, either that day or the next, and told Fra Arnaldo that she had received the following message from heaven: "Now, My sweet daughter and temple, is the moment when I shall accomplish what I said, and under the form of this consolation I love thee, but know that I shall never leave thee if thou lovest Me." She said that at that same moment she had a vision almost too wonderful to put into words: "I saw something perfect, an immense majesty which I cannot describe, but which seemed to me the Highest Good. It said many sweet words to me as it withdrew slowly, evenly, with immense sweetness." So she returned to Foligno, probably hardly conscious of the vineyards or olive trees, repeating again and again: "O Love unknown, why hast Thou left me? Why, why, why?" For as she explained later on: "I cried because I wished to die, and it was great sorrow to me to have to live."

It was shortly before her pilgrimage to Assisi that Angela had been received into the Third Order, and for the remaining eighteen years of her life she lived more or less in solitude, except for a few companions. She is now as candid and direct as previously she had been—we have it merely on her own evidence—a humbug. She tells vividly of her fear of dying of cold and hunger and nakedness if she gives away everything, but God had touched her in Assisi in such a way that she forgets to eat and sleep, counts all her penances as nothing, never tires of her bodily hardship, but walks the world ravished with her first taste of Paradise, after so much misery and bitterness and difficulty.

So fortified, Angela can endure further purgation. Indescribable—even to her—are the temptations of body and soul by which she is refined in the ancient furnace of the saints. She finds herself full of evil which she cannot resist, yet never would consent to. All is submerged save the highest point of her will. When the agony is over, she can find no rest save in the deepest humility, and longs to let the whole world know that she is the hypocrite who once let her guests see that she abstained and fasted and tried to edify them with the sight of a very poor bed, hiding some extra coverings. "Know ye," she longed to proclaim, "that during all my life I have studied how that I might obtain the fame of sanctity, but verily I say unto you that through the iniquity and hidden dissembling of mine heart have I deceived many and have been the murderer of many souls and of mine own soul likewise." She turns out the very garrets and cellars of her nature, and it is a comfort to us to recognize some of the poor rubbish that can be hoarded long by one who will be invoked as a saint after her death.

Angela's spiritual biography being the important thing, the dates and events of her human life have had to take second place in this account.[1] She lived about eighteen years in the Third Order. It appears that she made subsequent pilgrimages to Assisi, but for the rest remained as a poor woman living on alms in the city where she had been the mistress of a great household, and the woman of whose appealing beauty (we may guess) less attractive ladies were jealous, blaming their own virtue for their lack of admirers. Now as 'Sister Lelle' she had as admirers some of the holiest of those who sought to keep the Friars Minor true to the spirit of Francis, and the beauty they admired was that of her penitence.

It would appear that Angela never felt called to join the Poor Clares. Her vocation was to the Order of Penance, and there gathered round her other tertiaries, both men and women, who carried the Franciscan spirit into workshops and market, cottages and palaces. In the latter part of her life she founded at Foligno a community of the Third Order, who, although bound by the three vows of religion,

did not keep enclosure. They devoted themselves to works of charity.[1] Her companion, Bd Pascalina, established two convents of the Third Order; one in Foligno, the other at Spoleto. It is recorded that Angela and her sister tertiaries used to visit the hospital of San Feliciano at Foligno, where they loved to tend the poor lepers, washing their hands and feet, and drinking the water that had been used for this purpose with great devotion.

Fatevi piccoli, fatevi piccoli—" Make yourselves little, make yourselves little " —were the words she kept on repeating to the disciples who gathered round her deathbed—almost the same words as were spoken by St Thérèse of Lisieux six hundred years later. Her last recorded words were broken, seeming to come from far away: " The Word was incarnate. . . . No creature is sufficient . . . no intelligence, even of angels, is enough." Then when those kneeling beside her asked what she meant, she replied " To understand ".

She breathed her last breath on January 4, 1309, at the age of sixty-one. Her body was laid to rest in the church of San Francesco in Foligno, where many miracles were wrought by her intercession. She was beatified by Innocent XII in 1693. Until a few years ago the feast of Bd Angela was kept by the Friars Minor as a semi-double on January 4, but in the new Roman-Seraphic Calendar she is included with Bd Antonia and other widows of the Second and Third Orders on February 28. In the diocese of Foligno her feast day remains on January 4.

In the limited space available to us in this book, it is impossible to deal adequately with this great visionary and teacher, perhaps the most outstanding of all Franciscan mystics. As Père Pourrat has written: " After having been purified in the crucible of sufferings and temptations, God raised Angela to the most perfect mystical states. She was not, to the same degree as St Gertrude, ' the saint of the humanity of Christ ', although she had many visions, famous on account of their realistic character, of the scenes in the passion of the Saviour. Rather is she the saint of the transcendency of God. Her visions and her ecstasies put her in direct relationship with the Divinity whose immensity, incomprehensibility and ineffability she experienced most vividly." [2]

[1] Some historians have maintained that it was Bd Angela of Foligno who founded the first Third Order sisterhood devoting itself to works of charity. This could be true so far as Italy, but in Germany, France and Belgium similar Communities of the Third Order existed a considerable time before Bd Angela's foundation in Umbria. (Cf. Fr Marion Habig, O.F.M., ' Franciscan Charity Sisters ', in *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, Vol. XX (October 1941), 299-305.)

[2] *Christian Spirituality* (Eng. trans., London, 1924), Vol. II, 192.

CHAPTER IV

COURTS AND LAW COURTS (1240-1360)

INTRODUCTION

WE move on now into a rather different world, and leave behind the first Saints and Blessed of the Third Order, and those of more illustrious rank who were their contemporaries. Once again, let us consider their background and the world in which they lived. "The thirteenth century began with the sudden paralysis of the Empire, and the triumphant pontificate of Innocent III. Its early years saw the dissolution of the great Angevin dominion, and the unawaited bridling of the English kingship. The weak French monarchy suddenly took a leading place in Europe. The capture of Constantinople abased the pre-eminence of the Levant. The Christians of Spain finally gained the upper hand at Las Navas de Tolosa. The Papacy then puts out its strength: the Albigensian heresy goes down before it; its henchmen the friars permeate all the activities of the West; it begins once more its duel with the obsolescent Empire strangely championed by a pioneer of intellectual revolt and innovation in Frederick II. The Empire falls; Germany and Italy change their feature; but the Papacy is left deeply infected, deeply distrusted, and enslaved to its own political schemes and alliances. Meanwhile, Europe has seen the face of Asia changed by the Mongol conquest, and herself is only saved perhaps because the wave of invasion is exhausted. The strange experiment of the Latin Empire fails, and the Crusades peter out with the defeats of St Louis and the loss of Acre. And amid the clash of arms and revolutions the merchants throng the ways of traffic by land and sea, scholars trudge beside them, Florence becomes the clearing-house of Europe, waves of art pass from Palermo to Milan, from Paris to Westminster, and in churches rising out of the turmoil of peace and war those potent generations put their hearts in stone and make the figments of the brain their most lasting memorial." [1]

The Franciscan tertiaries whose lives have been told in these three first chapters were all mixed up to a greater or lesser degree in the clash of arms and revolutions. They were side by side with the merchants thronging the ways of traffic by land and sea, and the scholars who filled the universities of Europe. It was due largely to their prayers and penances during this century of turmoil of peace and war that the Christian religion managed to hold fast in Europe. The Third Order of St Francis during this period was like a grain of mustard seed, which the man took and sowed in his ground, or the leaven that the woman took and buried away in three measures of meal. The seed grew into a tree and birds of many species came and settled in its branches. But the Third Order was not quite strong enough to leaven the whole batch of European civilization.

[1] Introduction to *The Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. VI (1929), pp. xvi, xvii.

ST YVO OF BRITTANY (1253-1303)

YVES HÉLOURY was born in the manor house of Kermartin on October 17, 1253. It is situated about a mile south of the cathedral town of Tréguier, close to the village of Minity. The river Jeudy here flows through a peaceful valley with rich farms and woods on either side. Tréguier is redolent of the past, remote from the world. Life here, so the visitor feels, must be uneventful and untroubled. Except during the summer months there is little traffic in the narrow streets or in the lime-shaded market-place. In these days few ships find their way up the tidal river to be berthed alongside the quays. The slender spire of the Gothic cathedral watches over the grey roofs of the many gabled houses and their gardens—gay in springtime with lilac and wallflowers.

In the Middle Ages, when astrology was accepted by many devout Catholics, it was noted that Yvo was born under the sign of the Zodiac which is called the Balance. Those scales of justice were his sign in the heaven of the angels as well as in the smaller world of the astrologers.

The baby boy was christened after a holy Breton hermit and a famous Breton Dominican who had gone on the Crusades with King Louis IX.[1] He inherited the tendencies of the solitary rather than those of the Friar Preacher, so he was not sent, as were most elder sons, into the army. Brittany, especially the district around Tréguier, must have been a paradise to a child unafraid of solitude, for it was—and still is—full of memories and stories of saints and hermits who have given their names to every hill, valley and cavern in the rocks, just as is the case in Cornwall and south Wales. The Trégorois farmers grow flax, and the legends have been kept alive through the ages while the women sing to the humming of the spinning wheels. Yvo loved to learn and sing the rhymed legends of these saintly heroes. He seems to have been a fairly typical little Breton, running wild in the sea-air and sunshine, and the wind and rain, yet proud of his ancestral home beside the river Jeudy. He loved his mother with intense devotion. There is a story of his talking with her when she was " four leagues distant ". A schoolfellow doubted this tale, so Yvo said : " Put your feet on mine and you shall hear ", and he heard the distant voice. His mother had but one ambition for Yvo—she wanted him to be a saint.

His schoolmaster, Jean de Kerhoz, was the parish priest of a neighbouring village who lived to be a witness at the canonization of his former pupil. When he could teach the boy no more—for he had quick wits to drive his Breton logic—he went with him as tutor to the University of Paris. It must have been an overwhelming change—the great city after a quiet village set amid the wide cloud-decked skies and wind-swept open spaces of Brittany. Yvo may have been glad to have his tutor beside him, though it was the custom for nationalities to stick together in the international mob of students. Young men from the different provinces of France usually formed close-knit groups in the University, so Yvo would have found companions with whom he could talk Breton.

Yvo was fourteen when he went to Paris, an age when it was surely natural to think of nothing but fun, but he had already begun his life of penance. His tutor soon discovered, if he did not know it already, that his pupil slept, not in his bed, though it stood there as an innocent temptation, but on the rushes that

[1] Alternative spellings are Ivo, Yvo and Yves.

strewed the floor ; and that he gave away the meat courses of his dinner and cooled his young blood with the vegetables. On this spartan diet he wrestled with the Arts and Civil Law.

In 1277, at the age of twenty-four, Yvo and his tutor went to Orleans to enable him to study Canon Law. We are told that the young man kept out of quarrels, drank no wine, recited the Little Hours of Our Lady, and worked hard. Canon Law fascinated him. He was evidently a keen, and perhaps a brilliant student.

After thirteen years of study Yvo returned to Brittany in 1280, wearing the robes of a lawyer. He settled at Rennes, as an ecclesiastical magistrate. It was here that something took place of which he himself left record. A Franciscan, years later, asking him when he had begun to live a mortified life, was told that at Rennes Yvo had listened to a course of lectures on the Four Books of Sentences by Peter Lombard, and other conferences on the Bible. These expositions had made it plain to him the futility of earthly things. But, he remarked, for eight years there had been in him a great fight between reason and sensuality. The victory had begun to be given him in the ninth year and he did not win the battle until after the tenth year.

Stories began to be told about this remarkable young lawyer. Perhaps the most outstanding which has come down to us is that which tells how one day Yvo had to go to Tours to defend there in the ecclesiastical courts a judgment he had given on a marriage case. He put up at his usual hostelry, where he found the innkeeper's wife in tears. She told her guest that two men had come to her with a box which they asked her to mind for them, and only to give it back when they were both present. Some while later both men turned up, stayed the night, and were about to depart when one ran back, demanding the box. She had given it to him. After a day or two, the other man reappeared and claimed it. Horrified, the woman reminded him that she had given the box to his companion on their last visit. She was accused of being the accomplice of the man who had gone off with the box, and the case was brought before the civil court. The poor woman had no hope of defending herself as she had no money. Her accuser declared there were many valuable papers and much else in the missing box.

"Leave it to me", said Maître Yvo.

He accompanied her to the law courts, and presenting himself as her counsel, informed the magistrate, to the astonishment of that gentleman and the not less astonishment of the poor woman, that his client had recovered the box. But when the magistrate asked for it to be produced, Maître Yves regretted, with a smile on his face, that he was hindered, since his client, so the magistrate would remember, had promised only to produce it in the presence of both the owners. At that, the remaining owner showed such fury that the magistrate became suspicious, and on making enquiries, found that the box contained nothing but old iron. No wonder that those in court looked on Maître Yvo as a Breton Solomon.

In that same year, 1284, he became something more than legal adviser to the Bishop of Rennes. He returned to Tréguier where he was ordained priest. The fact that he had not been ordained before was due to his overwhelming humility and respect for the priesthood. Evidently his friend the Bishop overcame these scruples with the plea for the many sheep needing shepherds. He entrusted Yvo with the parish of Trédez, a small village west of Lannion, close to the sea and overlooking the sand dunes and the wide bay of St Michel. It was a remote spot, quite seven miles from the nearest town. This new status curtailed his work as

an ecclesiastical lawyer, because priests were allowed to plead only for themselves, their parents or the poor. All the more joyfully did Yvo not only accept the briefs of those who could not pay any fee, but he would even seek out those whom he knew were suffering under some injustice and take the matter to court for them. Louis IX had been busy making laws that protected the poor and the ignorant from untrained ' pleaders ', and from the great landowners who insisted on holding their own courts of so-called justice. The King laid down that lawyers must have at least three years' training before they could undertake the work of barristers. The Breton ecclesiastical courts were held on a plan the people approved. The advocates and barristers helped the judge by putting before him the result, written out by notaries, of the verbal accounts they had extracted from their clients. The poor liked this method much better than that which prevailed in the civil courts of taking everything on internal evidence, wherein a man might be confused or frightened into saying something he did not mean. Yvo used the best methods of both worlds. All his study and skill and experience were at the disposal of his clients, but when those were of no avail, he would go away and celebrate a Mass of the Holy Ghost, and some of the stories told of him show what marvellous changes of heart this obtained, and how peace was made when he did so.

In the courts this priest-lawyer was so swift and sure in his methods that other barristers who were long winded and kept a case dragging on while their clients had money to pay them, detested Yvo. They would insult him, but with his invariable good temper, he would remark that insults do not alter the rights of justice.

He did not mind acting in unpopular cases. He defended one poor man against a rich abbot, an action which cannot have added to his popularity in monastic circles. He defended a poor woman against one of his own friends. Yet he never seems to have lost his friends.

There is a tradition that it was about 1291 that Yvo was admitted to the ranks of the Order of Penance, but some historians dispute this. A story has been handed down that Yvo said to one of his clients : " Enter the Franciscan Order ; it is the safest way to save your soul "—advice that rings as though he had acted on it himself.

When, in after years, St Yvo appeared to Bd Jeanne-Marie de Maillé, she described him as wearing the habit of the Third Order of St Francis. The Acts of the Friars Minor of Guingamp state that he took the habit in their friary. In memory of this the Chapter-General of the Order held at Lyons in 1351 resolved that his feast was to be kept on October 27. There has always been the tradition among the Franciscans that Yvo Héloury was a tertiary, in spite of there being no reference to this in the process of his canonization. Still, there is no doubt that his spirit was strongly Franciscan in character, so it is reasonably certain that he was a member of the Third Order.

Yvo was not always mild and gentle. The Duke of Brittany levied a tax on the parishes of Tréguier which was contrary to Canon Law. When it was not paid he sent his men who carried off a horse belonging to the Bishop. Yvo stepped forward and, with a gasp of astonishment, the onlookers saw him seize the horse's bridle. They expected the leader of the men to draw his sword. But the captain, from the point of vantage on the back of his own mount, saw the poorest of the city tumbling out of their alleys in a gathering tumult to defend their beloved Maître Yvo. The treasurer of the Cathedral, trembling for his reliquaries, silver

and gold plate, rebuked Yvo, saying : " It is all very well for you to risk the fury of the men-at-arms, you in your pauper clothes who have nothing to lose." Yvo replied : " As you please, but as for me, all my life I will defend the liberty of the Church with all my might." So would St Thomas More have spoken.

It was true enough that he had nothing to lose by this time. In 1294 he was given the larger parish of Louvannec, close to the seashore, overlooking the bay of Perros-Gueric. His chasuble is still treasured in the modern church. With the benefices of his two parishes and his salary as Bishop's Counsel, he ought to have been rich enough. But to Yvo it was simply that he had three fields in which to work : the income went to the poor, meeting immediate needs without a thought of the days ahead. When he had nothing left to give away, he told the people to pick his orchard bare. He had begun to preach more fervently than ever before, and his sermons were famous ; yet nothing he could say was as eloquent as the things he did.

Yvo seems to have retained his manor house at Kermartin and used it as a shelter for the homeless. One day a poor minstrel came there, asking help. He died soon after, and Yvo took on himself the care of the widow and four children. Pilgrims used the manor house as an inn. Yvo loved pilgrimages, and was happy to clean the shoes of those who were going further than he himself could do. One man for whom he cared took leave of him with such gratitude and such a radiant expression on his face that Yvo was left staring after him with a dawning awareness that he had ministered to an angel. But not all the pilgrims were angels. Some had grown careless with much roaming, and left more than a blessing behind. A priest, taking a verminous insect from Yvo's habit, protested. The latter, who no doubt loved cleanliness as much as most saints have done, replied with that smile of his : " Oh, leave it on the corpse ! " He had no horror to compare with his horror of the smallest word against charity, even when spoken of a dirty vagabond.

Wherever you go in the Trégor countryside you will be shown places associated with " Monsieur Saint Yves ". For instance, there is the dolmen near Louannec —Goélé Saint Erwan—the bed of St Yvo—where he was attacked by a peasant with a spade. The saint put his hand on the stone to turn the blow, and the spade went into the stone. In the Bégard district between Guingamp and Plouaret you will find many spots connected with the saint, and around which legends have been handed down from one generation to another.

Maître Yvo had made his will before he settled at Louannec, leaving something to the chapel he had built which is now the parish church of Minihy-Tréguier. The word ' Minihy ' means ' immunity ' or ' sanctuary '. There, every nineteenth day of May, is still held the Pardon of St Yvo—more than any other Breton Pardon, frequented by the poor who flock here from miles around to do honour to him whom they still regard as their advocate in heaven. Every beggar in Brittany seems to gather at his tomb—rather like a medieval stone altar, with a hole beneath the *mensa* through which the pilgrims creep on their knees, praying that their intentions will be heard and their wrongs avenged.

At the end of April, 1303, he told a noble lady who was one of his flock that he would die shortly. On Ascension Eve he celebrated his last Mass in the chapel at Kermartin, and had to be helped to unvest. But a woman came to the sacristy door and begged him to hear her confession. He just managed to do so, for he had always been at the beck and call of the poor.

At dawn on Sunday, May 19, he died, with his eyes on the crucifix and a smile on his lips. The *jongleur's* widow and her children stood around his bed. He was buried in the church yard at Minihy, but part of his relics were taken to Tréguier Cathedral, where an ornate Gothic shrine was erected for them in 1890. Here every year on May 19, a long procession, starting from Minihy, over a mile away, winds its way through the country lane and the streets of the town, chanting the refrain :

N'hen eus ket en Breiz, n'hen eus ket unan,
N'hen eus ket eur Zant evel Sant Erwan . . .
(There is not in Brittany, there is not one,
There is not a saint like St Yvo . . .)

He was canonized by Clement VI in 1347. His feast is kept by the Franciscan Order and in the diocese of St Brieuc and Tréguier on May 19. St Yvo is the patron of lawyers, though not always their model, for " he was a lawyer and no robber, oh a wonder to all men "—to translate from a popular song of the Middle Ages.

ST ELIZABETH, QUEEN OF PORTUGAL (1271-1336)

THE circumstances of Elizabeth's life must be painted in as a background, and then her character will stand out against them. Spanish unity dates only from the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella in 1479, and was completed only under Charles V in 1516. Elizabeth—often called Isabel, which is the Portuguese form of the name—was born in 1271. In the beginning of the thirteenth century the Spanish peninsula was mostly in the hands of the Moors, who had control of the small kingdoms of Andalucia, Valencia, Toledo and the Balearic Islands. France ruled over Barcelona. Only Castile, Navarre, Aragon and Portugal were separate kingdoms.

It was the coalition of Christian princes against the Moslem invaders that fused Spain into a nation. King Ferdinand of Castile, St Louis of France, and Isabel's tremendous grandfather, Don Jaime of Aragon, united against the Moors. Don Jaime the Conqueror, as he is called, won back from them the Balearic Islands, most of Valencia, and then Murcia. St Louis, who believed in the unity of a nation more than in nationalism, made him a present of Barcelona which was French by right of possession, but could never be other than Spanish—more correctly Catalan—in spirit. Don Jaime was a warrior in the grand manner, but unfortunately his immoralities were to scale.

His eldest son, Pedro, married Constantia, daughter of Manfred, King of Sicily, and had five children before Isabel was born in 1271. She was named after her great-aunt, St Elizabeth of Hungary. At the time of her birth Don Jaime was on the point of divorcing his wife, and had the intention of disowning Pedro and his other children because they took their mother's part. But family feeling amounts to a passion in the Spaniard, and curiosity to see this new grandchild overcame his anger. He not only saw the baby girl, but fell a prey to her charm, and renewed interest in his family. There was no more talk of the divorce.

Before she was out of the cradle, Isabel was a diplomat. Don Jaime predicted, it is said, that she would be the pearl of the house of Aragon. With what amusement the courtiers must have made their bows to this tiny person who had conquered the Conqueror. With what wonder prelates and religious must have

regarded the preacher who with a chuckle and a waving of fat hands had converted so great a sinner from at least one of his crimes! When he died—making a good death—it was Isabel who closed the eyes of her grandfather: a little girl early acquainted with death because in those turbulent times and among those turbulent people he was always in the house or just outside it. It was typical of Don Jaime that he left his estates divided between his sons: a gesture of goodwill to them at the expense of the peace of his nation. So we see Isabel, standing against a tapestry of luxury and intrigue, glorious with the pride and state of Aragon, dark with death and evil, shot through with the steel of Toledo blades and the gold of crowns.

One thing she learnt in that fantastic kindergarten—that there is nothing so much to be cherished on earth as peace. And every year that came made this increasingly clear to her. Peace was the one good she could give to her world, and because everyone realized that she possessed this gift, everyone trusted her. They admired her also for her clear mind and strong character.

As soon as Isabel neared marriageable age, that is her teens, kings and princes sought her as their bride. Edward I of England wanted her for his eldest son, and so did the King of Naples. Then, at the age of eighteen, Don Denis (Dinez) came to the throne of Portugal. He was the illegitimate son of a usurper, and his mother had been born out of wedlock. He had quarrelled with her and with his brother. He had been excommunicated for his uncanonical treatment of bishops and clergy. If anyone longed for the pleasures of peace, it was this young king. He had heard about Isabel, and became one of her many suitors. Pedro of Aragon needed an alliance with Portugal to provide balance of power against Castile, so that he could safely claim his mother's kingdom, Sicily. He asked Isabel's help. She was only twelve years old.

Putting aside her dreams of the religious life, she not only gave her father that instant obedience which the men of royal Spanish families—as in other self-respecting European families—could count on from their daughters, but she gave it with all her heart. At the magnificent marriage with this unpromising young man which took place, by proxy, at Barcelona, she tried to look happy to console her parents. Her father took her most of the way to her new home, and parted from her as though he were tearing off his right hand, calling her " most delicious of creatures "—a phrase that still rings as though it were just spoken. Conducted with the utmost state and splendour by the rulers of the neighbouring kingdoms and duchies, Isabel arrived at Trancoso, where she met her husband for the first time. She chose the feast of St John the Baptist as her second wedding day, in honour of her patron saint, his mother, St Elizabeth.

" The new kingdom of Portugal was barely emerging from its swaddling clothes. . . . Death and treachery still stalked the highways and byways as warfare and raids continued between the Moors and the Portuguese. Streets in the cities, marked by Moorish influence, were narrow, and slaughter in street fighting was considerable. Bands of wild Moors, incredibly swift and agile on horseback, armed with slender lances, raided the countryside. The Portuguese, inferior in numbers and organization, were armed only with Gothic pike and the short sword, much like those which the conquering Romans had brought centuries earlier.

" On the one hand, bands of bloodthirsty Moors would sally into Portugal to plunder and kill. Then the Portuguese would retaliate. Wars were merciless. Heads were cut off, persons were drowned, thrown over cliffs, or stoned at the

proverbial drop of a hat. The Moorish victors would present their opponents with a huge box containing the heads of hundreds of Portuguese victims." [1]

Such was the world in which Elizabeth had to try to be a peacemaker, and which was her background until death.

Queen of Portugal, she came to the then capital, Coimbra. Here she found the romanesque cathedral, built in the previous century, the rich and important monastery of Santa Cruz, and many other churches, convents and religious houses, including those of the Dominican and Franciscan friars. It is recorded that from childhood Isabel had recited the full Divine Office daily, and generally assisted at several Masses. At Coimbra she kept up these practices of piety. We are given two facts about her at this time: first, that by nature she was " ardent, impetuous of heart and inclined to be vain "; and the second, that when she was surrounded by all the complexities and exigent demands of her new status, she " showed no sign of impatience and lost none of her recollection ".

It does not require much imagination to realize in what difficult circumstances she reached this heroic constancy of peace and trust in God. Historical facts are enough. Her father, in trying to defend his cause in Sicily, lost everything, including his life and died excommunicated, his cause being held as disloyal to the Papal interests. Her mother and brother were also excommunicated. She had only one comfort—she was told that her father had spoken of her shortly before he died.

With what patience, content with the slowest and surest means, Isabel tried to put things right, is shown by the results. Her wisdom, with the supernatural might of prayer behind it, accomplished what the mere diplomacy of Don Dinez's other advisers could not, and it was through her that he was reconciled with the Pope. One result of this was the foundation in 1308 of the university of Coimbra, which became a great centre of learning later on. Theology was taught by the Dominicans and Franciscans. The university professors confined themselves to canon and civil law, dialectic, grammar and medicine.

The young King was a poet, and his morals could hardly have been worse. His court was extremely corrupt. He was the father of several illegitimate children, and Isabel gave her consent to three of them being adopted, since she was still too young to have any of her own. She had treated these children as if she was their own mother, concerning herself with their happiness and welfare. When her court ladies expressed their astonishment, she replied with unassailable logic: " Am I, because of the king's sin, to renounce the virtue of patience and add my sin to his ? " Maybe she found the royal bastards more innocent company than that of most of the courtiers. In the year 1290 she gave birth to a daughter of her own, whom she named Constantia. The following year she had a son, Affonso.

The rest of her life was spent in peace-making and in works of charity. A quarrel arose between her husband and his brother. It was Isabel who made peace between them, and so averted civil war. The King loved her after his fashion, and there was no doubt that he admired her, but when jealous courtiers or diplomats who had failed where the Queen had succeeded, or men with their own family swords to grind, brought tales against her, Don Dinez listened to their gossip. A popular story is that having seen the Queen give large sums of money to a favourite page, the King told the man in charge of his lime kilns that if and when

[1] Muriel S. O'Neill, ' Blessed are the Peacemakers ', in *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, Vol. XXVIII (May 1949), 143.

a young man should come with the enquiry whether the King's will had been done, he was to be seized and thrown into the kiln. The King then dispatched the page with this message. But the page had to pass a church, and hearing Mass being celebrated inside, went in to pray for a few moments. The informer who was keeping an eye on the young man, thought this an excellent chance to prove to the King that he himself should be entrusted with the message rather than the page who idled on the way. Having heard the King's own words, he clapped heels on his horse and delivered the message himself. Mass ended, the page accomplished his errand, receiving a laconic affirmative reply to his now harmless enquiry. He returned to report—the page Don Dinez had sent out with his own death warrant. It was then that the King, greatly puzzled, asked a few questions, and discovered that his informer had suffered the fate meant for the page.[1]

The miracle of the roses, told of St Elizabeth of Hungary, is also told of her grand-niece—whether truly or by confusion of names is not certain. That Isabel's charity was similar to the other saint of the Third Order is quite definite, which is the important matter. Like Elizabeth of Hungary, she gave long and careful attention to the needs of the poor. One day, tending a poor woman, she noticed her efforts to keep one foot out of sight, so foul were the bandages. It was eaten away by cancer. Accustomed to the stench of the wound, the poor creature had thought to hide it from the Queen. But Isabel bent down and kissed the foot as though it had been that of one of her own children. And the cancer was healed.

Her own son and daughter grew up and added to her cares. Affonso turned against his father, greatly resenting the favours shown to his illegitimate half-brothers. In 1323 he gathered round him a band of malcontents and adventurers, and declared war on the King. Isabel tried to reason with her son, but only succeeded in giving Dinez an opportunity to doubt her loyalty. She was banished from the Court, and spent her time in prayer and penance. Finally, when she knew that the two armies were to meet she rode in person to the appointed place, and going between the fighting lines, succeeded in stopping the battle. Father and son were reconciled. Constantia died young, after being married to the King of Castile. Here again, Isabel was able to reconcile her son-in-law with her husband, and with the King of Aragon. Finally, in 1325, her task was to reconcile the stormy, unfaithful, jealous Dinez with death. He received the Last Sacraments with signs of the utmost penitence. His son succeeded him on the throne of Portugal as Affonso IV.

With a gesture that seems to be the first expression of her long suppressed impatience, Isabel straightway put on the habit of a Poor Clare nun, intending to live in the convent at Coimbra, which she had founded. But first of all she decided to set out on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St James, patron and reputed apostle of Spain, as though to hand over to him her share in the office of peace-maker to the nation. Having returned to Coimbra from Compostela she gave away all her personal wealth to the poor. But patience had come to be second nature, and when she was implored not to enter the Clares, but to be content with

[1] Fr Thurston, S.J., in the new edition of Butler's *Lives of the Saints* (Vol. III, 38) maintains that this story "is a mere fiction which can be traced back to the folk-lore of ancient India". He is of the opinion that it was only in 1562 that the tale was Christianized and made to fit in with the life of St Elizabeth of Portugal. Cf. Cosquin, *Revue des Questions Historiques* (1900), Vol. 75, pp. 3-12; also Vol. 74, pp. 207-17; also Formichi in *Archivio delle tradizioni popolari*, Vol. XXII (1903), 9-30.

the habit of the Third Order, she submitted. Yet with a liberty of royal right she claimed to enter the convent enclosure when she wished to do so.

This was that culmination of generosity, that last surrender of the last private possession into the common purse of human need, which is the saint's consummation. She had hoped to be allowed to end her days in a peace undisturbed except by God, but she who has made peace among so many others was herself denied it to the end. In 1336 war broke out between her son Affonso IV, King of Portugal, and her grandson, Alfonso XI of Castile. Once more Isabel, old, experienced, and courageous hurried to Estremoz, where she intervened between the two kings and begged for the peace they dared not deny her. The fever of their dispute was quenched, but it seemed that she had taken it on herself in mystical substitution, for a bodily fever laid hold of her, and from which she asked no mercy. It was death, her old acquaintance, who brought her that. He laid her down in the long-awaited peace, and the Queen of Peace appeared, smiling, to take the Queen-dowager of Portugal to an untroubled kingdom. Isabel died on July 4, 1336, aged sixty-five. She was canonized by Urban VIII in 1625. Her relics are venerated in the church of the Poor Clares at Coimbra. Her feast is kept by the Universal Church on July 8, and as a double of the second class in Portugal. She is the principal patron of Coimbra. No better title could be given her than that of the " Peacemaker ".

ST ELZÉAR OF SABRAN (1285-1325) AND BD DELPHINE (1284-1358)

ELZÉAR DE SABRAN was the son of the Baron of Ansouis and Count of Ariano in the Kingdom of Naples, who belonged to an old Provençal family. He was born in 1285 at the Château de St Jean de Robians, near Ansouis, situated between Aix and Apt, on the lower slopes of the densely wooded mountains of Laberon. According to the legends which have come down to us, Elzéar was precocious in holiness, not the holiness of austerity and silence, but of " nods and becks and wreathèd smiles ". We read that he had " an incredible care " for the poor ; also that he made " loving little winks "—it is almost little glad-eyes (*petites oeillades amoureuses*)—at them, and began to cry bitterly if nothing was given to beggars, so that his nurses had to run back to the Château with him to get an alms. They soon learnt to " have always their pockets garnished with bread ".

As he grew older the little boy brought back beggars and set them at his table " and to give them courage, he ate with great appetite ". We read that " he liked playing with his companions, but it was to try to win something, and to give it just as quickly to the poor ". The seventeenth-century biographers tell us that he was a beautiful child and a prayerful one, who " said his little paternosters so well " that he inspired others with devotion. They maintain that he recited the Hours of Our Lady on his knees, also the Office of the Dead, as well as many other prayers, shedding innocent tears all the while.

In the thirteenth century it was still quite common to find monasteries where, in accordance with the detailed instructions given in the *Rule of St Benedict*, baby boys were received as oblates. More often than not they were the sons of nobles, who could afford to pay for their board and lodging. They were put under the care of the Cellarer, dispensed from the strict letter of the Rule, and kept under diligent and watchful discipline until they were fifteen. It was laid down that these little boys were to be whipped for mistakes made in the intricate ceremonial

in church. Since they were too young to understand the greatness of the penalty of excommunication, they could be punished for more severe offences by severe fasting or sharp stripes. Their parents signed a written promise, and the hand of each child was wrapped in the altar cloth, when he was offered to a monastery.

One of Elzéar's paternal uncles, William de Sabran, was Abbot of St Victor's at Marseilles. This famous monastery was founded about 415 by St Cassian. The buildings were destroyed by the Saracens, but were restored in the first half of the eleventh century. The Provençal Gothic church dates from about 1200. St Victor's was one of the richest abbeys in Europe, owning lands in Spain, Sardinia, and even in Syria. All that remains today is the fortified church, standing above the old harbour. Here it was that the baby Elzéar was taken by his parents and handed over to his abbot uncle. His precocious piety must have surprised and amused some of the monks. We are told that one day he asked his uncle: "In what country do they have martyrs?" Maybe this question was inspired by the presence in the crypt of the body of one of the Holy Innocents as well as those of several early Christian martyrs. It is related that the boy oblate tasted spiritual martyrdom at the hands of some of the abbey servants, who did their best to tempt him to vice and impurity, however Elzéar resisted their advances with a "manly and heroic courage". We can picture him growing up in this great abbey, watching the little ships berthed at the quays beneath its walls, acquiring habits of piety as he took part in the Divine Office, serving Masses, and playing with the other boys in their hours of recreation. One suspects that he did not need to be punished for misbehaviour by fasting or sharp stripes.

Provence at that date formed part of the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily. One day King Charles II, known as the Lame, landed at Marseilles with his retinue of courtiers, and called at the Abbey. He asked to see Elzéar, whose relationship was close enough for the little boy to be called a nephew by courtesy. The King decided that although Elzéar was only ten years of age, it was time he was betrothed suitably. The royal choice was on Delphine, the orphan daughter of the Lord of Puy-Michel and Glandèves, a girl of about twelve. The betrothal took place, and three years later it was not considered too early for the marriage of these two children. The ceremony was performed at the Château of Puy-Michel. When it was over the bride and bridegroom were taken back to the Château d'Ansouis, where they must have welcomed the peace of the wooded hills above the valley of the Durance.

Finally, even the jesting which their elders thought befitting the occasion came at last to an end, the jesters probably being too drunk to joke any more. Delphine, in her wedding dress and coronet, was left to face alone the thirteen-year-old Seigneur d'Ansouis and Conte d'Ariano, her lord and master. We read that she fell at his feet saying: "Sire, I am here because of the extreme violence with which my parents have treated me. I agreed to this marriage only because they forced my consent. I love death better than love. I have consecrated my virginity to Jesus Christ." Poor child, she had heard enough of *l'amour* from persons of higher station than her boy husband had been taught by the abbot's servants in all probability.

Elzéar lifted her up and bade her be at peace and tell him all she had in her heart. Gathering courage, she explained. She had been brought up by an aunt who was a nun, Soeur Cécile, Abbess of St Catherine of Sorps. In this convent, situated in the mountains of Provence, not far from Aups, the Abbess used to

talk to her niece about St Cecilia, and " how she became white like the hares in the Alps through living among whiteness ". When the King announced that she must be married, she prayed to become ugly and poor, but when she protested that she had vowed herself to God, she was told (presumably not by her abbess-aunt, but by more worldly-minded relations) that she must obey the King, and that the Pope would dispense her vow of virginity. Anyway, they coaxed—it was only the betrothal to which she need consent—perhaps remembering St Cecilia. But when the time came for the marriage, Delphine would not consent to go on with it. Thunder as they might, her relatives could do nothing with this obstinate child. A Franciscan was sent to talk to her, and he spoke of St Cecilia and of Our Lady. He explained that Our Lady was immaculate and St Joseph the guardian of her Divine Son, and that St Cecilia and St Valerian " put out the fire of concupiscence with their blood and martyrdom ". She and Elzéar might have to live fifty years together, and if the most perfect hermits in the desert would keep their vows only through incessant prayer owing to the devil's hatred of this virtue, how would it be possible for her ? The friar seems to have been a good religious, though the maids of honour made fun of him. There was something about this Franciscan that had made Delphine trust him. God spoke by his mouth, so she felt. And so, though his common-sense was against her heart's desire, she agreed finally to the marriage. She believed that God would help her to keep the vow of virginity.

The miracle happened. The young couple spent their wedding night talking of the things of God, and Delphine won Elzéar's heart. One of the early biographers says : " He sacrificed with all his heart his innocent pleasures to virginity, thinking it far better to be the companion of the Archangels and of all the Seraphim than the father of three or four little children who might possibly be evil vipers." Elzéar's mother guessed what was happening, and called Delphine a bigot " with bitter laughter ". The household spied and gossiped. The place she had feared most, the apartments she shared with Elzéar, came to be Delphine's one place of refuge. Meanwhile, she wore a hairshirt and prayed all she could. One day opening her Book of Hours by chance, she saw the words : " You shall not be tempted above that which you are able ", and for eight days the ecstasy of the promise fed her soul.

Meanwhile, with all prudence and devotion, Elzéar was making up his mind. As Père Binet expresses it quaintly in his early seventeenth-century life, from which most of our quotations are taken : " you can understand that God, choosing to put this young Lord in so hazardous a state of life, like a Royal Salamander in the midst of lively flames, must see to it that he was armed with heavenly weapons, finely tempered, ready for every trial." It is a heraldic shield, proud and noble, rather than a mixed metaphor, however, this seventeenth-century French Jesuit meant it !

He goes on to say : " In the fifteenth year of his age, the vigil of the Assumption of Our Lady, being at Matins, [Elzéar] felt a great desire to accompany his dear and holy Mistress mounting to heaven, at least in spirit. . . . With this intention, he confessed and communicated with great tenderness, and at the hour for dinner, being seated at table with his uncle the Abbot, he felt his heart fail with so great a violence of the love of God that it seemed all his breast was alight with a great flame. He was put to bed, and the curtains being drawn, in that sacred silence, he opened his heart and felt as if all Paradise were flowing in his blood. He saw the whole nothingness and foulness of the fallen world and the value of the least

action done for God. When he returned among his companions they jeered at him so much," and life at Court was so hard to stomach, that a thousand times he was on the point of leaving everything and losing himself in " the sacred horrors of an amorous solitude with God ", to translate the words of Père Binet.

But a voice said to Elzéar : " My son, I am well at ease to see thee in this sweet despair to be able to be pure in the impiety of the age ; but courage, son, courage ! I know thy strength and all thou canst do : trust in Me, because I will do all that thou canst not do, and will make up for all that thou lackest."

This confirmed Elzéar's vocation to live in virginity in the midst of the world. His sense of prudence was comforted by the fact that the vision had put to death all earthly interests, and all things had become so indifferent to him, and " the gift of chastity from on high was so impressed on his heart that he felt no rebellion in his body ". Evidently this had not always been so.

" What I am going to tell you ", says Père Binet, " is wholly astonishing without parallel and impossible to imitate without temerity. He and his wife slept in the same room and ordinarily in the same bed, but he confessed that the nearer he was to that chaste dove, the more he felt drawn towards virginity. . . . Be not astonished at that hazardous trait, for Jesus Christ often appeared at their bedside. . . . They say that the diamond placed between the iron and the magnet never do these approach, but lose all their attractions. I do not know whether every diamond has this power, but I believe indubitably that Jesus Christ has." It must not be forgotten—and Père Binet makes it clear further on in his book—that in their position, if they had appeared by their behaviour not to have consummated their marriage, every effort would have been made to disturb their peace, to separate them, to offer them more attractive lovers. Every evil would have been spoken of them and scandals darkened their name and the family honour. As it was, they made something of a cloister for each other, sleeping or watching within reach of each other in the immense canopied bed. Elzéar too had his hairshirt jewelry of penance. If Delphine was in any spiritual pain, a word would bring Elzéar on his elbow to talk to her ; if he was troubled, she was there like a little Sister of Charity. Neither were inhuman or under any illusion, but they had too much to do with eternal matters to have time for anything else.

To understand the heroic lives of this couple, it is necessary to realize the almost incredible divorce between morals and religion that existed in the thirteenth century, above all among the nobility. We have only to turn to the pages of Dante's *Divina Commedia* for proof of this. It was a century that produced many a saint, but it bred far more notorious sinners. There were no half-tones about life ; everything was painted in primary colours.

Robert, the third son of Charles II, hereditary Count of Provence and of the kingdom of Naples, had married Yolande, daughter of Peter II of Aragon, in 1297. He resided usually with his court at Aix, the capital of Provence, not far from the Château of Ansouis. It is easy to understand what Elzéar must have felt when he was ordered to join his feudal lord, because the court of Robert was very far from being the sort of place where anybody could aspire to a life of holiness. In fact, everybody had to be immoral, or at least pretend to be, lest he or she should be taken for a hypocrite. Except at night, Elzéar had no peace from the purgatory of this court or the devils of the courtiers. Sitting one night at a window, looking out at the sky, he was rapt in ecstasy and knew the abyss of the mercy of God, and knew that a hundred times he would have been damned if the succouring hand of

God had not preserved him; and that there is no sin into which a man will not fall headlong if God have no pity on him. He saw that his sins, which seemed to him so small, in the eyes of God were so great that he could have recourse only to the deepest self-abasement before His Divine Majesty and the most implicit trust in His most worthy Providence. He heard the words, so his biographers tell us: " My goodness, dear son, is infinitely greater than your faults. I swear unto you that I will not suffer you to depart from My grace." Elzéar seemed to hear the Mass of the Invention of the Holy Cross " sung in the chapel of Paradise " with ineffable harmonies and splendours, during which the mysteries of the Passion were graven on his heart. He became like a rock in the sea of the gay and voluptuous court. He loved his enemies and those who were hostile to him, suffering calumnies in the hope that Our Lord might grant him by such means the palm of the martyr. But on the morning after this vision, when the court doctor came into his room on his way to greet the Count and his wife, he found Elzéar still at the window. He pulled at his gown in vain. The doctor put him to bed, but apparently he had the sense to hold his tongue, for the story was not recounted by him but by Elzéar's confessor. Perhaps this doctor found himself nearer to Paradise than he liked at such short notice, and did his best to forget it.

When he was forced to dance, Elzéar put pebbles in his shoes, and when he had to squire ladies of light virtue—of which there were many at the court of Provence—he wore a hair girdle. Ecstasies might show him the loathsomeness of evil, but he did not therefore think himself safe without penances. We are told that he had an intense devotion to Our Lady, and once said that the little he had to offer to God he gave by her virgin hands.

It seems that Delphine remained at home and did not go with her husband to Aix. It was not until about 1305, when he was twenty years of age, that Elzéar was allowed to leave the court. He was resolved to find greater solitude for the future, and chose Puy-Michel, one of his wife's estates, as his home. That same year Bertrand de Got, then Archbishop of Bordeaux, received the papal tiara as Clement V at Lyons. After moving around France for some time he made his permanent residence at Avignon. Thus began the seventy-two years of the ' Babylonish Captivity ' during which the Popes were little more than vassals of the Kings of France.

Once he became master of his own household, Elzéar showed that he could rule as well as obey. He wrote rules for his servants, ordering that they should assist at Mass daily, even if his comfort suffered in consequence. His punishment for oaths—the first offence—was a diet of bread and water. If the swearer did not amend his ways he was dismissed. He would allow no immorality of any sort. The servants must confess and communicate regularly. But there must be no skimping house work under the guise of greater devotion. He would not permit either dice or card games, knowing only too well the ingrained passion of his race for gambling. Yet he said roundly that his house was not a monastery nor its inmates hermits, and he wanted them to play and laugh " as long as it was not at the expense of God and their conscience ". The servants were to keep the peace among themselves. They were to meet every evening, presumably with their master, " to talk a little of God ". None was to offend or injure a neighbour under the pretext of seeing to his interest. Père Binet tells us that Elzéar not only taught his servants, but made them love what he taught.

His gentlemen could not live, day after day, so near one of such heavenly

disposition and not envy his joyousness. So some " vowed external virginity, some wore hair shirts under their crimson satins, fasted at feasts, a thing more difficult than in a desert, and all the while behaved so well at table, cutting, serving, amusing everyone, that it seemed that all made graet cheer and yet fasted". Delphine's sister Alasia, who was a nun, said that when she came to stay at Puy-Michel it profited her more than when she was in her own convent, and being suddenly tempted against purity, prayed by the bed of her sister and brother-in-law, and " felt the dragon which inflamed her breast killed and the abominable thoughts which had been great mountains became no more than little images at which she could only laugh ".

It is recorded that Delphine kept her house in excellent order. " Her devotions were those of the mistress of a house, not of a nun ", so Père Binet writes. But she had not the weakness of the Provençal ladies for listening to romances or for reading stories similar to those related by Boccaccio in his *Decameron*. It was not long before her ladies laid aside these dubious books for " the holy adventures of saintly persons ". Elzéar served the poor at table constantly, and although he had not yet been clothed as a tertiary, had the universal Franciscan love for lepers.

It must not be supposed that this was the only household in the south of France where this sort of life was to be found at that date. Franciscan friaries were numerous in Provence and their influence widespread. Although Abbot Joachim's *Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel*, which had appeared in Paris in 1255, had been condemned, it was still read and believed in by many of the so-called " Spiritual " Franciscans. Their leader during the thirteenth century was Hugh de Digne, who had not feared to denounce St Louis for having monks and friars living at Court.[1] His death took place in the year that Elzéar was born, but his numerous disciples, most of them Franciscan tertiaries, were to be found all over Provence, chiefly at Marseilles and Hyères. His sister, St Douceline, also lived at Hyères, but " was of a far gentler mould than her brother . . . a man of brilliant talents, irresistible in argument, with a relentless logical mind, and a force of oratory which made his preaching like ' the voice of a trumpet or the swollen waters of a cataract '."[2] Eighty noble ladies in Marseilles had followed the example of St Douceline, and lived lives of intense austerity and devotion in the midst of the world. Not only in Marseilles, but in other places in Provence there were men and women doing penance in their own homes, and under the spiritual direction of the more extreme section of the Friars Minor, who still accepted the teaching of Abbot Joachim of Flora.

Some time about the year 1308, when he had reached the age of twenty-three, his father died, and Elzéar had to take possession of estates in Italy. This long journey also involved a visit to Naples where King Robert the Wise received his homage as Count of Ariano. The King appointed him tutor to his son Charles, Duke of Calabria, who about the same time was betrothed to the daughter of Henry of Luxembourg—an ambitious prince already aiming at becoming King of the Romans. The courtiers laughed about the Count of Ariano, whose unworldly behaviour merely annoyed them—it was more than a joke. According to some

[1] See p. 61.

[2] Nesta de Robeck, *Among the Franciscan Tertiaries* (London, 1930), p. 106. Cf. G. G. Coulton, *From St Francis to Dante* (London, 1907), p. 148; also Evelyn Underhill in *Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. VII (Cambridge, 1932), 794-5.

historians Elzéar did not return to Provence until after four years in Italy, where he was welcomed by his wife. It is recorded that it was about this time that both of them received the habit of the Third Order from the hands of Père Jean Julien of Riez, a small town north of Aix, where there was a Franciscan friary at that date. But the chronology of this period is very confusing, and the general opinion is that Delphine accompanied her husband back to Italy, where she was entrusted with the upbringing of the young Duchess of Calabria, who after a short time died so happily in her arms that everybody wished that they too might have her beside them when they were dying.

King Robert's first wife, Iolanda, daughter of James II of Aragon, died in 1302, and in 1309 he married Sanchia, daughter of James I of Majorca, of whom more will be said further on. As to Elzéar's inherited estates in the south of Italy, they were found to bring him nothing but debts. His Sicilian knights called him a monk, and for three years refused to receive him. One of his friends, the Prince of Taranto, told him that the only way to teach the knights was to hang fifty of them, adding: "*You* say your prayers and leave *me* to give them what they need!" But Elzéar refused to act on this advice, and moved among the malcontents with undisturbed serenity. Even Delphine could not bear to see her husband treated so, and declared that she might be only a girl, but she was not afraid to give a piece of her mind to these gentlemen-at-arms, saying that even a dove, even St Paul, could deal sternly with evil-doers. But it was only during a storm at sea, which was quelled by Elzéar's prayers, that they came to realize what manner of man he was.

When in 1312 the self-elected Emperor Henry VII declared war on King Robert of Naples, the latter put Elzéar beside his brother John, Duke of Durazzo, at the head of the army. The latter had reason to exclaim: "Lord God, is this the man I took for a sheep?" For Elzéar proved to be "a thunderbolt of war—fearless except in matters of conscience, such as whether he had been angry or a little sharp or had given way to other soldierly imperfections".

He longed to get back into solitude, but Robert sent him, royally equipped, to ask the hand of the French princess, Marie de Valois, for his son Charles, Duke of Calabria. The flower of the nobility went with him to the French court, where he was treated as though he had been the King himself. While he was there, so it is recorded, a priest passed by carrying the Blessed Sacrament to the dying. All in the crowd fell on their knees except Elzéar, to the scandal of everybody. Was the priest a heretic? The Archbishop of Paris asked Elzéar to meet him, and the latter suggested that the priest should be sent for. The priest came, and on being questioned, showed great fear, admitting finally that he had been summoned with threats to attend a merchant who was not in a fit state to receive the Last Sacraments, and so he had brought with him an unconsecrated host.

Elzéar's sojourn in Paris proved to be a long one. He prayed that he might be allowed to return to his little hermitage in Provence. At last he was stricken with fever. He confessed to the theologian Père François de Mairones, a pupil of Duns Scotus, who celebrated Mass daily for him. He was completely obedient to his doctor and allowed himself to be bled. When he knew that he was dying, he told those around his bed what he had hidden all his life—his virginal marriage with Delphine. Yet the devil came to tempt him even at this last hour. A look of terror came into the dying man's face which petrified the beholders. Then they heard a cry of joy: "I have conquered! Thank God! Yes, most assuredly

I have conquered!" His face radiant, Elzéar died on September 27, 1325.[1] Delphine was not with him. She was far away at Avignon with King Robert and his Queen Sanchia. She told them that her husband was dead, but they would not believe her.

Later on Elzéar appeared to her, shining like the sun, and said he was in heaven, and bade her live the rest of her life so that at death they should never more be parted. His body, clothed in the habit of the Third Order, according to the instructions given before his death, was laid to rest in the church of the Friars Minor at Paris. Not long after it was exhumed and taken to Provence, and given a final resting place in the Franciscan church at Apt. The bells of Avignon are said to have rung of themselves, and little children to have fallen on their knees when the bier came over the bridge across the Rhone. One wonders if Pope John XXII, whose pontificate was much disturbed by the increasing strife between the two parties in the Franciscan Order, came out of his palace to pay his respects to this noble tertiary. Père François de Mairones accompanied the cortège from Paris to Apt, and preached the sermon.

Queen Sanchia was surprised to see how Delphine wept, expecting her, with her high spiritual standards, to rejoice. But Delphine said that Elzéar had ever the power with two words to take bitterness from her heart and clouds from her spirit. "With him I lived like a dove, and now I desire to mourn him like a wood-pigeon."

In her grey tertiary habit she was indeed like a wood-pigeon, for no longer need she dress in court fashion, being a widow and a privileged person with the King and Queen. From Robert, her liege-lord, she obtained permission to sell all her lands, "and would no longer be called Madame or Mistress who was the waiting-maid of the poor".

When King Robert died in 1343, his widowed Queen entered the Convent of the Poor Clares at Naples, which she had founded on the advice of Delphine. For ten years she kept Delphine with her, until it was revealed to the latter that she was to return to Provence. But she had to remain in Italy several years more and yielded to an urgent appeal to go to Sicily where Queen Eleanor wanted her advice and help. During her stay at Palermo she refused to live in the royal palace and begged her bread from door to door as a true Franciscan. At long last she was allowed to go home. On the way she gave away her dress to a beggar, having nothing else to give, while her women smiled and wept with wonder and veneration for their mistress.

Delphine chose to live at the Château de Cabrières, a few miles from Ansuois, and there the days were always too short, for she read a great deal—the Gospels, also the works of St Augustine and St Bernard. We are told that "her people all worked hard, and some made vows and some became hermits". She was "very devoted to the Holy Souls", so it is recorded. She cured many who were sick. We have an impression of an intense, quiet supernatural life in that castle. Some time before the death of Clement VI in December 1352, a papal messenger arrived from Avignon, with a request that the now seventy-year-old tertiary should appear in person to give evidence in favour of her late husband's sanctity of life. The cause of his canonization had been started. Although she was suffering from dropsy, and able no longer to beg her food in the streets of Cabrières, Delphine felt she must go to Avignon. The Pope was much impressed with her answers

[1] The date is given as 1323 by some historians.

and eventually she was allowed to return home. Delphine died at Apt on November 26, 1358, having survived her husband thirty-three years. She was buried beside him in the Franciscan church in this cathedral town among the hills of Provence.

Elzéar was canonized in 1369 by his nephew, William de Grimoard, one time Benedictine abbot of St Victor's at Marseilles, who became Pope Urban V. Delphine was beatified at the same time. In 1791 their bodies were translated to the cathedral at Apt, where they were laid to rest in the chapel of St Anne, erected in 1660 to enshrine the reputed relics of the mother of Our Lady. The feast of St Elzéar is celebrated by the Franciscan Order on September 27. He is a minor patron of the Italian diocese of Ariano. His feast is observed as a double of the second class in the diocese of Digne (Basses-Alps). Blessed Delphine is now commemorated in the Roman-Seraphic Calendar on December 9.[1]

[1] Conventuals, Capuchins, November 26; Third Order Regular, December 1.

CHAPTER V

HERMITS AND SOLITARIES (1268-1449)

INTRODUCTION

IN these days we are so accustomed to think of Franciscan tertiaries as pious layfolk living in the midst of the world that it is not easy for us to visualize them as solitaries, whereas this was nothing out of the ordinary in the later Middle Ages. Then there were numerous solitaries who followed the Rule of the Order of Penance, whose object was to get as far away from the world as possible. There was nothing inconsistent with their Franciscan vocation in so doing, because St Francis himself had composed a short rule, entitled *De religosa habitatione in eremo*—'Of living religiously in a hermitage'. This is how it is worded:

> Let those who wish to live religiously in hermitages, be three or four at most. Let two of them be mothers and have two sons, or at least one. Let the two former lead the life of Martha, and the other two the life of Mary Magdalene.
>
> Let those who lead the life of Mary have one cloister (in which each one shall have his own cell), and each his own place, so that they may not live or sleep together. And let them always say Compline of the day toward sunset, and let them be careful to keep silence and to say their Hours and to rise for Matins, and let them seek first "the kingdom of God and His justice". And let them say Prime and Tierce at the proper time, and, after the hour of Tierce, they may break silence and may speak and, when it is pleasing to them, they may go to their mothers and may ask an alms from them for the love of the Lord God, like poor little ones. And after that, let them say Sext and Nones and Vespers at the appointed time.
>
> And they must not allow any person to enter into the cloister where they live, or let them eat there. Let those brothers who are mothers endeavour to keep apart from every person and, by the obedience of their custos, let them guard their sons from every person, so that no one may speak with them. And let these sons not speak with any person except with their mothers and with their custos, when it shall please him to visit them with the blessing of God. But the sons must sometimes in turn assume the office of mothers, for a time, according as it may seem to them to dispose. Let them strive to observe all the above diligently and earnestly.[1]

[1] Fr Paschal Robinson, O.F.M., *The Writings of St Francis of Assisi* (London, 1906), p. 89.

As the late Archbishop Paschal Robinson says: "To understand the scope of this peculiar piece of legislation, it must be borne in mind that at the beginning of the Franciscan movement the friars had no settled domicile. The wide world was their cloister. Possessing nothing, they wandered about like children careless of the day, teaching or preaching, passing the night in hay-lofts or under church porches, in lazarettos, or deserted huts and grottoes. The need of having some kind of permanent retreat where they might retire at times to pray or rest, resulted in the institution of hermitages. These little solitudes, to which Francis loved to withdraw, may be found wherever the Saint went. The Celle near Cortona, the Carceri on Mount Subasio, Greccio in the valley of Rieti, and the more solitary hermitages, like Lo Speco, form, as some one has said, a series of documents about St Francis' life, quite as important as the written ones. And not a little of his spirit still lingers in such of these hermitages as yet remain. It was for the government of small *Loci* [1] like these that the present special little Rule was written.[2] Again, it must not be forgotten that St Francis, "a short time after his conversion, having already gathered together many companions and received them into the Order, fell into deep thought and much doubting as to what he ought to do; whether to give himself wholly unto prayer, or some time also unto preaching; and on this matter he much desired to learn the will of God. And for that the holy humility that was in him suffered him not to trust over-much in himself nor in his own prayers, he thought to search out the will of God through the prayers of others." [3] So he sent Brother Masseo to consult St Clare and Brother Silvester. Both gave the same answer; that it was the vocation of Francis to go through the world and preach, that many might be saved.

Nevertheless, St Francis often retired into complete solitude for brief periods, so that he might give himself entirely to prayer and communion with his Creator. No saint had a greater love of solitude than *Il Poverello*. After his death some of his first disciples felt that the best way to imitate him was to live in remote hermitages instead of in the large monasteries which had been built in most of the towns in Italy. Such was the origin of the long drawn out fight between the 'Spirituals' and the 'Friars of the Community'. The former asked for nothing more than the freedom to live, as St Francis had done, "in humble friaries or hermitages far removed from the highway of the world. Here they kept alive a vivid memory of the primitive life of the Order and jealously conserved all records left them by those who knew St Francis and could witness to the life he had led and intended the brethren to lead. To them we owe in fact, many of the most authentic records of St Francis and the first Franciscan days." [4]

It was not only members of the First Order who retired from the world to become hermits. We have written already about some of the first tertiaries who were solitaries—St Veridiana, Bd Gerard of Villamagna, Bd Torello of Poppi, Bd Jane of Signa, Bd Novellono of Faenza, and Bd Vivaldo. By the close of the thirteenth century there were many more Brothers and Sisters of Penance scattered over Italy, living alone or in groups. The eremitical movement spread rapidly, due in some respects to the influence of the teachings of the Cistercian abbot,

[1] St Francis habitually uses the word *locus* or place to designate the habitations of the friars. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[3] *The Little Flowers of St Francis*, translated from the Italian by T. W. Arnold (London, 1898), Chap. XVI, p. 46.

[4] Fr Cuthbert, O.S.F.C., *The Capuchins*, Vol. I (London, 1928), 26.

Joachim of Flora, and more directly to Bd John of Parma who, under pressure from Pope Alexander IV and St Bonaventure, resigned his office as Minister-General on the charge of heresy in 1257, and retired to the hermitage of Greccio, near Rieti, where he was left alone to meditate on the apocalyptic ideas of Joachim of Flora. Then arose that strange character, Brother Angelo of Clareno, who became the leader of the Spiritual Franciscans, or rather, of a very exclusive group known as the ' Clareni ', or as they preferred to style themselves, the ' Brothers of the Poor Life '. Angelo and his disciples hid themselves in remote valleys of the Apennines, where, cut off from the world, their opinions tended to become somewhat heterodox. Seeking even greater solitude than could be found in Italy, Angelo disappeared to Greece and Armenia for some years. However, he was reconciled to the Church eventually, and ended his days in a little hermitage in southern Italy, where he died in 1337.

Angelo wrote an exposition of the Franciscan Rule towards the end of his life, and after his death miracles were attributed to his intercession, but he was never beatified. He wielded a great influence over members of the Third Order who favoured the Spirituals.[1]

By this time there were so many groups of *Fraticelli*—all striving more or less to live according to the primitive Franciscan spirit, and none of them able to agree as to the true meaning of Holy Poverty—that it is impossible to deal with them. The more extreme parties were bitterly opposed to the Papacy. By the close of the fourteenth century bishops were doing their best to disband or suppress these heterodox communities. Their members were seized by force, their hermitages pulled down or destroyed by fire. Where tertiaries and other layfolk were suspected of being in sympathy with the extreme Spirituals, they were often imprisoned.[2]

Yet throughout this period there were many Brothers and Sisters of the Order of Penance who found their vocations as hermits and solitaries who managed to keep apart from this strife. All they asked was to be allowed to live apart from the world, praying and doing penance and making reparation for the sins of mankind. They were not interested in the apocalyptic doctrines of Joachim of Flora or of Angelo of Clareno. They did not seek publicity, and many of them are little more than names, of whose lives scant record has been preserved. But here are some of these hermits and solitaries who lived between the end of the thirteenth century and the middle of the fifteenth century. They stand out from countless others because they have been canonized or beatified, and thus found a permanent place in the Franciscan calendar.

ST CLARE OF MONTEFALCO (1268-1308)

BEFORE starting to tell the story of St Clare of Montefalco, otherwise known as St Clare of the Cross, it had better be stated that scholars have been arguing for centuries as to whether she was a Franciscan tertiary or an Augustinian nun. Both parties can produce more than sufficient evidence in their favour, and it is difficult

[1] Cf. *Acta ss. Bolland.* (July, III), 566-76 ; Tocco, *L'eresia nel medio evo* (Firenze, 1884) ; Ehrle, *Archiv. fur Litteratur und Kirchengeschichte nel Mittelalters*, Vol. I (Berlin, 1885), 507-69 ; Vol. II (1886), 108-64 ; 249-327 ; Vol. III (1887), 553-623 ; Vol. IV, 1-190; *Analecta Bolland.*, Vol. XLI, 212.

[2] Cf. Fr Michael Bihl, O.F.M., article, ' Fraticelli ' in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VI, 244-9.

if not impossible to decide which is right. Anyhow, the Bollandists seem to be on the side of the Franciscans, so we venture to include this saint in our book.

Living in this complex modern world we are apt to say that we " don't care " for saints who seem to have been " born good and never known evil ". And such a one was Chiara Damiani, who entered a convent at the age of six and lived a life of penance which most of us could imitate about as easily as we could live the life of a tiger or an angel. Yet we are going to miss something if we do not try to understand such saints—especially in this age, when no one likes to feel he is missing anything.

The fact of the matter is that souls with what we call the vocation of innocence understand, better than the most experienced man of the world, what evil is. For does not the prophet Isaias say : " Butter and honey shall he eat—that he may know the evil and choose the good " (7. 15) ? It was the mystical utterance of prophecy which applies to Our Lord—those two types of the purest and most nourishing foods suggesting the nourishment given Him by His sinless Mother, and the heavenly Food of " doing the will of Him that sent Me". But it reminds us that He who was to take away the sins of the world was of that innocence which we find unsympathetic in some of His saints. This is enough to make us realize that our judgment here is shallow and inadequate. The best judge of what is wrong is the expert in what is right. One does not expect the dirty type of domestic servant will best understand one's desire for a clean house.

It seems, then, that God sends into the world saints whom He has specially protected from personal sin, to fight with Him against the devil—their armour being to them an armour as effective against the devil's assaults as perfect health can make us immune to certain germs.

Clare was born about 1268. Her birthplace was Montefalco—a little city in Umbria set on a hill, overlooking the valley of Spoleto, with Assisi visible to the north. " The road [from Foligno to Montefalco] is beautiful with view of the ever changing valley and the mountains ; and the little city herself, high upon her hill, is like a flaming torch thrust into the sky at noon. Her unfrequented streets seem still to shine with the beautiful footsteps of her saints ; her aspect is that of some mystical hermit whose face is flushed with some marvellous sweet thought of God, whose eyes search heaven for His advent. Only a lesser witness than Assisi to the great saints of Umbria, she seems to look across the wide valley to Assisi as a daughter to her mother." [1]

Montefalco contains some interesting old churches, San Francesco, now turned into a museum, has the famous series of frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli recording the life of St Francis. The little Chapel of the Roses can show some equally lovely paintings by Tiberio d'Assisi, depicting the life of the same saint. Although Montefalco has no visible associations with the *Poverello* it is redolent of his spirit : he still seems to haunt the hills and valleys, for they have changed but little in the intervening seven centuries. The tender sky and soft colours of Umbria Mystica look just like they do in Perugino's paintings.

When she was six years old Clare was placed in the convent of Sant' Illuminata, of which her sister, Giovanna, was Superior. What kind of a community it was we cannot be sure, because at that time Angelina di Marsciano was not born, and the cloistered Third Order Regular did not exist as such. We may remind our-

[1] Edward Hutton, *The Cities of Umbria*, p. 59.

selves that even the Third Order Rule for the laity was austere enough in those days, but it did not make provision for community life. About eight years later the community had built a new convent on a nearby hill, and given it the title of Santa Croce. The Sisters appealed to Rome for a Rule suitable for community life which would enable them to continue wearing the Third Order habit. This does not mean that they wanted to be a kind of hybrid half Franciscan and half something else. It meant that they were trying to do what Angelina di Marsciano was to do a hundred years later—to build up a form of the religious life that was different to that of the Poor Clares, but which retained the Franciscan spirit. When a new Religious Institute is founded today, its Rule is rarely an entirely new one. Usually, with an eye to the work which is to be undertaken, an old and approved Rule is chosen, and Constitutions drawn up.

And this is what seems to have been done at Montefalco, when the so-called Rule of St Augustine was given to these Sisters. It is permissible to think that they did not become part of the Order of St Augustine, but that their life, as religious, was moulded on that very brief Rule, while their spirit was that of the Third Order of St Francis, with its special devotion to praise, peace, penance and poverty. This took place in the year 1290.[1]

Whether Clare had been put into the convent for safety in troublous times or because she was an orphan, or whether she was admitted as an *alumna*, that is a child offered to God with the hope that she should later develop a religious vocation, we do not know. But we are told that from the first she followed the Rule of the Third Order, that she kept rigid silence, fed on bread and water, and slept on the bare ground.

We shall never understand this little girl if we think that she despised the fish, honey and figs which the Holy Child Jesus did not despise, or that she had a morbid liking for discomfort. This is disproved by her miracles and her joyous courage. The fact was that she was one of those whose vocation is to live in the supernatural, that all her comfort came not through creatures, but direct from God Himself. It is recorded that when her strength failed, she was restored by hearing the angels sing; and that gives us an idea of the kind of life she led in this world, only to suffer and to do penance, but spiritually living in the spiritual world of God, just as most of us live in the world of earth, air, fire and water.

Even some of the stories about Clare are incomprehensible, like a mere glimpse of something on a faded fresco. That story, for instance, of Our Lady appearing to her with the Holy Child and saying: " Clare, embrace your Spouse ", whereupon the Holy Child hid Himself under His Mother's mantle and disappeared. We have no clue to its meaning. Was she learning what the deprivation of one Joy would mean to a soul? It is all obscure, one feels; it is not our business to explain such mysteries.

At the death of her sister in 1298, Clare was elected Superior of the community. She redoubled her prayers and penances, and watched over her nuns in the most tender and motherly way, as though she was their angel guardian. One of her old biographers says: " She showed them the sacred way of virginity open before them, a glorious and sure way, a way strewn with crosses, no doubt, but to which

[1] In the Lessons for Matins for the feast of St Clare of Montefalco, printed in the Capuchin Breviary, we read that she was " professed in the Third Order ", but later on she " asked to be admitted into the community recently established under the Rule of St Augustine ".

is attached the blessed privilege of following the Lamb without spot whithersoever He goeth."

" Following the Lamb " sums up her interior life. She seems to follow Him through His Passion, able, by virtue of her undivided love and freedom from the infection of actual sin, to " make up behind the sufferings of Christ " for the redemption of the world.

And Clare was not so incomprehensible a being to the people of her time as she may seem to us, who have not seen her face. She converted sinners, reconciled families, even made peace between neighbouring towns of Umbria in the almost unending civil wars of that age, when towns took sides in all the political quarrels of Europe, and hired men to fight and murder each other, just as nowadays men engage in sports in honour of their cities. She healed the sick, drove out devils and foretold future events—even raised the dead, in one case one of her own nuns, and in another, a poor workman who had been killed by a landslide on the hills round Montefalco. She kept before the people of her time the reality of the supernatural. Nobody could maintain that she was not a useful and valuable inhabitant of this little town. Again and again she proved herself a public benefactress.

Warned of her death, she commended her nuns to the care of her Franciscan brother, Francesco Damiani. She had received an interior assurance that a reward was prepared for her, and that she would go straight to heaven.

" O sweetest Jesu," she cried, " how great is the happiness reserved to those who serve Thee with love ! No, the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come in heaven."

Yet she had asked particularly to be allowed to share in some way the bitterness of Our Lord's Passion. We shall never know in this life what hours of shuddering darkness she went through in her convent cell during the days and nights of the summer of 1308, tasting the Agony of Gethsemane. Was it not St Thomas Aquinas who said : " Love is consummated in community of life " ? That is what the saints have shared of Our Lord's Passion. It is recorded that Clare's body was opened after death for embalming (it is hard to imagine any other reason for this), and that there was found in it three little balls of gall, formations of actual material bitterness, which when weighed by the surgeons were found to have the inexplicable quality of weighing as much separately as they did together. This was taken to mean that they symbolized the Trinity. It is no good trying to understand what such a phenomenon could mean. All we can do is to realize that in some way, which is quite beyond the comprehension of the human mind, Clare partook of the bitterness of the Passion of her Spouse, for the redemption of the world and the deliverance of men from the results of their sins.

It is said that Our Lord had appeared to her, carrying His Cross, saying : " I have been searching for a long time, daughter, to find a firm and solid place on which to plant My Cross, and I have not found one more suitable than your heart. You must receive it and allow it to take root." There is a tradition that the surgeons found a cross imprinted on the substance of her heart.

Clare of the Cross had been prepared for that, as a piece of ground is sheltered when a special plant is to be put into it. Hence her strange vocation which developed so early. It must be admitted that she is a mysterious and remote figure ; a rare and exotic plant in God's garden, whose beauty is so subtle, whose delicacy is so tender and yet so clear, that it needed the shelter of an enclosed convent to

make it flower to its full perfection. Clare Damiani was an Umbrian, and only those who know the people of this province of Italy will, so we venture to think, be able to appreciate her. She may seem utterly unreal to others, yet she is as real as the landscape background in any of Perugino's pictures, and this, after all, was her background. For nearly forty years she dwelt in her convent, set in that little city in the heart of Umbria, which itself is the heart of Italy. She looked out over the Umbrian hills towards the distant range of the Apennines, over the valley of Spoleto, that valley " of infinite softness and space " where " the gesture of the mountains is of profound nobility ".[1] Yet throughout her life Italy was seldom at peace; there were wars and rumours of wars, and life itself was not always serene and tranquil as was its physical background. For clouds gathered over the hills, and the mountains were hidden in the raging of winter storms as in the shimmering heat mists of summer.

Clare died on August 17, 1308, and a Friar Minor said that he saw her soul in heaven among the angels. She was buried in the chapel of the convent of the Holy Cross. In after years a stately church was erected alongside it, dedicated to herself. Here can still be seen her incorrupt body. As one kneels before it, one realizes, almost with a shock, that Clare Damiani was human, even if she seems so mysterious and unreal to us in these times.

She was canonized by Leo XIII in 1881, but her cultus had been approved in 1624. She is a minor patron of the archdiocese of Spoleto, where her feast is celebrated on August 18. The Augustinians observe her feast as a double-major on November 3. She has another feast in the calendar of the Order of St Augustine —that of the Impression of the Instruments of Christ's Passion on October 30. For some reason or other the Friars Minor ignore St Clare of Montefalco, but she is commemorated by the Conventuals and Capuchins on August 18, as they maintain that she did belong to the Third Order of St Francis.[2]

ST CONRAD OF PIACENZA (*c.* 1290-1351)

KINGS, queens and artisans, lawyers and merchants, beggars and children blossomed into sanctity in the Garden of St Francis during the first hundred years after the death of the Little Poor Man of Assisi. A study of the tertiary saints discloses

[1] Edward Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. xii.

[2] Contemporary with St Clare of Montefalco, and more or less her neighbour, was *Blessed Peter Cresci*, who was born in or near Foligno some time in the second half of the thirteenth century. After what seems to have been a riotous youth, this wealthy merchant's son was converted in every sense of the word after the death of his over indulgent parents. At the age of thirty, determined to make reparation for the past, he rid himself of all his worldly possessions, gave away his money to the poor, and supported himself with the meagre wages of a casual labourer. After some years he joined the Third Order of St Francis, changing his tattered clothes for the more respectable uniform of a Brother of Penance. It is recorded that he had no place he could call his own, and generally spent the night on the bare boards of the belfry in the church of San Feliciano. He is said to have made frequent pilgrimages to popular shrines, and often visited the chapel of the Porziuncula near Assisi. We are told that some of his former companions, irritated by Peter's aggressive piety, managed to get him accused of heresy. This would not have been difficult, for Umbria was swarming with the ' Fraticelli ' at this time. Eventually he was vindicated of all charges. He died on July 19, 1323. His local cultus was approved by Urban VI in 1385. (Cf. Louis Biersack, O.F.M., *Saints and Blessed of the Third Order of St Francis*, p. 147; *Analecta Bollandiana*, VIII, 365-69, LIII, 209; *Acta ss. Bolland.*, July IV, 665-69.)

an immense number who went and begged at the friary door permission to live under vows—quite apart from those who eventually joined the Friars Minor or the Poor Clares. What was it that kept so many of them in what we may call geographically the world instead of in the cloister, though their souls were cloistered behind the peaceful walls of great renunciations ?

It seems to have been—and still seems to be, for such vocations are becoming more common in the world today—an incommunicable vocation ; something single, something perfectly obedient, but individual. This tendency which is found in certain spiritual temperaments was understood, even taken for granted, by Francis and his sons. And provided there was more than a tendency, an absolute demand for obedience—to prove that this was a good plant and not a weed—they gave it ground and took care that it produced its own flowers in its own way. They gave it " peace and good ". And it gave to their garden another colour and another sweetness.

Having realized this, we can make the acquaintance of Conrad of Piacenza without feeling that it is difficult to understand him. An Italian hermit of the thirteenth century can have little in common with our own age ; at least, this could be our first impression.

The date of his birth is uncertain, but it took place probably about 1290. His parents belonged to one of the noble families of Piacenza, that tranquil walled city on the river Po, lying north of the Apennines, set in the midst of a seemingly never-ending plain, rich both in farms and in industries.

The first act in the story of his vocation is dramatic. He rides into view, a young nobleman in hunting dress. He wants some game driven out of the forest, and tells his beaters to set light to the brush-wood. The wind takes the flames, and before anything can be done, the conflagration is out of control, sweeping through the trees into cornfields beyond, doing damage to crops so immense that Conrad and his servants are aghast. He and his men have no fancy for shouldering the responsibility for something which was the wind's doing, and they take themselves back to the city as quietly as they can while everybody else is out fighting the flames and helping the farmers who are desperate.

Unfortunately, instead of the catastrophe being put down to bad luck and a forest fire, suspicion falls on a man who had been seen picking up wood in the neighbourhood. There is sufficient reason and evidence to convict him for arson, for which serious crime, endangering lives as it does, the man was condemned to death.

Conrad, riding into the city a day or two later, sees a crowd, and upon enquiry is horrified to hear that the man is on his way to execution for the results of his own deed. He flings himself off his horse, rushes into the midst of the crowd, and shouts his own responsibility for the forest fire. Then he goes before the governor and explains the matter.

He is, of course, charged only with imprudence, but that does not release him from repairing the damage he has done. It will cost him not only the value of his own property, but also his wife's dowry.

There is the first act. A gust of wind and everything Conrad possessed has gone.

We are told that he was very happily married. The second act in the story is told in another gust of wind, but this time it is a wind of grace. The record says simply that " the incident led Conrad and his wife to meditate on the instability

of earthly happiness ", with the result that she leaves her castle and seeks admission to the Poor Clare convent at Piacenza, and that he, having given the odds and ends that remained to them to the poor, " retired to a solitary spot where some pious hermits lived under the Rule of the Third Order of St Francis, and from them he received the habit of the Seraphic Father ".[1]

A Franciscan vocation seems so often to germinate after meditation " on the instability of earthly happiness ". Born as we are to our vocation, we are born with a capacity for that especial good we are told to find in our vocation. With the Franciscan it is so often a capacity for happiness. Conrad and his wife needed no other preacher than the wind to tell them that it is a frail happiness which can be swept away by any chance, an unsafe home which can be emptied, and too sorrowful a love where there can be any parting. " O poor little one," says the Voice to the heart of Isaias, " tossed with tempest and without all comfort, behold I will lay thy stones in order, and will lay thy foundations with sapphires ".[2] The Poor Clares will put in order the stepping stones of faith for Conrad's wife, and will give her foundations of hope for a life everlasting where all the heart's cravings are infinitely satisfied " beyond what we know how to ask ". She will find stability in that little cloister where there is never so much bread for the morrow. Conrad will find it in solitude, hunting God among the forests where the wind befriended him.

Conrad seems to have plunged into sanctity as suddenly as he plunged into solitude. When this crisis occurred in his life he was about twenty-five. Almost at once he felt he must get right away from those who had known him in Piacenza, and who came to ask him for advice and prayers. He left his native Emilia with its wide stretching plains and marshes, crossed the Apennines, and made his way to Rome. He mingled with the crowds, safe in obscurity, because in those days a tertiary habit excited no comment. Then—for reasons unknown—he continued his journey. Taking ship to Sicily, he reached Noto, about fifteen miles south of Syracuse. This was not the city that now stands on the shore, but Noto Vecchia —the ancient Noto, more than a thousand feet above sea level, which was laid waste by an earthquake in 1693, and which became a desolate heap of ruins. Here Conrad remained for thirty-six years.

At first he lived in the Hospital of San Martino, then he moved to a hermitage outside the town. The latter years of his life were spent in much greater solitude. The ' Eremo di San Conrado ', situated among the hills about three miles from Noto, is still a place of pilgrimage.

Conrad may have hidden himself from his friends and relations, but the devil always knew how to find him. There is a legend that, after a long and horrible temptation, remembering St Francis, he flung himself into the brambles and rolled there, till he could think of nothing but pain. When he had been tried enough, his victory brought him the gift of miracles and prophecy, and these drew to him the sick and sorrowful. By that time, solitude had come and dwelt within him, and he could give God to others without losing Him. So when, in time of famine, the villagers clamoured for his prayers and help, he obtained food enough for thousands merely through his prayers.

The fame of this miracle brought the Bishop of Syracuse to visit the hermit, and the good Bishop said that he, too, was hungry, and asked if Fra Conrado had nothing to lay before him like a dutiful son. Conrad answered with Franciscan

[1] P. Léon, *Auréole Séraphique* (Eng. trans.), Vol. I, 262. [2] Isaias 54 : 2.

gaiety that he would go and see what he had in his cell. From this poor empty grotto, far from any baker's shop, he brought out some delicious fresh cakes. We are left with a pleasant picture of the prelate sitting on a stone outside the cave, devoutly eating the food from Paradise.

One Friday, so it is recorded, he went into Noto because there was a miraculous crucifix which he wished to venerate. Some ill-disposed young men who knew his ways, offered to give him a meal. Conrad accepted, for he was hungry, and our Seraphic Father bade all his sons accept what is offered them when they need it. When he ate what was set before him, the young men were delighted at the success of their plot, because they had given him meat. Moreover, the hermit had eaten it as they expected he would do. They guessed that holy men are often absent-minded. Their scorn and laughter were answered only by his mild glance, and on his empty plate was nothing but a few little bones . . . of fish.

Conrad returned the visit of the Bishop of Syracuse, because he wished to make a general confession. None but the Bishop was to know what consummation of sanctifying grace was taking place in the hermit's soul, but the birds knew what miracle of divine love was done on Alvernia, knew this saint's secrets too, and they fluttered around him joyfully when he arrived at Syracuse after his long walk along the hot dusty road. The birds were his companions the whole way back to his grotto among the hills, as he trudged along the coast beside the Mediterranean. We can picture him, in his worn grey habit, rapt in prayer, while the birds flew to and fro among the olives, fig-trees, oranges and carobs, their feathers ruffled in the soft sea-breezes.

He was warned by an angel, so the old chronicler tells us, to go to the town and make known to his confessor that death was approaching. He did so, received Holy Communion, and then made his way back over the hills to his cave. It is said that he died on his knees before a crucifix, praying for his benefactors and the people of Noto. His death took place on February 19, 1351. There is a tradition that, as in the case of so many other saints, the church bells rang of themselves to announce his death. He was buried by his own wish in the church of San Niccolò in Noto. His tomb was opened a hundred and fifty years later, and his body was found without any trace of corruption.

Conrad is a homely saint, invoked for the cure of rupture, and—surely—by those who are hungry and lack food. One likes to visualize him as an old man wandering beside the Sicilian coast through a sub-tropical landscape, with the singing birds flying round him. Or one can see him in that cave among the hills, where God answered his prayers so often. Both Conrad in his cave and his wife in her far distant Poor Clare convent must have said many times before they died: " For where we are alone with God we are alone with bliss."

His cultus was approved by Leo X for the diocese of Noto in 1515, and Paul III extended it to the Franciscan Order. St Conrad was never formally canonized. He is commemorated in the Roman Martyrology on February 19, and his feast is kept as a double on this same day in the Roman-Seraphic Missal and Breviary. St Conrad is the principal patron of the diocese of Noto, where his feast is observed as a double of the first class. In the archdiocese of Syracuse it ranks as an ordinary double. At Noto he has another feast on the last Sunday of August. This commemorates the translation of his body to the new cathedral which was erected after the great earthquake in 1693. Here it was enshrined in a silver reliquary, and is still much venerated.

BD FRANCIS OF PESARO (d. 1350)

As we have noticed before, plenty of the saints and blessed of the Third Order of St Francis appear to have lived in so unworldly a way that the question arises: how was it that these men and women could wear the habit of an Order intended for people in the world? Why did they not join one of the then existing religious Orders which were instituted for those with an eremitical vocation, or which took hermits under their wing?

The answer appears to be a very human one: that these men and women fell in love with the Franciscan spirit, and being drawn more to the solitary life rather than to that of the Friars Minor or the Poor Clare, asked humbly for the habit of the Third Order, with the determination to add privately what they would to the quite considerable austerity of the Rule of the Order of Penance. It might be said, in passing, that in the ages when human beings lived at the pace of the plough and the four seasons, rather than at the pace of petrol and their own moods, fasting was a hardship rather than a strain; and when the Faith was held in common by saint and sinner, priest and merchant, it was not extraordinary for a shop-keeper or the mistress of a household to wear the rough woollen habit of the Order, which hermits and anchoresses also wore. Today Franciscan tertiaries living in the world are content to wear the scrap of habit which remains to them under whatever clothes are suitable to their secular state of life, and to find a joyous humiliation in the necessary mitigation to their holy Rule. But the spirit of the Order remains unmitigated, and tertiaries are bound to abandonment to Divine Providence and to the kind of services to their neighbours as were the Brothers and Sisters of Penance in the thirteenth century.

Francesco da Pesaro seems to have been known always by the pet name of *Cecco*—a common Italian abbreviation of his Christian name. His parents had him christened with the name of the Little Poor Man of Assisi, and so, when they died, leaving him his own master at an early age, his patron saint took him in hand. He inspired him to become a solitary. Cecco wanted nothing so much as to be alone with Him whom a great modern French theologian has called "the Supremely Interesting Being".

He spent his money, with what seems to us a kind of holy wilfulness, in building no less than three little hermitages near his native city of Pesaro. To at least one of these was attached a hospice where poor wayfarers and tramps could lodge free of charge. It is interesting to recall that Cecco was a contemporary as well as a fellow citizen of Bd Michelina (see p. 137). It is probable that both belonged to the same congregation of the Third Order, and in their latter years these two holy tertiaries founded the Compagnia della Misericordia in Pesaro.

The first of Cecco's hermitages was situated on the far side of the river Foglia which flows into the Adriatic at Pesaro, and was dedicated to Our Lady of Almetero. The second was to be found on Monte Granaio, outside the city, and this in after years became a Servite friary. The third was erected on Monte San Bartolo, where, a century after the death of Francesco, his namesake, Francesco Sforza, erected that "palace of delight"—the Villa Imperiale, mentioned in the life of Bd Michelina (see p. 138). Its hanging gardens, loggias and terraces are in startling contrast to the simplicity and poverty that must have been the chief features of the original hermitage on this same mountain.

Thus, having provided for charity, this young man who had given up all his wealth for the love of God and his neighbour, gave himself up to a life of prayer, and with a rough hair-shirt as his body's portion, and sometimes other instruments of penance, and with herbs and wild fruit and a little bread to nourish him, strove with all his mind to know the mind of God.

The devil took notice of Cecco, after the long months of penance and prayer had run their course, and having tried to tempt him in vain, finally lost his temper and tried to pull Monte San Bartolo about the hermit's ears. But the huge mass of rock that came rolling down the slope, rending trees in its path with a noise like thunder, suddenly checked itself immediately about the little hermitage. It hung there poised for minutes, hours, weeks and months, and until at last the verdure of the mountain had grown round and over it. Here was a proof of the watchfulness of Providence over those who live like the birds of the air.

Whether it was that they came first to see the rock which did not fall, and so discovered the hermit, or whether they came to find out how Cecco was getting on and saw with amazement the hanging rock, nobody can tell. The curious visitors came and went, and then timid disciples made their way to the hermitage. They found it peaceful to sit under the hanging rock which appeared as though it might drop and grind them to powder. They felt safe there, so manifestly held as it were, in the hollow of God's hand.

Cecco the hermit was glad that his visitors should be happy, and was glad to teach them what he could of prayer and trust in God's providence. But they came in dozens and were unwilling to depart, and like those who followed his Master up the mountainside, they were often hungry after their climb. So Cecco had to plod down the steep path to the nearest village to beg food for his guests. The people had such respect for his holiness that they gave him more than he dreamed of, and he was able to feed not only the hungry, but to ransom poor debtors who had been sent to prison. He also gave marriage portions to poor girls and, like St Francis, helped to re-build ruined churches.

It seems that he observed the Franciscan custom of eating what was set before him, for one day when he was out collecting alms he was invited into the house of a rich man who was friendly towards him, and a good dinner was set on the table. There was a dish of roast meat, and to the surprise of everyone the hermit announced that it took his fancy. His appetite was so stimulated that he said he would like to take a slice of it away. Smiling at the hermit's greed, his hosts gave him what he asked. Cecco returned to his cell, but did not eat the meat at once. A few days later he went for it, and, needless to say, it was putrid and swarming with maggots. "Now, then, Fra Francesco", Cecco said to himself, "since, after so many years of penance you have come to be a glutton, here is a delicious morsel to satisfy your hunger. Here is the roast meat which so excited your appetite. Eat it up." And he fed himself with the filth.

Francis of Pesaro is evidently the saint to invoke when tempted to gluttony, because two more stories are told of him in that concern. One of his benefactors had sent him, by a servant, two salted eels. On the way to the hermitage, it occurred to the servant that Cecco did not know that two eels had been sent, and would be sufficiently grateful if only one were handed to him. So he hid the one under a tree, and when he arrived at the hermitage, presented the other to Cecco. The servant was bidden to thank his master, but he also got a very odd smile, which made the fellow glad to be out of the sight of those keen eyes. He went

back to the tree where he had hidden the other salted eel, and removed the moss with which he had covered it—when to his terror there wriggled out an enormous snake which attacked him furiously. Terrified, he fled to the hermitage, and guessing now the meaning of the hermit's smile, flung himself at Cecco's feet, confessing his guilt. Cecco forgave the man, bidding him to be more faithful in future, and to have another look for the eel which he might keep with a hermit's blessing. So in a humble and believing state of mind the man went back. He moved the moss again, and there was no snake, only the salted eel. He took it to his master, and recounted what had happened, for his soul's good and to the glory of Cecco.

The other story is told of the saint during an illness, when he felt such a loathing for food that his disciples were afraid he would die for lack of nourishment. With the devoted stupidity of their kind, they took a cock which the hermit had reared and in whose crowing he took a special delight, and killed it.

Shortly afterwards, Cecco asked of them where the cock had got to, as it had not crowed at its usual hour. There was nothing for it but to tell him.

"You have done wrong", said the sick man gently; "may Our Lord God forgive you. Why have you taken the life of this innocent creature? Its crowing at midnight and daybreak ought to have earned for it better treatment. It called me in the morning by its crowing, and was a reproach to me for my tepidity, and a stimulus to my good resolutions. Bring it to me, just as it is."

When the bird was brought, stripped of its plumage, Cecco took it in his hands and said quietly: "My little brother the cock, what have you done to deserve such treatment? You were my faithful friend. Your crowing set me free from the bonds of sleep, and drove far from me laziness and idleness, so that my soul rose up to devote itself to the praises of God. How I wish I could now repay you! Since I cannot, I hope that the Lord God, your Creator and mine, will supply for me, and restore to you the life of which you have been deprived by the zeal of my disciples—zeal which was too compassionate to me and too cruel to you."

Thereupon Cecco made the sign of the cross over the cock, and it flew out of his hand in all the splendour of new life—its fine plumage restored, crowing to glorify God and His saint.

Perhaps there may be readers who will refuse to believe such fantastic stories, for they belong to the ages of faith which are so far removed from our own materialistic outlook on life. To Cecco, the little cock was the messenger of God's love, reminding him not to deny his Lord by sloth. We are reminded of those words of that English hermit—Richard Rolle of Hampole: "Rise from thy bed at the bell-ringing, and if no bell be there, let the cock be thy bell: if there be neither cock nor bell, let God's love wake thee, for that most pleases God. . . . Blessed are they above others whom God's love wakens."

Cecco recovered from this sickness, and as the Feast of the Portiuncula was at hand, he set out with some of his disciples to Assisi. On his way home the people of Perugia were so impressed with this hermit that they detained him against his will, refusing to allow him to continue his journey across the Apennines. His companions could not bear to return to Pesaro without him. "Go your way", was all he said, "I shall be there before you." When they arrived, weary after their long tramp through the mountains of Umbria and the Marches during the hot August days, they found Cecco waiting in his hermitage above the Adriatic, just as he had predicted.

He died after fifty years spent in the solitary life, which had been glorified by the gifts of miracles and prophecy; half a century in which he was just as kind and gentle to others as he was hard and brutal with himself. He was buried in the cathedral at Pesaro. The year of his death was 1350. His cultus was approved by Pius IX in 1859. Bd Francis, who, until a few years ago, used to be commemorated in the Roman-Seraphic Missal and Breviary on August 13, in company with Bd Vincent of Aquila of the First Order, now has his feast of October 1, when he is remembered along with Bd Nicholas of Forcapalena.[1]

BD LUCY OF CALTAGIRONE (d. 1400)

SOME time during the second half of the fourteenth century, when Europe was torn between the struggle between Popes, Emperors and Kings, when merchants had grown as powerful as once only lords and nobles had been, and the great lords and nobles were sated with the many devices of luxury and cruelty, and when the Popes were still living in their "Babylonish Captivity" at Avignon, a little Sicilian girl was out picking figs on a sultry summer day, not far from her native city of Caltagirone.

Caltagirone is right off the beaten track of the average tourist. It is to be found hidden away at the end of a long valley that widens out to the sea at Catania. The town itself stands about fifteen hundred feet above the sea, exposed to all the winds that blow, baked by the sun in summer, and cold enough in the brief Sicilian winter. The road and railway reach it by tortuous hair-pin bends and severe gradients, passing through hills whose sides are clothed with vines, figs, olives and scrubby bushes. Then the country grows wilder, the hills barer—more often than not, just great cliffs of black basalt. Caltagirone is built on three hills, and from its loftiest point there is a vast panorama of rolling mountains with the smoke-covered cap of Etna to the far north, and the blue Ionian sea both east and south. Even today it is a busy little city, with some richly decorated churches, and famous for its pottery for more than a thousand years. Such was the background of the little girl who was picking figs on that summer day more than five centuries ago.

She is easy to visualize, with black hair and black eyes. It is more than probable she was wearing a white chemise, a black velvet bodice, and a brightly coloured skirt. She was evidently a fearless little creature, because when it began to thunder —thunder storms in Sicily can be as terrifying as a bad air-raid—Lucy went on picking figs instead of running home. Perhaps the tree was an old one, and in its thick cool leaves she felt as safe as under her own roof. Still, most little girls like to be with somebody else when it is thundering, and there was no one near at hand.

This explains her astonishment when a sudden burning white light seemed to tear the tree in half, and she was tossed to the ground as though she were a little black fig herself, and in the terror of her realization that the tree had been struck by lightning and perhaps she had been struck too, and perhaps she was dead and did not know it, she found herself being picked up by a very kind old man with a long beard. She clung to him, and he comforted her; assuring the child that she was not dead. Holding her fig-stained brown hand in his, he took her homewards while she sobbed herself into composure.

It was only when she reached the door of her home that she realized she had never met this old man before. She asked him wonderingly who he was.

[1] Third Order Regular, August 11; Capuchins, August 4; Conventuals, 5.

" I am the servant of God, Niccolò, Bishop of Myra," he replied. " Your parents have a great devotion to me, and I wished to reward their confidence."

Lucy managed to curtsy in a stupefied sort of way, hardly able to realize that she had been rescued by a bishop who had died nearly a thousand years before. But it is more probable that it was only after he had disappeared, and when she was telling her parents what the old man had said, that she realized that ' Santa Claus ' had come from heaven at the moment of that lightning flash to save her from being killed. One fancies that she was inclined to run away when her father and mother repeated the wonderful story to their neighbours. No doubt Lucy preferred to wander by herself over the hills, recalling the dim memory of the kind bearded face, and the overwhelmingly clear memory of kindness and protection. She must have wondered why a great saint had thought it worth his while to come back to earth just to save a little Sicilian girl who picked ripe figs from a wild fig-tree.

That revelation of the value of one human soul to God, of its separate and unique preciousness, comes to most of us at some time or another—when we realize the millions who are born into paganism while we have been born into a Catholic family—perhaps even more if we have received the Faith later on in life out of a non-Catholic family.

We do not imagine that Lucy worked this out logically. But in the manner of an uneducated child, she realized it intuitively. She understood—without knowing it—St Augustine's saying: " Thou hast made us for Thyself." She grasped what St Gregory the Great meant when he said : " Recognize, O Christian, thy grandeur ! "

She grew up very prayerful, modest and charitable. Then, one day a friend or relative of her family came from Salerno, near Naples, to stay at Caltagirone—a long and arduous journey in the fourteenth century. She was a tertiary of St Francis and wore the grey habit of the Order, and was of so holy a life that Lucy was entranced with this guest, as young people are with a real saint whose love of God and attention to Him are unmistakable as is their lack of interest in themselves and their loving kindness to those around them.

Before those days came to an end, Lucy knew that she wanted one thing only in this world, and that was to join this lady. She had no wish to marry and to be mistress of a household. She wanted to live alone with God, enduring human loneliness to be free for the fullness of communion with God.

How long afterwards or how soon afterwards it was she left home to join this tertiary is not recorded. But evidently there was considerable objection to her doing so, for Lucy had to remain hidden in the poor little house at Salerno, lest she should be seen and taken back to Sicily. Possibly her good parents—we know they were devout at least to St Nicholas—disapproved on grounds of prudence, of her going off to what to them was a foreign country, of her living there unprovided for, with an elderly woman who would die and leave their child unprotected in a great city, and at a time when Italy was frequently at war. If one considers the matter the whole thing does seem rather abnormal, certainly imprudent.

Lucy had been clothed in the habit of the Third Order soon after her nearly four-hundred-mile journey from Caltagirone to Salerno. She must have felt like one of the sparrows who " do not fall to the ground without My Father ", according to the promise of her Master.

When the elderly tertiary died—we do not even know her name—Lucy showed

that she was no mere visionary, for she had the prudence to present herself at the Convent of Santa Maria Maddalena—presumably one that did not keep the Third Order Rule in a cloistered state, for it was yet too early to become a member of one of the communities of the Third Order Regular founded later by Bd Angelina of Marsciano, who was only about twenty-four at the time of Lucy's death.[1]

There she was known for her humility and for the way she prayed while she was working. She lived on bread and water, and slept on the ground. The world certainly needed her prayers. There were rival Popes in Rome and in Avignon. The Great Schism would not end until after Lucy's death. In 1396 a truce had been declared in the Hundred Years' War, but there were lesser civil wars raging in other parts of Europe. Moreover, there were signs of heresy infiltrating into the Church, both in England and in Bohemia.

Salerno is, and was then, a busy city, with a large cosmopolitan population, being a wealthy seaport and centre of maritime trade. So people began to come to the convent and ask to speak to Sister Lucy when they were in need of help or advice. She worked miracles and cured, it was said, even more sick persons of their diseases than did some of the doctors at the then world-famous medical school of Salerno.

The date of her birth is unknown, and all that is certain is that she died somewhere about the year 1400. Her body was still incorrupt in the chapel of the convent at Salerno when Père Léon wrote his *Auréole Séraphique* about seventy years ago, and probably is so still, but it has not been possible to verify this. The devotion which had been paid to this Sicilian tertiary was approved by Leo X in 1514 for the Convent of Santa Maria Maddalena. Some of her relics, including her arm, were taken back to Sicily later on, and the Feast of their translation is observed at Caltagirone on the last Sunday in August. In the archdiocese of Salerno the feast of Bd Lucy is kept on September 27. Innocent XII granted permission to the Franciscan Order to observe her feast, on September 26. In recent years it has been combined with that of Bd Delphine on the same date.

Such is really all that we know of Bd Lucy—not much of a biography. Yet, to look back on it supernaturally, there must be some reason why this little Sicilian girl who ran away to Italy in order to be alone with God, should have a feast which is kept by the whole Franciscan Order. But after all, what did she do? What lesson has she to teach us? Was it that she realized *the marvel of having been created*, and so quietly and humbly, and without any self-importance, devoted herself to following her vocation? Who shall decide?

BD ELIZABETH THE GOOD (1386-1420)

ELIZABETH ACHLER was born on November 25, 1386, in the little town of Waldsee that lies between the Danube and Lake Constance, not far from Ravensburg. Her parents were poor working-class folk. It seems that she was remarkable for her piety even as a small child, and was nicknamed *Die Gute Beth*. Her confessor was a learned and devout Canon Regular of the abbey of St Peter in Waldsee, Conrad Kügelin, by name. He realized that this little girl was something out of the ordinary, and it was on his advice that she was admitted to the Third Order of St Francis at the age of fourteen. At first she continued to live with her parents,

[1] See p. 167.

but after a year or so her director arranged for her to lodge with another tertiary, who taught her to spin.

The next we hear of Elizabeth is that the devil began to get annoyed with her. He used to break the thread of her spinning wheel, and would often spoil a half day's work by the waste of time in repairing the damage done. Elizabeth suffered acutely from spiritual dryness and desolation. She remained in this dark night of the soul for three years.

Meanwhile Pater Conrad Kügelin had founded a community of the Third Order Regular at Reute, a village on the outskirts of Waldsee. The first members of this community were five of his penitents, including Elizabeth, now aged seventeen. They lived in dire poverty, and begged their bread from door to door. But *Schwester Betha* was so modest and simple that it was decided that she should remain indoors and act as cook for the Sisters. We may presume that Elizabeth herself preferred this solitude and seclusion.

Pater Kügelin, who was her confessor for twenty years, and who, after her death, wrote her life, tells us that he found it difficult to discover matter for absolution when she came to him to lay bare her sins, so great was her vigilance and zeal for perfection. The little community kept no enclosure, but Elizabeth had such an intense love of solitude that she became known as "the Recluse". The more she advanced in holiness of life, the more violent were the attacks of the devil, recalling those experienced by the hermits in the Egyptian deserts. She is said to have lived without food for three years, and for the last twelve years took so little nourishment that nobody knew how she managed to keep alive.

The temptations to which she was subjected are almost impossible to believe, even more so the devices of the devil to humiliate her. Pater Kügelin tells us that on one occasion the devil hid some things that belonged to another Sister and put them under Elizabeth's bed. A search through the convent led to the discovery of the missing articles, whatever they may have been, with the result that Elizabeth was accused of theft. She was reproved by the Superior, and given a severe penance. She never tried to explain or defend herself, and was only too glad that she had not been sent away from the community. For a long time after this incident she was treated with suspicion and all her actions watched. But she remained quiet and resigned, so absorbed in God that after a while the other Sisters began to wonder if they had been wrong to take her for a thief. One day the Superior ordered Elizabeth to tell her the true facts of the story. At long last her innocence was recognized. The community realized, if they had not done so before, that they had a saint in their midst.

Yet even now the devil continued to attack her. Sometimes he appeared under the disguise of an angel. On other occasions he attacked her with bodily violence, and nearly killed her with brutal assaults. Again and again Elizabeth prayed that she might not give way to these temptations. Then she was stricken with leprosy. Had she not suffered enough already? one is inclined to ask. At the same time she was granted joys that surpass human understanding. She was permitted to realize the happiness of the Blessed, and also to visit the Souls in Purgatory. Our Lord appeared to her, also Our Lady and many of the saints. When she was ill some of the Sisters saw angels in her room making the bed, and placing Elizabeth on it. On another occasion, when the chaplain came to bring Holy Communion to three of the community, the Host reserved for Elizabeth was missing. The priest did not know what to do, so went to her cell to explain the situation. To his

astonishment she said that Our Lord Himself had brought her Holy Communion that morning.

When one reads the story of this life of vicarious suffering that was led by a humble woman in a small convent situated in a remote village in southern Germany, one is tempted to suspect that much of it may be exaggerated; invented in after years, for the edification of the pious faithful. Granted that these legends are true, and we have the assurance of Pater Kügelin that he was recording what he had seen and heard, then was there any special reason behind these psychic phenomena—as they would be described in these days? Perhaps we may find the reason if we look at what was going on in Europe during the lifetime of Elizabeth Achler. *Her life coincided with the forty years of the Great Schism.* Pope Gregory XI, inspired by the courage of St Catherine of Siena, had ended the "Babylonish Captivity" at Avignon and brought back the papacy to Rome after seventy years' exile in France. But the French cardinals refused to accept Urban VI who was elected to succeed Gregory XI in 1378, and set up Robert of Geneva as anti-pope with the title of Clement VII. So began the Great Schism—eight years before the birth of Elizabeth Achler—with the result that the Bride of Christ was torn asunder for nearly forty years. Its origin was not theological but political. In one sense it was not a schism strictly speaking, but a battle between two parties, each claiming to uphold the true Pope. Italy, Germany, England, Ireland, Scandinavia, Flanders, Poland, Portugal and Hungary were on the side of Urban and his Roman successors; France, Spain, Naples, Provence, Scotland and Wales supported Clement and the Avignon Popes who followed him. Europe was divided between 'Urbanists' and 'Clementines'. Yet it must be remembered that there were devout men and women, even canonized saints, among the Clementines, and that the schism was brought about just as much by the violent policy of Urban VI as by the rebelliousness of the French cardinals. Men began to wonder how long this scandalous state of affairs would last. The universities of Paris, Oxford and Prague tried to start negotiations between the rival parties, with the result that in 1407 the Clementine Pope, Benedict XIII, agreed to open up communications with the Urbanist Pope, Gregory XII. But so bitter was the feeling that the two pontiffs could not be persuaded to meet. Finally it was resolved to summon a General Council, consisting of cardinals of both sides. It met at Pisa in 1409, and tried hard to effect the re-union of the Church in Europe. However, the situation became worse, for when the two Popes had refused to attend the Council and the supreme pontificate had been declared vacant, and when Peter Philargos, a Cretan, had been appointed to the papacy as Alexander I, there were now three men claiming to be Pope, since neither Benedict nor Gregory would recognize that they had been deposed canonically. In the end it was Sigismund, King of the Romans and afterwards Emperor, who managed to heal the Great Schism by convoking the Council of Constance in 1414.

It is curious, if one considers the fact, that only a few miles away from Constance, near the little town of Waldsee, Elizabeth Achler should be confined to her bed enduring superhuman pain and suffering such as are given to few human beings, and that she should foretell that the Great Schism would soon be ended. But it was to continue for three more years. The Council of Constance was also concerned with other serious matters which were affecting the peace of the Church, for instance the heretical preaching of the followers of Wycliffe in England and of John Hus in Bohemia. Finally, when the Council had been dissolved in 1418

and Odo Colonna elected Pope as Martin V, peace was restored, despite various attempts to set up anti-popes.

We may be sure that throughout these troublous years Elizabeth Achler was offering herself as a victim for the sins of men who had brought about the Great Schism, and that her prayers and sufferings helped to end it. Elizabeth—like her seraphic father, St Francis—was granted the marks of the Stigmata. So great was her devotion to the Passion of Our Lord that every Friday blood flowed from the five wounds in her body. On her head could be seen the marks of the thorns. Sometimes, so her biographer relates, she experienced in her body the actual scourging of Our Lord. She would cry out in agony: "Ah! My Lord, spare me not! Why do I not suffer more? Grant, dear Lord, that I may know and feel the pains of Thy Passion."

She was thirty-four when she died on November 24, 1420, praying that nothing of her life should be revealed after her death. She wished to be forgotten, saying that she was only a poor woman, "a worm of the earth and that people had plenty of examples as to how they should live in the lives of Our Lord, of our Blessed Lady, of the Apostles and other saints". Then she asked for the Gospel narrative of the Passion to be read to her once more, and then she closed her eyes and fell asleep in peace. Had her confessor felt obliged to carry out her wishes it is probable that we should know nothing about *Die Gute Beth.* But he disregarded them, and very soon after her death wrote a full account of all the favours she had received from God. Elizabeth of Reute belongs to the great spiritual family of the German mystics of the fourteenth century, among whom were many Franciscans.[1]

Many miracles were wrought after her death. In 1623 her tomb was opened by the provost of Waldsee, and her popular veneration spread throughout southern Germany. In 1766 Pope Clement XIII ratified her cultus, and her relics were translated the following year. In the diocese of Rottenburg the feast of Bd Elizabeth is observed as a double on November 25. Until a few years ago the Roman-Seraphic Breviary and Missal commemorated her as a semi-double with Bd Delphine on December 9. Her feast is now observed on November 17, along with two other *Beatae.*[2]

BD GERARD OF LUNEL (1275-1299)

THIS thirteenth-century solitary belonged to the same family as that of St Elzéar of Sabran. His father, Gerard d'Amicy, was the Lord of Castelnau, with a château situated near Uzès, a few miles north of Nîmes. Gerard himself was born at Lunel, a small town about half way between Nîmes and Montpellier, surrounded on all sides by rich vineyards. There is a tradition that he asked to be given the habit of the Third Order when he was five years old. So precocious was his piety that the Friars Minor granted his request.

When he reached the age of eighteen, Gerard and his brother, Effrenaud, who seems to have shared his love of prayer and penance, decided to leave their father's château and to hide themselves in a cave on the banks of the river Gardon, which flowed nearby on its way to join the Rhone at Tarascon. Here they lived as hermits

[1] Cf. P. Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality in the Middle Ages* (Eng. trans., London, 1924), Vol. II, 224-52; also Evelyn Underhill in *Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. VII (Cambridge, 1932), 796-804.

[2] Third Order Regular, December 1; Conventuals and Capuchins, November 25.

for two years, begging their food in the neighbouring villages. They expected to be left in peace, but the holiness of these two brothers attracted many visitors, some who may have come merely out of curiosity, but there were others who asked for prayers and spiritual advice. Finally, they became desperate, and made up their minds to leave their retreat beside the river. They set out on foot and walked all the way to Rome, intending to proceed to Jerusalem. Gerard and Effrenaud remained two years in Rome, where they would have been lost in the crowds of pilgrims. Then they set off on another long journey, with the port of Ancona as their goal. No doubt they hoped to find a ship there which would take them to Palestine. But the sufferings of this tramp through the Apennines proved more than Gerard could stand. He collapsed at a lonely cottage near Montesanto in the diocese of Fermo. He became very ill, and his devoted brother was obliged to leave him alone while he went on to the nearest village to seek help. When he got back, Gerard was dead. It was May 24, 1299.

This tertiary was buried in a chapel that was erected on the site of the cottage. His cultus was approved by Benedict XIV in 1743. He is invoked especially in cases of epilepsy.[1]

BD HUGOLINO MAGALOTTI (d. 1373)

THIS tertiary hermit was born somewhere in the neighbourhood of Camerino in the Marches of Ancona during the early part of the fourteenth century. His parents belonged to a noble family. He was left an orphan when he was a boy, and was filled with the desire to give his life to God, and to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ Crucified. So he gave away all his possessions to the poor, and having been clothed in the habit of the Third Order, retired to a solitary place among the hills. Very little has been recorded about his life, other then the usual story of prayer and penance, and constant temptation by the devil. The fame of this hermit spread through the Marches of Ancona. Men and women of all classes found their way to his retreat, seeking to be healed of their bodily diseases, or to ask the hermit to pray for their spiritual and temporal welfare. It is related that Hugolino performed many miracles. So we can form a picture of him in his hermitage, set in that beautiful country where like " wave after wave, the hills break upon the valleys dim with mist, and far away against the pale gold of the evening sky, clouds whiter than snow, shaped like the wings of angels, sail as in a picture by Perugino over the hills ".[2]

Hugolino died on December 11, 1373, and his body was carried away in triumph to the parish church of Fiegni, a remote village hidden among the mountains between Camerino and Amandola, towering above the world. It was not until 1855 that his cultus was approved by Pius IX. The feast of Bd Hugolino is

[1] It is not easy to decide what are the authentic traditions about this tertiary *beatus*, whose name appears also as Gery, Gerius, and Roger. There are three death dates as alternatives : 1270, 1298, and 1299. Whether he died at Colombaro in the diocese of Fermo, or at Montesanto in the diocese of Macerata, is not certain. His feast is kept on several days : at Montesanto on May 24 ; in the diocese of Fermo on February 26 ; at Montpellier on May 23 ; in the Third Order Regular on July 2 ; and according to Holweck (*Biographical Dictionary of the Saints*, 1924) on May 24. (Cf. *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, Vol. XXIX (April, 1950), 116 ; *ibid.* (May, 1950), p. 148.)

[2] Edward Hutton, *The Cities of Romagna and the Marches*, p. 252.

celebrated as a double in the diocese of Camerino on December 20. The Roman-Seraphic Breviary and Missal now keep his feast, with that of Bd Peter of Siena, on December 11.

BD THOMAS OF FOLIGNO (1319-1377)

HERE is another fourteenth-century solitary, the son of rich parents, who was born in the village of Valmacinaia, near Nocera in Umbria, in 1319. It is related that before the birth of Tommaso, generally known by the diminutive ' Tomassucio ', an angel appeared to his mother, saying : " Be of good cheer and thank God, for the child to be born of you will be a great prophet and friend of God." Later on she received another visit from the angel who told her that the boy must be called Thomas. Like Gerard of Lunel, he seems to have been a precocious child, so far as spiritual matters were concerned. At the age of twelve he resolved to make a vow of chastity, and at the age of twenty-four he left home, making his way up into the mountains to live as a hermit. Feeling the need of direction he moved on further, having heard of another solitary, Blessed Pietro of Gualdo, under whose spiritual direction he placed himself. From this holy man he received the habit of the Third Order, and here he remained for twenty-four years, until the death of his master and companion.

From now onwards Tomassucio lived in even greater seclusion as an anchorite. He built himself a hut, and walled up the only door, keeping perpetual silence, except with his confessor. It is recorded that he never took food or drink more than twice a week. In this way he dwelt alone with God for three years, and God rewarded him with visions and ecstasies. But they were paid for at the price of terrible temptations and conflicts with the powers of evil.

The anchorite would have been content to remain in what he now regarded as a heaven on earth, but one day he heard a voice saying to him : " Tommaso, go out of your tomb and tell the people of their sins. Go without fear for I will go with you and will inspire your words so that they must listen." He was so overwhelmed at this command that he prayed to be excused, begging to be allowed to remain in his solitude. But again the voice was heard telling him to go forth. So Tommaso broke open the walled-up door of his cell, left his native Umbria, and crossed the Apennines into the Marches of Ancona, where, having gained confidence as a preacher of penance, he returned to Umbria. He addressed vast crowds in the streets of Assisi and Perugia. Then he went on north through Tuscany, preaching in Cortona, Siena, San Miniato, Pisa, Lucca and Florence. He prophesied great troubles which would fall on Italy. He implored his hearers to do penance, and worked astonishing miracles, by curing the sick, raising the dead, and foretelling the future. He was often persecuted, and calumniated, but in after years people were amazed to discover how most of his prophecies came true. He must have begun his apostolic mission just about the time that Urban V came back to Rome for a few years, and when he returned to Umbria the " Babylonish Captivity " at Avignon was nearly ended.

To his great relief came the voice of an angel, telling him to stop preaching and go back to Umbria. The last four years of his life were spent in a hospital at Foligno, where he slept on the bare ground, his days and nights being taken up mostly with prayer.

Again and again he had visions of coming events. As one of his biographers

tells us: "He saw the glory of the Queen of the Angels, the Seraphic Patriarch, St Francis, and all his faithful followers, and in particular the members of the Third Order who had kept their Rule faithfully." He died on September 15, 1377. Those who were present at his death-bed beheld a great light, and heard the voices of angels. His body rests in the church of San Agostino at Foligno, where his feast is kept on September 19. He was never formally beatified. Bd Thomas finds no place in the Franciscan Breviary and Missal.

BD NICHOLAS OF FORCAPALENA (1349-1449)

THERE is no doubt that children are influenced by the environment in which they are brought up. Those grim-looking mountains of the Abruzzi, with their jagged peaks and precipitous slopes and dark valleys, are enough to give any child a fear of God and the devil. The superstitious peasants believe that they are haunted by witches and evil spirits. Right in the heart of these mountains, in the diocese of Sulmona, lies the village of Palena. Here it was that Niccolò da Forca was born in 1349. It is recorded that he belonged to a well-to-do family, and that from boyhood was remarkable for his love of prayer and penance. For some years he laboured among his own people in the Abruzzi, devoting himself to works of mercy and charity. Feeling that he was called to a life of greater austerity, he joined the Third Order of St Francis, left home and made his way to Rome. Disciples of various nationalities gathered round him, and they lived as hermits. One of these young men was a Neapolitan, Domenico Zurlo, and it was due to his influence that Fra Niccolò formed another group of solitaries at Santa Maria delle Grazie, near Sperlonga, on the sea coast between Terracina and Gaeta. Although he appears to have been the superior of this little community, he did not remain with them continuously. He seems to have returned to Rome at frequent intervals, and became associated with Pietro of Pisa, who in 1377 had founded another community of hermits at Montebello, near Cesena, on the Adriatic coast.

In the year 1431 Gabriel Condolmieri, an Augustinian friar from Venice, was elected Pope, and took the name of Eugenius IV. He became friendly with Fra Niccolò, and gave him a church and monastery near Florence. But the right of possession was contested. Rather than stir up strife, Niccolò returned to Rome, although it appears that a legal judgment was given in his favour. Meanwhile his own hermits had been affiliated with those of Bd Pietro of Pisa, also with a group of Franciscan tertiary solitaries, founded at Scolca, near Rimini, by Fra Angelo of Corsica about 1393.

About the same time as the meetings of the Council of Basle were transferred to Florence in 1439, Eugenius IV presented Fra Niccolò with the monastery of Sant' Onofrio in Rome. In this peaceful spot, close to St Peter's, overlooking the Tiber, remote from the noise of the city, the now venerable hermit spent his last years. It is more probable that the formal union of his congregation with the Hermits of Bd Pietro of Pisa did not take place until 1446. By this time they had ceased to belong to the Third Order of St Francis and had adopted the white habit and the Jeronomite constitutions.

Fra Niccolò died on September 29, 1449, a hundred years old. His body was laid to rest beneath the high altar in the church of Sant' Onofrio, and many miracles were attributed to his intercession. In 1647 the inhabitants of Forcapalena asked that his body might be brought back to the Abruzzi, but all they secured was a

small portion of the relics. At the same time they were told that if, at some future date, there was talk of founding a religious community in this district, the Jeronomite Hermits should be invited first, and if they were able to make a foundation, the body of Bd Niccolò would be taken back to his native village. His cultus was formally approved by Clement XIV in 1771. The feast of Bd Nicholas is observed in the diocese of Sulmona as a double-major on March 14. Until recent years he was commemorated by the Friars Minor with Bd John of Dukla, confessor of the First Order, on October 1. His feast has now been pooled with that of Bd Francis of Pesaro on the same date.

The church and monastery of Sant' Onofrio are now occupied by a community of the Third Order Regular of St Francis. After the Second World War they were handed over to the Society of the Atonement, founded in the United States as an Episcopalian brotherhood in 1898, and received into the Catholic Church in 1909. In these peaceful surroundings the Friars, in their chocolate-coloured habits, devote themselves to the cause of the Unity of Christendom, working and praying that all those who, down through the centuries, have been separated from the Chair of Peter at Rome may return to Catholic communion, that is to say, communion with the Apostolic See.

BD WILLIAM CUFITELLA (d. 1411)

GUGLIELMO CUFITELLA was born at Noto in Sicily, where Bd Conrad of Piacenza spent the greater part of his life as a hermit. Nothing has been recorded of this solitary previous to his conversion, whenever it happened. All that we know is that he retired from the world, and hid himself in a wood, not far from Scicli, a small town west of Noto, situated among the rocky hills of strange volcanic formation. Near his retreat was a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Pity which was put under his charge. He had joined the Third Order when he abandoned his worldly career, and observed the Rule with more than literal fidelity, spending his days and nights in prayer, fasting and penance. He lived on the charity of the faithful, except for the vegetables he grew in his little garden. Sometimes he was visited by his brother tertiary, Conrad of Piacenza, who walked over from Noto. We are told that the two hermits once spent the whole of Lent together, without any food or mutual conversation, each being absorbed in prayer. Guglielmo seems to have been of a kindly disposition, for it is recorded that he was always glad to welcome anybody who needed spiritual advice or consolation. He did not spend all his time in solitude, but used to visit the poor among the hills, especially those who were sick. Indeed, from the little we know of this solitary, he seems to have been a true son of St Francis.

He made his home in that hermitage within a few miles of the Ionian Sea for more than seventy years. Here he died on April 4, 1411, ninety-five years of age. It is related that—as in so many other instances of the deaths of saints—the bells of the neighbouring churches rang of themselves to announce the event. The priests, accompanied by crowds of layfolk, hastened to the hermitage, where they found Guglielmo on his knees, his hands joined in prayer, his eyes raised to heaven, and his body lit up with supernatural brightness. They took the body back with them to Scicli, where it was laid to rest in a marble tomb in the parish church dedicated to San Matteo, where ever since it has been venerated by pilgrims. Guglielmo is often called " the Eyeapple of the Sicilian Saints ". His cultus was

approved by Paul III in 1537. In the diocese of Noto his feast is observed as a double-major on April 4. He is the principal patron of Scicli. Until recent years the Roman-Seraphic Breviary and Missal commemorated him on April 7, as a semi-double, but he is now pooled with two other confessors on April 3. Bd William Cufitella is invoked by the Sicilian farmers in times of drought. The peasants pray to him in cases of internal maladies. In 1873 his body was translated to the church of Sant' Ignazio, where are also preserved one of his sandals and a wooden crucifix which is said to have belonged to him.

BD VITALIS OF BASTIA (d. 1491)

BASTIA is a little village just off the main road from Assisi to Perugia, and about three miles from the former city. It was to the convent of San Paolo at Bastia that St Francis brought St Clare after her clothing in the Franciscan habit at the Portiuncula. About a mile from the village is still shown the spot where St Francis fell asleep by the roadside during the heat of midday, and where in a dream it was revealed to him that the newly granted Portiuncula indulgence had been " confirmed in heaven ". Here it was that Vitalis was born some time during the fourteenth century. The date of his birth has not been recorded, and very little is known about his early life. He was brought up in an environment redolent of the Franciscan traditions, and so it is not surprising that he joined the Third Order, and about 1470 retired to a remote place among the hills behind Assisi with a chapel dedicated to Our Lady, where he lived as a hermit. It is related that he spent his time in prayer and penance, went barefoot, and mortified his body by long watches and severe fasts. His food consisted of vegetables. He drank only water. Apart from the fact that he died on May 31, 1491, this is about all that we know concerning this tertiary solitary. He was never formally beatified, but in and around Assisi he is always referred to as " San Vitale ". He was buried in the chapel of Santa Maria di Lendiola, but so many miracles were claimed to his intercession that in 1599 his relics were translated to the cathedral of San Rufino in Assisi. His feast is kept as a double of the second class on May 31 in the diocese of Assisi, and also by certain Congregations of the Third Order Regular. Bd Vitale finds no place in the Roman-Seraphic Calendar.

CHAPTER VI

SAINTS ACTIVE AND CONTEMPLATIVE (1295-1503)

INTRODUCTION

THE Brothers and Sisters of Penance whose stories are told in this chapter stand out against a background made up of strife and turmoil. Some of them were right in the foreground of these battles, fighting with spiritual weapons to make peace. The period embraces the more than a hundred years absence of the papacy from Rome, and the thirty-seven years of the Great Schism. Interwoven with this lack of unity in the Church was the long drawn-out hostility between the two groups among the Franciscans, who attacked each other almost without ceasing for more than two centuries, being unable to decide what was the true meaning of Holy Poverty.

"The thirteenth century bequeathed to the fourteenth a legacy of splendour and contention. The fourteenth century continued the feuds of the previous era and developed into one of the most stormy periods in the history of Franciscan poverty—one in which poverty became confused and identified sometimes with the spirit of rebellion animating the Apostolics, Beguins, Bizzochi, Brothers of Free Spirit, Fraticelli, and other heretical sects which were beginning to swarm over Europe." [1]

All the thirteen tertiaries included in this chapter must have been conscious to a greater or lesser degree of the bitter contentions within the First Order of St Francis. How could they escape from this bickering and strife? The repercussions were felt in every country of Europe in some way of another. In 1279 Pope Nicholas III tried to restore peace by defining poverty in his Decretal *Exiit qui seminat*, but it satisfied neither party completely. In 1312 Clement V, having summoned representatives of the spirituals and friars of the Community to Avignon, where they argued among themselves for many months, hoped he had achieved peace when he forbade the holding of lands under permanent endowments. This papal Constitution insisted on what was known as the *usus pauper* in some cases, and the *usus moderatus* in others. Once again, the extremists among the Spirituals cried out that the Pope had betrayed the spirit of St Francis, and some whispered among themselves that he was Antichrist. Not a few of these extremists, who became so vocal, had to be handed over to the Inquisition, and some were burned alive. In 1322-23 Pope John XXII caused a revolt among the Friars Minor after he withdrew from them the right to hold property in the name of the Holy See, and at the same time declared that the extremist Franciscan doctrine of poverty was heretical. The situation from then onwards became more and more confused.

[1] Agostino Gemelli, O.F.M., *op. cit.*, p. 83. The influence of these heretical sects on the Third Order has been dealt with in the introduction to the previous chapter.

The greater number of the friars were glad to accept money and lands, and had no scruples about doing so. The Black Death had the effect of making pious Catholics eager to bequeath property to the Franciscans, so that in return prayers and Masses would be celebrated for the repose of the souls of those who had died during the great pestilence.

Meanwhile the more devout tertiaries in Italy were in close touch with the movement that started in 1334 when Fra Giovanni delle Valle received permission from his Minister-General to retire to the hermitage of Brogliano up in the mountains behind Foligno, so that he and a few like-minded friars could live in poverty and in penance. Such was the start of the movement which resulted in the breaking up of the First Order into two distinct groups, the gulf between which grew wider and wider. They became known as the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals. In the beginning this reform movement was largely made up of lay-brothers and hermits, but once it gained the support of St Bernardine of Siena it infiltrated into the whole Order, making itself felt in every part of Europe sooner or later. Early in the fifteenth century the Observant Franciscans had been released from the jurisdiction of the provincials of the Order, and granted provincials of their own.

But apart from all this internal strife within the Order there was a deep spiritual life. We may be fairly certain that manuscript copies of the book now known as the *Fioretti* or *Little Flowers of St Francis*, must have been passed around the tertiaries after 1330, and that they would have read Ubertino da Casale's *Arbor Vitae*, composed on Mount Alvernia about 1305, in which he insists upon the poverty of Christ, deploring the relaxations which have crept into the observance of the Rule of St Francis. Well-thumbed copies of the *Sacrum Commercium*, that exquisite allegory of the Lady Poverty, which was an earlier book of Franciscan spirituality, must have been in the hands of all such tertiaries who could read. During the fifteenth century they could have added the *Laudi* of Jacopone da Todi or the *Dicta* of Brother Giles to their libraries.

During the year 1430, when the Brothers and Sisters of Penance assembled for their monthly meetings, they would have been informed that Pope Martin V had confirmed the already existing division of the First Order. Such local groups which had an Observant Friar as their Visitor must have rejoiced to hear in 1442 and 1445 that papal bulls had given yet more freedom to this branch of the First Order. But this meant that in a large town there could be rival groups of tertiaries some with Conventual friars as their Visitors, others with Observants.

What wonderful sermons the fifteenth-century tertiaries had the chance to hear, with St Bernardine of Siena, St John Capistran, St James of the Marches, Bd Angelo of Chiavasso and Bd Bernardine of Montefeltre filling the churches up and down Italy. Some of these friars confined their missionary work to their own country, but others, like St John Capistran, travelled all over Europe. The fifteenth-century Franciscan theologians were as vigorous as those of the previous century in their defence of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady.

It is more than probable that individual tertiaries felt the call to spread the Christian religion to far distant countries, and joined the Friars Minor, whose foreign missions now extended from the Azores in the Atlantic to China in the Far East.

In Palestine the friars managed to regain possession of the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, and certain other holy places which had passed into the

hands of the Saracens. But they endured constant persecution, and were often obliged to abandon their friaries and seek refuge in the mountains.

By the end of the fourteenth century the Poor Clares had become somewhat relaxed in their observance of the Rule. St Bernardine of Siena carried out a widespread reform and re-introduced the First Rule of St Clare into many convents in Italy. Noble ladies began to join the Clares, and among them were St Catherine of Bologna [1] and Bd Battista Varani. But the real reformer of the Second Order of St Francis was St Colette of Corbie, whose influence spread far beyond the cloister, for this one-time tertiary recluse became the adviser and confidant of kings and queens.[2]

Despite the long drawn-out strife between the two groups of the Friars Minor, the Third Order continued to be a powerful social force almost everywhere in Europe. In many towns and cities there were hospitals and charitable institutions maintained by tertiaries. In Rome, the Third Order had the direction of four Houses of Mercy. In France, Germany and the Netherlands more and more communities of the Third Order Regular were founded. Both the Brothers and the Sisters of Penance, enrolled in numerous Congregations, conducted hospitals and homes for the poor, and in some places schools.

St John Capistran did much to propagate the Third Order in Germany and in Poland. St Bernardine of Siena enrolled vast numbers of tertiaries in Italy, and St Colette did likewise in France. By 1456 the Third Order was especially flourishing in Rome, Florence, Naples, Siena, Perugia and other Italian cities. It had a large following in the Marches of Ancona. In 1459 the famous Dominican, St Antoninus of Florence, recorded that there were very few Dominican tertiaries in Italy, but that the Third Order of St Francis was to be found almost everywhere, and that a number of its brothers dwelt in hermitages. Once again, we should remind our readers that it was not the simple Rule which tertiaries follow today that bound those of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. When one studies the Rule of 1289, imposed on the Third Order by Nicholas IV, the more one wonders that there were thousands of men and women scattered all over Europe who could have fulfilled its obligations. It was not just a matter of joining a pious confraternity. These men and women, even if married, were definitely 'religious' living in the world.

[1] See p. 160.

[2] It should not be forgotten that St Colette (1381-1447), having found she had no vocation for the life of a Béguine, 'Urbanist' Poor Clare, or Benedictine—all of which she tried—joined the Third Order of St Francis. From September 1402 until the summer of 1406 she lived as an anchoress, shut up in a tiny cell built between two buttresses of the Church of Notre Dame at Corbie in Picardy. Her Franciscan confessor received her vow of 'perpetual and absolute enclosure', the ceremony being presided over by the Benedictine Abbot of Corbie. Here she spent her days and nights in prayer and penance, reciting the Divine Office, and by means of a little window or wicket, opening into the church, was able to assist at every Mass. She wore the usual habit of the Sisters of Penance, with a rough hair-shirt beneath it, also iron chains. She took the discipline seven times daily. Her friends brought enough food to keep her alive, but very often it was uneaten. It is recorded that people came to her cell to seek her counsel and sympathy. A fifteen-year-old boy, who became a public notary in after years, used to visit the recluse for religious instruction. During this period of strict enclosure, Colette had it revealed to her that she must reform the Poor Clare nuns. She wrote a letter to Pope Benedict XIII, and received his sanction to make a start in the convents of Picardy. So her phase as a tertiary anchoress came to an end. (Cf. Perrin, *St Colette and her Reform*, Eng. trans. by Mrs Conor Maguire (London, 1923), pp. 98-126.)

ST ROCH OF MONTPELLIER (*c.* 1350-1379)

DURING the later Middle Ages, St Roch was invoked all over Europe, especially by victims of the plague and other dangerous illnesses. The facts about him which we may hold for certainties are limited but vivid. While he has suffered from the lack of an early biographer, he has been perhaps too fortunate since the fifteenth century, because the legends about him are numerous and often doubtful. Indeed the late Fr Thurston, S.J., says in the new edition of Butler's *Lives of the Saints* that " there is no evidence that he was a Franciscan tertiary, but that the Franciscans venerate him as such ". He also maintains that there is " no authentic history of his life. . . . His ' lives ' are chiefly made up of popular legends, which may have a basis in fact but cannot now be checked ". However, another recent historian, who has made elaborate researches into the life of St Roch, seems to think that the majority of the legends may be authentic in substance, but that the dates hitherto accepted are wrong. So we have tried to reconstruct the life of this popular saint in accordance with the facts now generally accepted.[1]

Roch (Rochus or Roche) appears to have been born at Montpellier in the south of France about 1350. His father was a wealthy merchant, and his mother a native of Lombardy.

In one of the many legends which have been handed down we read that he came into the world in answer to prayers made by his elderly parents to Notre-Dame-des-Tarbes, the famous black Virgin of Montpellier, whose shrine was famous throughout France until the church was destroyed by the Huguenots in the sixteenth century. Another legend is that his birth was a miracle, also that a mysterious red cross appeared over the heart of the infant boy. We are told that from his earliest childhood Roch was absorbed in the interests of God rather than in all the coming and going of the busy university city which was his home. Perhaps he played at being a pilgrim as eagerly as children of today play at being racing motorists or pilots of aeroplanes ?

It is reasonably certain that his parents died when he was about fifteen. Forthwith, so the chroniclers record, he rid himself of his worldly possessions, gave his money to the poor and set out for Rome, not merely as a pilgrim, but as a beggar. His youth had been spent amid the comfort of an upper middle-class household, and if he was the child of parents who were young no longer at the time of his birth, it is more than probable that he was made a fuss of and indulged in every way possible. Now he had the courage to put himself at the mercy of the weather, prepared to face hardship, hunger, thirst and fatigue. Roch thought of himself as being at the mercy of God, just as a boy is at the mercy of his father.

No actual record of his being clothed with the habit of the Third Order exists, but the tradition has been accepted in the Franciscan Supplement to the Roman Martyrology, and is endorsed by St Roch being styled a confessor of the Third Order in the *Breviarium-Seraphicum* and the Franciscan Missal.[2]

In imagination we can picture Roch trudging along the dusty roads—through Nîmes, Avignon (where Pope Clement V had taken up his residence in 1309), through the wooded mountains of Provence, and along the coast of the Medi-

[1] Cf. Augustin Fliche, ' Le Problème de Saint Roch ' in *Analecta Bollandiana* (LXVIII, 1950), pp. 343-61.

[2] Cf. R. Menth, *Franziskanische Studiens*, Vol. XXI (1934), 213-14.

terranean. Onwards by way of Genoa, and the road that keeps close to the sea as far as Pisa, then turning inland, he would have joined the Via Francigena at Empoli. He was now among the vineyards and olives and cornfields of Tuscany; passing through town and villages made holy by the tertiary saints who had dwelt in them —Castelfiorentino, Poggibonsi and Siena. As the pilgrim climbed the lower slopes of Mont' Amiata, leaning on his staff, the road became dustier, and in that sun-baked, almost treeless desert of mud and clay hills, we can guess his weariness. Everywhere he would have found the sombre shadow of the Plague. This mysterious disease had been brought from the East, and it was spread far and wide by those who journeyed among the affected places. It broke out in different parts of Italy at frequent intervals during the fourteenth century.

When Roch arrived at the village of Acquapendente, a few miles north of Viterbo, he decided to keep aloof from the loquacious pilgrims on the road, but not to desert those who were in dire need. It is related by one of his later biographers that he knocked at the door of the Ospedale di San Giovanni, and offered himself as a nurse to the plague-stricken. It is related that the director of the hospital, " looking upon him, loved him ". Although there was a desperate need of attendants for the sick he told Roch that he was far too young to face the appalling sights and stench of the wards. But Roch had travelled far enough in the spiritual pilgrimage to see none but Christ in any who suffered. He replied in such sober earnest that the director permitted him to enter and work in this hospital. It was here that the plague first began to spare those on whose forehead Roch made the sign of the cross.

At last it was impossible for him to hide these miracles; and, to escape the almost divine honours that the desperate people gave him, he left Acquapendente and hurried on his way to Rome by way of Viterbo, entering the city by the Porta Castello, close to St Peter's. But his fame had travelled faster than his body—a cardinal noticed him at Mass—a young man in pilgrim's guise with an aureole around his head—and recognized him as the son of the merchant of Montpellier. He begged Roch to deliver Rome from the plague as he had done the village near Viterbo. Modest as saints are, they must use the power that is put into their hands, and Roch performed miracles of healing among the crowds of the city which is the spiritual heart of the Christian world. It is difficult to be certain of any dates in the life of St Roch, but recent historians consider that he remained in Rome from about 1368 to 1371.

When this tertiary pilgrim had ended his devotions in Rome, he set out with the intention of returning to France by a less direct route than by which he had come. It is possible that he visited Assisi before he crossed the Apennines, for it is recorded that he passed through Cesena, Ravenna and Padua, where he would have prayed at the tomb of St Anthony. Then, by way of Parma he reached Piacenza, where one night he is said to have heard a voice: " Roch, my son, you have borne many fatigues for My sake. . . . Now for the love of Me you must suffer great pains in your body." He replied: " O sweetest Jesu, I thank Thee for having remembered Thy servant. I offer Thee this pain, and I am thankful for it as a gift from Thy hand. It is thus that Thou dost visit a wretched creature. This visit is sweet and dear to me. Coming from Thee, death is a gain to me." For at the Voice, Roch had felt himself smitten with the foul disease he had every reason to know too well—the plague. God, who had made him its victor, now made him its victim.

Here the legends take on a truly Franciscan colour. The holy and gentle nurse who had been so much in demand, so much honoured, was now not only a wretched infected creature, but his pains were so severe that in his fever he moaned involuntarily all day and night, crying aloud so piteously that the other patients, smitten with the same disease, complained that he made the ward intolerable to them. Roch was putting on a sackcloth of humiliation with no stint. In a more lucid moment he realized how detested he was, and unable to promise not to cry out when he was semi-conscious, he made the best use of his temporary self-command to crawl out of his bed, out of the ward and into the street. The director of the hospital soon heard of his flight. Indignant complaints reached him, and he was blamed for his carelessness. Roch, in his next moment of consciousness, was asked to explain his conduct; and when he had done so he was told that he was mad, alike in his ravings and in his ideas. So, with the persistence of the sick, he made another attempt to escape, and this time he got as far as the wooded country outside the city—perhaps those same woods which had been set alight by Bd Conrad of Piacenza when he was hunting on that fatal day nearly a century before. There, as he used the very last of his strength to stagger among the trees where none could find him, he noticed a ruined hut. He crept inside, and made a childlike prayer to God not to forsake him. A gentle rain began to fall, cooling his rising fever and washing the foul plague-wounds. And God was his nurse.

Next day the lord of the neighbouring manor was dining, and his dogs lay around the table, waiting for the meat or bread that would be thrown to them. To one dog he threw a fine large piece of bread, and was surprised to see it—instead of devouring the food—carry it away. This happened for two or three days, until thoroughly curious, the master followed his dog to see where it was taking the bread. He found himself at the hut in the wood, where, to his horror, lay a man smitten with the plague. This noble lord was more charitable than afraid, and from that hour he nursed the sick man. Nurse, and then friend and finally companion, until the two dwelt together in the wood as hermits. When Roch had recovered, even though he was still weak, he returned as nurse to the hospital in Piacenza where he had been so despised. By day he worked among the sick in the town, and when he went back in the evening to the seclusion of his hut, the wild creatures came to him with their ailments.

Roch had not yet climbed his Calvary. There came a day in 1374 when he was bidden to leave his companion named Gothard, and return to France. Sorrowfully they parted, but Roch found that the north of Italy was being ravaged by war, with the papal troops fighting the Visconti armies of Milan. He was stopped by the city guards when he arrived at Angera in Lombardy. They asked him who he was, for they feared that any strange comer might be a spy. His quiet replies did not convince them, and Roch was thrown into prison. His maternal uncle appears to have lived at Angera, and a word from him would have effected his nephew's release. Did Roch try to get in touch with this uncle, one wonders, or if he did, was the message withheld? Warders would scoff at the strange tale of a ragged man. Madmen always tell such tales, and if he was not a spy, then he was certainly mad, if not both. The fact remains that it was only when he felt himself dying, five interminable years later, that the warders allowed Roch to see a priest, and his story came to light. He was dead when the bewildered merchant recognized, in the worn face of the captive, the nephew who had made over to him all his possessions.

There can be little doubt that the French vagrant was buried at Angera, without any special solemnity. According to a legend, he had informed a certain person that any who were in danger of, or stricken with infectious diseases, and who invoked him, might be cured. This may or may not be true, but within a few years of the death of Roch, his cultus was spreading in all sorts of places. By 1413 he was being invoked in the centre and south of France during a plague epidemic. By 1421 the Dominicans at Montpellier had erected a chapel in his honour. Roch is said to have performed a miraculous cure from the plague during the Council of Constance in 1414. Before long almost everybody was praying to St Roch when they were dangerously ill. By 1477 a pious confraternity under his patronage had been established in Venice, and there is record that other cities soon had guilds or confraternities of St Roch. In 1485 the Venetians managed to procure his body, which was solemnly translated from Angera, and a church erected where it could be enshrined. A magnificent place, the Scuola San Rocco, was built for the headquarters of the confraternity, whose members devoted themselves to works of mercy and charity.

Other relics found their way to Arles, and these were given back to Montpellier when that city had lost her own relics during the wars of the Reformation. Roch remains, perhaps, the most universally invoked Franciscan saint after Anthony of Padua.

His cultus was approved by the Council of Constance. He was canonized by Urban VIII. Permission for his feast to be celebrated by the Franciscan Order on August 16 was granted by Innocent XII. It is kept as a double of the first class in the diocese of Montpellier. Feasts of the Patronage of St Roch are found in several Italian dioceses, e.g. at Locorotondo (Ostuni-Brindisi), February 20; Giojosa (Gerace), March 27. In 1913, when the feast of St Joachim was fixed for August 16, that of St Roch was transferred to the following day in the Roman-Seraphic Breviary and Missal, where he has the rank of a double-major. Paul III established a confraternity at Rome, under the patronage of St Roch, and placed it in charge of a hospital and church in the Via Ripetta, which existed until 1890, when the buildings were seized by the anti-clerical government. But the Confraternity, enriched by many spiritual favours by subsequent popes, and granted a cardinal-protector as its immediate superior, still functions.

Such then are the chief facts in the story of this saint, as recorded by his biographers. Whether their authenticity will ever be proved is uncertain. No matter, we have the authority of the Holy See in claiming him as a member of the Third Order. This is stated definitely in the Franciscan Supplement to the Roman Martyrology, approved by the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

BD MICHELINA OF PESARO (1300-1356)

RIGHT in the heart of the cheerful little city of Pesaro on the shores of the Adriatic will be found the church of San Francesco. It is within a stone's throw of the Palazzo Ducale, now known as the Prefettura, within whose great hall Lucrezia Borgia danced on the night of her betrothal. Almost opposite this church, in the centre of a square, is a statue of that composer of many a gay and sparkling melody —Giacomo Rossini, whose father was the town trumpeter of Pesaro. Nearly five centuries before his birth a girl was born in this same city, and christened Michelina.

If you enter the church of San Francesco you will find her tomb at the far end of the right aisle, above which is a painting depicting her in ecstasy on Calvary. Even today, she is better known and loved than any of her fourteenth-century contemporaries, most of whose names are forgotten, save by a few historians.

The story of Bd Michelina is a short one. Its very shortness is its glory, because it is the story, not of one who had a short life, but who took a short cut to sanctity. Does " a short cut to sanctity " seem an irreverent phrase ? Those words exactly describe what we can call Michelina's method, because she cut short anything she felt was keeping her from God.

" She belonged ", so Père Léon tells us in the *Auréole Séraphique*, " to the noble family of Metellus, and was married, at the age of twelve, to a scion of the powerful family of Malatesta, the eldest branch of which was then reigning at Rimini." [1] Metellus was the family name of that famous ancestress, St Cecilia, so it was old even in the third century. As for Malatesta, it is one of the names that resound through medieval Italian history, evocative of tyranny and luxury wherever one reads it, though later it was to give another *beato* to the Third Order of St Francis in the person of Roberto Malatesta, Prince of Rimini.[2]

It was about 1285 that the Malatestas appeared in Pesaro, when Giovanni, the husband and murderer of Francesca di Rimini—immortalized by Dante and Byron —became Podestà. This great family retained possession of Pesaro for nearly two centuries, when Galeazzo Malatesta sold the city for 20,000 florins to Francesco Sforza, who held it until 1500, when it was captured by Cesare Borgia.

To understand the background against which the life of Michelina was passed, the following quotation may be helpful. Mr Edward Hutton describes Pesaro as " that delightful little city—one of the pleasantest in all the Marches ". He does not know what it is in Pesaro that makes one always feel so happy there ; " whether it be the charm of her wide Piazza with its beautiful Palazzo della Prefettura, or the kindliness and hospitality of her citizens . . . or whether, after all, one's pleasure lies not so much in Pesaro herself as in the delight of the country in which she lies ". She is situated on the flat shores of the Adriatic, where " there is so much sleepy movement, the sound of ships and of the sea, and light and colour. All one's days and nights in Pesaro are full of melodies, and no one can be the least surprised to learn that Rossini was born there, for the whole city and the hills and woods are full of music, to which the sea continually beats a grave and solemn accompaniment, gently breaking in a line of foam along the shore." [3]

There are many ancient churches too, and many lovely paintings in them and in the museums. A city of laughter and pleasure, where on a moonlight night one seems to hear the sound of music of that famous ball on the occasion of the betrothal of Lucrezia Borgia, when the guests came forth into the streets in couples, the Papal ambassador leading the dancing. Then there is that " palace of delight " —the Villa Imperiale—described as " a glorious pleasure house, built for love " which, as much as any palace in Italy, conjures up a picture of a world of luxury and artistic culture now long since past. Such was the background of Bd Michelina; such was the world to which she belonged, and which she gave up at the call of God.

We know nothing about her before her marriage, save that she was born in 1300, and nothing of the marriage itself. She had one child, a son, whom she loved with all the tenderness of her soul. The devotion between Italian mothers

[1] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, 422. [2] See p. 157.
[3] *The Cities of Romagna and the Marches*, p. 131.

and their children has always been remarkable: a fact we need to remember in the story of Michelina. Her husband died at the age of twenty-one, and she found herself a widow.

To the young Duchess, God had become a hard man. She could see no love in the deed which had despoiled her. She found it only in the smiles and caresses and demands of her baby. She was evidently just a good Catholic, who heard Mass and said her prayers, but she could not understand the inscrutability of God's justice.

One day, Michelina was told that a woman who spoke little Italian, still less the Romagnuolo dialect, but who wore the habit of the Third Order of St Francis, was asking alms at the door. She was, so the ladies said, the holy woman known already in Pesaro for her poverty, penance and ecstatic prayer. Would not the Duchess speak to her? Michelina not only saw the woman, but conversed with her, finding that she came from Syria, probably on a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi. There is always an attraction in Christians who find joy in their faith to those who find none, and Michelina invited the Syrian to take up her abode in her palace.

On the Feast of Pentecost, she was praying for Michelina, when God so filled her with a desire for heaven that she was drawn up from the earth, and remained so during the day. Michelina, missing her guest on this great feast, went to find her, and on hearing no response when she knocked at the door, saw the woman rapt in unearthly bliss, lifted above the ground. As though in obedience to what was due to her hostess, the Syrian came to herself; Michelina could only stammer something about having come to fetch the woman to join in the feast. The Syrian could not forbear to reply sweetly and ruefully: "My Lady, if you but knew the gift of God and the ineffable bliss of His conversation, you would not have called me back to the things of the earth. Rather, the world would be bitterness to you, and you would despise all that is not God."

In Michelina's answer we see, for the first time, that honesty of mind which was her characteristic. "Sister", she said humbly, dazzled by the sight she had witnessed and which had given such a hint of Divine love that her own mental picture of God as a hard man was lost in a new light: "I cannot aspire to such perfection. My whole heart is given to my son, and"—with a gesture towards her magnificent dress which contrasted with the grey woollen habit of the other—"my riches hinder me from going to God."

"Then let us ask God to come to you", was the Syrian's reply. Next day they prayed together in the church of the Friars Minor. And there, so we are told, a voice came from the crucifix and they heard these words: "Michelina, I will deliver thee from your cares and from this too human affection. I will call thy son to Myself, and will espouse his mother."

So many thoughts flock round that scene. The "hard" God shows His love by taking all that is left. But He speaks from a crucifix as though challenging His creature to say that He takes no more from her than He took from Himself. If pity demands passionately, is this the reward for honesty of heart? If we show God where our treasure lies, will He only avail Himself of the showing of it? Did He, then, not know without telling? Is not honesty of heart the deepest of all prayers, prayed without knowing; a cry from the true depths of one's being towards God's merciful help to deliver us from doing the things we would not and leaving undone the things we desire to accomplish? That this is no mere saying "Lord, Lord" without any goodwill behind it, is proved by the generosity

with which Michelina accepted the emptying of her whole heart. Her love was great enough to wish for her little son a love greater than her own : the love which she knew was in the heart of God. Besides, the crucifying promise had ended with consolation. The " hard " God had spoken of *espousing* her. She was no longer to be widowed and alone. God Himself would be her Lord, her protector, her husband. The Syrian woman must have gone humbly to church beside the Duchess, but she must have returned far more humbly beside the espoused of God, utterly forgetful that she had been used by God to bring Him His bride, that she too, in the separateness of her own vocation, was His chosen and beloved. The picture of Michelina's return from the church of San Francesco to her palace recalls the return of Mary from Calvary.

Servants met their mistress with word that the little Duke was sick. It was, as Michelina and the Syrian knew it would be, a sickness unto death ; and not only did they see his death, but also they were permitted to see his soul carried by the angels, free from stain of sin, to what Francis Thompson has called " the nurseries of heaven ", there to play with the Holy Innocents, " sporting with their wreaths and palms ".

To give up her riches was only to give pence after having given gold. The Duchess realized the whole of her personal fortune, keeping only her palace and the part of her wealth which belonged to the Malatesta, and distributed it among the poor. For how many families it must have provided, dowering young girls, buying comforts for old men and women, paying the debts of those hopelessly bound by them, giving wretched homeless creatures a chance to live honestly and decently which their poverty had previously made impossible. Then she asked to be received into the Third Order, and put herself under the spiritual direction of a Franciscan friar. She still lived in her palace, but it now became more like a great hospital, magnificent only in the generosity which it gave to every need.

Widows who at first confided in her timidly found that the Duchess was, after all, only a widow like themselves. Orphans found in her—not the too eager tenderness of a starved and empty heart—but the madonna-like gentleness of a mother who wishes to make other children as happy as her own baby is.

Michelina had not longed for love more than God had longed for her to discover the secrets of His Heart. It was when she forgot and renounced her own loneliness that she found what He had been waiting to give her. In forgetting herself she has prepared herself for His coming. She had won His Heart when she was thinking, not of winning love, but only of giving it.

One of her biographers tells us that God appeared to her, and said : " Your compassion for the poor and sick, for the widow and the orphan, has gained My Heart. For that which you have done to the least of these My little ones, you have done to Me, and therefore your reward shall be overflowing. I will help you powerfully, that you may follow without fainting this path on earth on which you have entered. You shall never turn aside from it, neither to the right nor to the left, for I shall cause you to walk courageously in the straight way that leads to life eternal."

Trembling with reverence, Michelina fell down on her knees. " Lord," she said, " what I have done comes not from myself but from You. From a vile creature what could come fit for You to look on with pleasure ? I have only given back Your own gifts. If You reward me, Lord, You crown Your own works, not mine. There is nothing good, even the least desire for good, that does not come

from Your grace. Grant then, my Lord, that neither my will nor my actions may ever separate me from You ! "

She had indeed become a Franciscan.

Great consolation brings, she would have told us, desire for greater labours for God, greater giving. There was nothing she wanted now but to separate herself from the good deeds that seemed to be hers. So she reduced herself to absolute personal poverty, having no further command over her palace and remaining possessions. Instead, she allowed a poor woman to give her shelter for the love of God, and as for food, she begged it from door to door.

Her own relations who might have admired her deeds if someone else had done them—because the fourteenth-century Italian understood and admired the saints of his own age—took a very different view when a Duchess of their family turned her palace into a sorting-house for the rag, tag and bobtail of the city, and got her living as a beggar at the doors of those who bowed low at the mere sight of a Prince of Rimini riding down their streets.[1]

Ignominy and blame Michelina accepted as she had accepted bereavement and poverty, their bitterness sweetened in the knowledge that she shared what Christ had also been given. It was, she said, welcome penance for her sins. She added other penances so as to share further in what the world had given her Saviour.

She left Pesaro, took ship and went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Père Léon says, " an opportunity presented itself for the execution of this pious project ". What was this opportunity ? We do not know, except that she joined a company of pilgrims, and was able to venerate the places connected with the life and death of Our Lord. It needed some courage for a Christian to set foot in Palestine during the fourteenth century, because the Moslems were growing more and more powerful—with well disciplined armies that had gained possession of the greater part of Asia Minor. In 1356 they became the masters of Gallipoli and thus entered Europe. The Christian kings were too much taken up with the Hundred Years' War to think of another Crusade. As to the maritime states of Italy, they were more intent on commerce, and far more eager to keep on good terms with the enemies of Christendom. It is possible that the Syrian woman accompanied Michelina on this pilgrimage, on the other hand she may have been dead. It is recorded that when Michelina was praying in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, she was rapt in esctasy, and (in the words of Père Léon), " Our Saviour appeared to her and poured forth such a flood of consolation on her, that when she came to herself she spoke of the Passion in such burning words, that they were like darts of fire, piercing all hearts with love and compunction ".[2]

Michelina died in 1356 at the age of fifty-six, soon after her return from Palestine. As was fitting, her body was laid to rest in the church of the Friars Minor in Pesaro. She worked many miracles after her death, and in 1737 Clement XII gave formal approval to her cultus. Such was God's will for her. But the Syrian who had worked the miracle of her conversion has been forgotten.

In the dioceses of Pesaro and Cagli-Pergola the feast of Bd Michelina is observed on June 20. In the *Breviarium Romano-Seraphicum* and Franciscan Missal her

[1] There is a tradition that Michelina's rich relatives were so ashamed of her behaviour that, at an earlier period, they kept her locked up in a small room of her palace, maintaining that she was a harmless lunatic. Eventually her keepers were disarmed by her patience and gentleness, and she was released.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 426.

feast is now kept on September 9, with Bd Seraphina and other widows of the Second and Third Orders of St Francis. Until a few years ago she had a feast to herself on June 20, where she ranked as a semi-double.

ST BRIDGET OF SWEDEN (1303-1375)

IT is difficult to decide what to mention or what to omit when it comes to writing about St Bridget of Sweden.[1] So far as is possible we shall try to depict her as a Franciscan tertiary, not as the foundress of the Order of the Most Holy Saviour. For, like Moses who only got a far-off glimpse of the promised land, Bridget never had the happiness of even being clothed with the habit of the double-order she founded.[2]

Sweden had taken a long time to convert, and it was not until 829 that its first apostle, St Ansgar, a monk of Corvey in Westphalia, arrived in the country and began to preach Christianity. It took more than two centuries to overthrow the pagan gods, and it was not until 1160, after the death of St Erik, King of Sweden, that the Catholic Church was firmly established. Four years later Pope Alexander III declared Sweden to be an independent ecclesiastical province, with Uppsala as the seat of its archbishop. Christian civilization grew up in the form of feudalism at its best. Peasant life eddied round the great castles, and the lords and ladies, valuing their peace and leisure, paid for it by protecting their vassals. So it was a rough and ready, eager, peaceful, brightly coloured life into which Bridget came. She was dowered, not only with castles, lands, servants, and a noble man, but with outstanding gifts of mind.

Bridget was the fifth child born to Ingeborg Magnusson, the second wife of Birger Persson, lord of the manor of Finsta, in the province of Uppland. The probable date of her birth was in 1303. One night, when she was seven years old, little 'Brita' had the first of those visions which were to be granted her for the rest of her life. She woke up, and saw "an altar opposite her bed, and seated above it a certain lady, clothed in shining garments and holding in her hands a precious crown, who said to her: 'Bridget, come!' Hearing this voice, she at once rose from her bed and ran to the altar. Said the lady: 'Will you have this crown?' and when she assented, the crown was placed on her head so that Bridget felt its touch. When she returned to her bed this vision vanished, but she could never forget it."[3]

About three years after this Bridget had another vision during Holy Week, after she had heard a sermon on the Passion. She woke up and beheld Our Lord, with fresh blood flowing from His wounds. "See how I am wounded!" were His words. Bridget cried out: "O Lord, who has done this to Thee?" The answer came: "Those who despise Me and spurn My love. It is they who have

[1] The Swedish form of Bridget is Birgitta; the diminutive, Brita.

[2] The best and most accurate biography of this saint is *God's Ambassadress* by Helen M. D. Redpath, Bridgettine of Syon Abbey (Milwaukee, 1946). Other recent lives in English are *St Birgitta of Sweden*, by E. Peacey (London, 1933), and *St Bridget of Sweden*, by Johannes Jörgensen, translated from the Danish by Ingeborg Lund (2 vols., London, 1954). The bibliography at the end of this book is enough to show what a wealth of material exists concerning St Bridget.

[3] Redpath, *op. cit.*, p. 3 (*Vita b. Brigide Prioris Petri et Magistri Petri;* Cod. olim S. Laurentii in Panisperna, fol. 2[r]).

done this." [1] As Johannes Jörgensen put it: "Christ *is* a bird of prey. Like an eagle He struck that night into the young heart of Bridget." [2]

That same year Bridget met her whom St Francis calls "our sister, bodily death, whom no living creatures shall escape". Her mother died, and was buried in the cathedral of Uppsala. Her father sent Bridget and her sister to be cared for by their maternal aunt, Katherine, wife of Knut Jonsson, Governor of East Gothland, the fertile province that lies south of Stockholm and which is the cradle of Swedish culture.

The Lady Katherine, like her husband, was a devout practical Catholic, given to good works, but she believed in bringing up children with a rod of iron. She had little sympathy for the precocious piety of her niece, Bridget. Those two years spent in the castle of Aspenäs could be described as Bridget's novitiate. She found little to her liking, and had no one on whom she could shower the riches of her nature save Him who was waiting and longing for them. Already in more than one vision she had seen what sin had done to Christ: now, in hard daylight, she tried by faith rather than by sight to see what devotion could do for Him. She seems to have returned to Finsta by the summer of 1316, and at what we should regard as the very early age of thirteen she was married to Ulf Gudmarsson, a son of the Governor of West Gothland, whose family was just as noble as her own. Her sister Katherine became the wife of Ulf's brother, Magnus, and she was only twelve. Bridget's wedding took place at Ulfåsa, the home of the bridegroom, and the feastings went on for several days.

Ulf loved and respected his girl wife. On the night after their marriage, Bridget suggested that they should live as brother and sister for a year, and he agreed to this. They devoted themselves to the welfare of the serfs and tenants on the vast estates, and were lavish in almsgiving. About 1320, the first of Bridget's eight children—four boys and four girls—was born.

Some years after her marriage—the actual date is not known—Bridget joined the Third Order of St Francis. It is probable that Ulf also became a tertiary, for it is recorded that the young husband and wife used to recite the Hours of Our Lady together.[3] Both the Dominicans and the Franciscans had established themselves in Sweden by the close of the thirteenth century. It can be understood that the latter Order, whose members in emulation of their Founder, who not only loved to preach on the Passion of Christ, but who had received the marks of the wounds of Christ in his own body, made a special appeal to Bridget. We may presume that it was her spiritual director, Master Mathias, a Canon of Linköping Cathedral and a learned Doctor of Divinity, who had studied at the University of Paris, who decided that the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance would provide a solid foundation upon which he could build up the spiritual life of this noble lady. He procured for her a Swedish translation of the Bible, and other books to stimulate her piety.

This is a point to be remembered when we think of Bridget as a tertiary of St Francis: unlike St Louis of France, who acquired the seraphic spirit from one of the first disciples of the Little Poor Man, she absorbed it, so far as we know, in the way in which it was presented to her by a secular priest, and not by a Friar Minor. Master Mathias stressed the penitential aspects of the message of St Francis.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 7 (*Proc. Can. dep. Pr. Pet.*, art. 29, fol. 213[r]).
[2] *St Bridget of Sweden*, Vol. I, 36. [3] *Vita. b. Brigide*, fol. 3[v].

Bridget cannot be described as a typical Franciscan saint. It is doubtful if her Nordic mentality would have been capable of appreciating the spiritual romance —dare one call it ' fun ' ?—of the stories told in the *Fioretti* and similar collections of Franciscan legends, manuscript copies of which may have reached Sweden by the fourteenth century. One feels that some of the *Laudi* of God's troubadour, Fra Jacopone da Todi, who died two years before she was born, might have puzzled, if not shocked her. Bridget's Franciscanism, even after she went to live in Italy, remained as dark and gloomy as the pine forests of her native land. Very seldom does a ray of even the palest winter sunshine pierce the shadows. She smiles sometimes, but it is always a sad smile, never a hearty laugh. After all, were laughs and jokes in keeping with the Rule of a Sister of Penance ?

By 1335 the elder children had been placed in various convents and monasteries for their education. That same year Bridget and Ulf were summoned to court, because she had been appointed chief lady-in-waiting to King Magnus Eriksson's child-bride, the little Flemish princess Blanche, a daughter of Count John of Flanders. Bridget held this office for five years, lamenting in vain against the wasteful luxury and endless pleasure-seeking of the royal household.

The story is told that one day she came across a richly decorated casket, flung aside in a corridor, where it lay dusty and neglected. Bridget discovered that it contained the relics of several saints, including St Louis of France. The Queen had forgotten about this casket, and allowed her lady-in-waiting to keep it. Bridget placed it on the altar of the chapel in the castle at Stockholm. It is possible that a copy of the Sieur de Joinville's reminiscences of St Louis, which first appeared in 1309, had found its way to Sweden, and that Bridget and Ulf had read the story of this royal tertiary. No matter, it was the example of this saintly King of France that she set before Magnus Eriksson, trying to make him live justly and wisely in ruling his kingdom.

Some time between 1339 and 1341 Bridget managed to escape from court-life and, accompanied by her husband, made a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Olaf in the cathedral of Nidaros. It was a long and wearisome journey across high mountains, and took them thirty-five days. This first pilgrimage roused Bridget to make another and much longer one—to the shrine of St James at Compostela, which had been visited by her father, grandfather and great-grandfather. There was a *wanderlust* in her blood ! She would never cease to be a traveller.

But before the husband and wife could leave Sweden, much had to be done to arrange family matters, and to see that all the children were being cared for. Ulf and Bridget set out on their long journey in June 1341, having left their little son, Benedict, with the Cistercian monks at Alvastra. The pilgrims stopped at Cologne, moved on across France, visited the grotto of St Mary Magdalene at La Sainte Baume, took ship from Marseilles, landed in Spain, and at long last reached Compostela. Here they were forced to remain until the winter snows on the Pyrenees had melted so that they could return overland to France. After several months on the road the party arrived at Arras in Flanders. Ulf, exhausted by the hardships he had endured, fell ill, and faced suddenly with ' Sister Death ' realized that he was not ready to appear before God. He recovered his health, apparently as the result of his wife's prayers, and there and then the two of them made a vow to enter religious orders. From a statement made by his daughter, Katherine, which is found in the Process of St Bridget's canonization, it appears that Ulf also

vowed to found a monastery.[1] Then they returned to Sweden. Ulf got no further than the monastery of Alvastra, where he remained as a guest until his death in February 1344. Bridget left her son, Benedict, in the care of the Cistercian monks, and went back to Ulfasa to clear up her husband's affairs, wondering what was to be her future.

Torvald Höjer in his study of the life of St Bridget has summed up the effect of the journey to Spain on her character, and says: "The pilgrimage to Compostela was of the greatest importance for her mental development and for the widening of her spiritual horizon. By it she came into touch with all the great questions which occupied the contemporary mind in the principal countries of culture; the conflict between France and England, the bitter complaints which from every quarter were levied against the papal court of Avignon on account of its great moral corruption. Her already acute political interests were carried from the small affairs of her native land to the weightiest problems of European and Church politics." [2]

Finding herself a widow at the age of forty-one, Bridget hardly knew what to do with her life, but she had received several mysterious visions and heard voices suggesting that God had arranged her future career already. The obvious course open to her was to remain at Ulfasa, devoting her spare time to works of mercy and charity, or there was nothing to prevent her from becoming a Cistercian or Poor Clare nun. There were several convents in Sweden which would have welcomed this pious widow with open arms. But, having set her house in order, she realized that her vocation was to live in poverty and imitate Christ who was poor, and in some way walk in His footsteps. It is recorded that "of her prosperity she only kept what was necessary for herself to live simply and dress modestly. She divided everything else that she possessed among her children and the poor." [3]

Acting on the advice of her confessor, Master Mathias, Bridget resolved to taste poverty and solitude in the shadow of the Cistercian monastery where her husband died and where her son was testing his vocation. Special permission was obtained from the Abbot-General of the Order for her to live in a house within the monastic enclosure, and there she remained for four years.[4] She had the company of two old servants. At Alvastra Bridget drank deep of loneliness and hardship. People criticized her, thinking it very odd that a youngish widow belonging to one of the most noble families in Sweden should be living practically inside a monastery. "I didn't begin this way of life to please you," she answered one of her critics, "and neither will I give it up to please you. When I began it I resolved to bear blame for others. Pray that I may be able to persevere." [5] Then she became very ill, probably largely as the result of her excessive penances, also from mental strain. On hearing of this, Master Mathias hurried to Alvastra, and ordered his penitent to give up most of the bodily mortifications. Meanwhile the visions were more and more frequent. One day it was revealed to her that these visions must be recorded for the benefit of others, and Peter Olafsson, then Prior of Alvastra,

[1] *Proc. Can. dep. Katherinae*, art. 4, fol. 125^{v}.

[2] *Studier i Vadstenas Klosters och Birgittinordens Historia*, p. 31; translated by M. Howitt; quoted by Helen M. D. Redpath, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[3] Alphonsus of Jaen, Prologue to the eighth book of the *Revelations*; quoted by Jörgensen, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, 131.

[4] *Proc. Can.*, 8th, 9th, 10th witnesses at Vadstena, fol. 26^{v}.

[5] *Proc. Can. dep. Pr. Pet.*, fol. 208^{r}, 5 m.

was appointed to act as her secretary. With the permission of successive abbots, he remained in this position for the next thirty years, nearly always travelling about with Bridget, jotting down the revelations and translating them from Swedish into Latin. What a difficult task it must have been for this monk, because the secrets of Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell were unveiled to his employer. Bridget's " visions were for the most part intellectual, but quite different to those of Bd Angela of Foligno. Bridget was more prophetic than philosophical, intensely vivid and pictorial rather than impersonal and transcendent. She deals with questions that Bd Angela never touches, and her visions are those of the seer." [1]

Nevertheless it is a mistake to think of Bridget as an aloof and remote prophetess, rather is she " homely and kind—an understanding person with whom we can be quite at our ease. If we find her at times saying strange and stern words, it will not be in her own person, and it will be with inward fear and shrinking on her part. She never adopts the rôle of the teacher ; she makes no claim to sit in the seats of the doctors. She hides her graces when she may and guards jealously the secrets of her soul. If she is consulted, she will reply : ' I am a sinner ' ; if she is praised for her words, she will protest that she is only like a humble runner of a great lord, who delivers his master's message and is straightway forgotten." [2]

From now onwards Bridget's affairs were directed and controlled by her visions and revelations. They bade her intervene—better say interfere !—with affairs which even some of her friends felt had nothing to do with her. As to her enemies, the marvel is that they never murdered or poisoned this tiresome busybody who felt she was called by God to clean up the messes of the world, no matter what they might be. Then came the visions in which she saw with startling clarity almost every detail of the double-order she knew Christ the master-builder wanted her to found. His instructions were taken down by her monk-secretary. Some features of the observances of this community composed of monks and nuns could have been subconscious memories of the monastery of Fontrevault, which Bridget may have visited on her way to or from Compostela. The new foundation was to be governed by an abbess who, as Our Lord told Bridget, would represent His Mother. Certain details of the Rule, which were revealed later on, for instance a new form of the Hours of Our Lady, show faint traces of Cistercian influence, or could have been inspired by Dominican usages, but taken as a whole they are completely original. It is difficult to discover many Franciscan features in the Rule, but among them is the habit, which was to be of humble grey homespun wool, symbolic of a spirit of penance. Bridget's Franciscan devotion to the Passion was to be symbolized by a crown of white linen worn by the nuns over their black veils, with five small pieces of red cloth sewn on it to represent the five wounds of Our Saviour. There was another definite Franciscan note in the stress on poverty. The erection of stately or unnecessary buildings was specified as a grave sin, if it involved depriving the poor and needy of food and clothing. Moreover, it was revealed to Bridget that the churches of her Order must always bear the mark of holy poverty in their architecture, and be provided with only the absolutely necessary number of gold altar vessels and candlesticks. Finally, there is that primitive Franciscan tradition, where it is laid down that the monks and nuns must not touch gold and silver even with their hands without permission from the Abbess.

[1] Nesta de Robeck, *Among the Franciscan Tertiaries*, p. 177.
[2] Redpath, *op. cit.*, p. xiv.

Day after day Dom Peter Olafsson wrote down more and more details of the life and observances of the new Order while Bridget dictated to him. She told him that the maximum each community would consist of was twenty-five monks and sixty nuns. They would be strictly enclosed—even the monks, who, like the nuns, would be separated from the outside world by a grille. The planning of the church was unique, with two choirs : the one for the monks behind the high altar, the other for the nuns in a gallery above it. The Divine Office would be sung alternately by choirs of monks and nuns. Such, in brief, was the new Order revealed to this Franciscan tertiary widow. King Magnus made over one of the royal estates near Vadstena by deed of gift. A start was made on the buildings, but within a year or two everything stopped. There was too much opposition to the whole project.

For Bridget had been writing some extremely outspoken letters to the Swedish bishops, and the royal court had turned against her. Then she managed to send Bishop Hemming of Abo and Prior Peter Olafsson to Avignon with a letter she had written to Clement VI, requesting him to approve the new Order, and also to bring about peace in Europe. Their long journey of roughly fifteen hundred miles in each direction achieved almost nothing. Then one day in 1348 Bridget heard a strong clear voice telling her to go to Rome, and to remain there until both the Pope and the Emperor should meet there, promising her at the same time that the Rule of her Order would be " as a light in a lantern ".

So she started to prepare for the two-thousand-miles journey from Sweden to central Italy, taking with her among the party a new spiritual director, Master Peter Olafsson of Skeninge, a secular priest, because the Prior of Alvastra was unable to leave his monastery at this time. They sailed across the Baltic in the autumn of 1349, and after more than eight months of travelling, reached Rome in the summer of the following year.

It is difficult to imagine what Rome must have been like in the Holy Year of 1350, with thousands of pilgrims from all parts of Europe flocking to a city which was more or less in ruins ; the result of the transference of the papal residence to Avignon more than forty years before, civil wars, and no effective civic government. The Papal Vicar was a mere puppet among the turbulent baronial families. Bridget and her party were lucky to find any accommodation. At first she lodged at the Poor Clare convent of San Lorenzo-in-Panisperna, but it was not long before she and her companions moved into a house belonging to Cardinal Hugo de Beaufort, brother of Pope Clement VI, which adjoined his titular church of San Lorenzo-in-Damaso. The visions continued and Master Peter of Skeninge was kept busy writing them down.

Heavenly orders came to Bridget that she must go to Farfa, a Benedictine abbey in the Sabine mountains, where the monks were living in a state of great laxity. She did so, and the welcome she received from the Abbot was not exactly in keeping with Benedictine hospitality. She told him that he was living in mortal sin, and that if he and his monks did not mend their ways, they would find themselves in hell. It does not appear that this mission had any immediate success, but a journey to Bologna with the object of reforming another monastery proved to have been worth while. Then, quite unexpectedly, Bridget's daughter Katherine turned up in Rome, feeling she must be with her mother. Not long after, came a vision that Katherine's husband had died in Sweden. She refused many subsequent offers of marriage.

Most of the years Bridget spent in Rome were taken up with daily visits to churches. It is recorded that she had visions in the basilicas of St Peter, St Mary Major, St Laurence outside the Walls, St Sebastian on the Appian Way, and St Lorenzo-in-Damaso. The crucifix which spoke to her in St Paul's outside the Walls is still preserved there. She loved to sit among the poor, and beg alms as they did. Prayer occupied much of her days and nights. Every evening her household gathered round her in their oratory, where they sang the Divine Office together.

On the morning of the feast of St Francis, October 4, 1351 or 1353, Bridget made her way through the streets and crossed the Tiber, so that she could pray to the saint in the only church in Rome then dedicated to him—San Francesco a Ripa. Here she had a vision of the Little Poor Man, who said to her: " Come into my cell and eat and drink with me." It seems that she postponed her pilgrimage to Assisi until the following year, when she set out from Rome in company with her daughter Katherine and Francesca Papazzuri, the wife of a noble who was now one of her most intimate friends.

According to Jörgensen the pilgrimage took place in July, to enable Bridget to gain the Portiuncula Indulgence, if so, then it is easy to picture the party either riding or tramping along the dusty Via Flaminia, exposed to the glare of the sun, stopping for the night at some primitive hostelry, where there was no comfort, or in less rough quarters in such towns as Narni, Terni, and Spoleto. We can visualize them kneeling before the high altar in the Lower Church of San Francesco, soon after their arrival in Assisi, for at that date the exact spot where the Saint was buried was unknown. There can be little doubt that the vast size of the monastery adjoining the church must have struck Bridget as quite out of keeping with the spirit of Franciscan poverty as she understood it. Indeed she may have been shocked at the recently completed frescoes, far more brilliant in colour than they are today, which covered the walls and ceilings of both the Lower and Upper Churches. As she was rapt in prayer, she beheld Christ in a vision. He looked at her and said: " My friend Francis descended from the mount of pleasure into a cave, where his bread was divine love, his drink tears, and his bed the contemplation of My works and My commands. But his brethren now ascend the mount of worldly cares and pleasures and regard not the humility and the consolations of their Father and My friend." [1]

There is a story told that when Bridget read the verses painted on the base of Giunto Pisano's crucifix in the Upper Church: *Domine Jesu pie, miserere precantis Elie*—" Good Lord Jesus, have mercy on praying Elias "—she asked for mercy on the soul of him who, she felt, had been so disloyal to the spirit of holy poverty.

It is also related that when she reached the chapel of St Mary of the Angels, which in the fourteenth century still stood in the open air and not covered by the present basilica, she began to have doubts about the truth of the Portiuncula Indulgence granted by Honorius III, when he made this chapel " the Head and Mother of the Franciscan Order ". Once again Our Lord spoke to her and said: " Tell Me, what is it that troubles your heart? " She revealed her misgivings, and the reply came: " My friend Francis was truth itself and what he said was truth. He prayed that everyone who came hither with an empty soul should have it filled with blessing and be absolved from his sins. And as he prayed from love of men, and as I am love, I gave him what he prayed for." [2]

[1] *Revel. Extrav.*, cap. 90; quoted from Redpath, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
[2] Cf. Jörgensen, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, 95.

So Bridget entered the chapel and knelt before the altar, where she beheld St Francis himself, who said to her: "You did well to come, for I invited you to my cell to eat and drink with me. Yet the cell of which I spoke is not this house. My cell is true obedience. My meat was drawing my neighbour from the vanities of the world to serve God with his whole heart; this was to me delicious food. And my drink was the joy I tasted when I saw those I have converted love God with all their might. Enter into this my cell and share my meat and drink that you may be refreshed throughout eternity." [1] One of Bridget's modern biographers remarks: "This story of Bridget and St Francis is typical of her attitude towards God's saints. They are all her dear and honoured friends, and when she visits their shrines it is to make no formal visit of devotion but to have an interview with the saint she has come to honour." [2]

If it was in 1354 that Bridget went to Assisi, then she must have been back in Rome by the month of October when the Senator Cola di Rienzi was slaughtered by a wild mob at the foot of the Capitol. By this date she was living in the Papazzuri palace in what is now the Piazza Farnese, then more or less open fields, known as the Campo dei Fiori. This continued to be her home in Rome, and it was here that she died. But she set out on other long pilgrimages to famous shrines in southern Italy, including those at Ortona, Bari, Salerno, Benevento and Amalfi, where in turn she had 'interviews' with St Thomas the Apostle, St Nicholas, St Matthew, St Bartholomew and St Andrew. At most if not all these shrines there were visions and revelations. When she visited the shrine of St Michael on Monte Gargano, she declared that she heard the angels chanting the praises of their Creator.[3] Her Scandinavian *wanderlust*, even in late middle-age, drove her forth from Rome again and again. She travelled to Naples, having been told in a vision that she must rebuke her royal cousin, Queen Joanna, whose immoralities were as well known as was Bridget's holiness. Here she worked miracles, and Joanna, who developed almost an affection for this strange Nordic widow, made a few amendments, but with no lasting result. By October 1367 Bridget and Katherine were back in Rome, in time to be among the crowds who welcomed Pope Urban V on his arrival from Avignon. The following year came the Emperor Charles IV. The heavenly voices had told Bridget to remain in Rome until the return of both Pope and Emperor, so that she could deliver messages to them. On October 16 the Pope sang Mass in St Peter's, which Bridget describes to us as being in a filthy and ruined state, after long years of neglect.

She had interviews with the Pope and the Emperor in 1368, and asked the former to confirm the Rule of her Order, but he showed little credence in her statement that it was of heavenly origin. Nothing happened, except that she obtained a papal passport and leave for Mass to be celebrated for her on a portable altar while making another pilgrimage to Bari, Monte Gargano, and Ortona. When she returned to Rome, she was told that the papal court had moved to the summer palace at Montefiascone, on the edge of the Lake of Bolsena. Determined to make a final attempt to secure confirmation of her Rule, Bridget mounted her white mule and rode to Montefiascone, where, towards the end of July, she obtained an audience with Urban V, after waiting nearly three months. Besides confirma-

[1] *Revelations*, Bk. VII, cap. 3; quoted by Redpath, *op. cit.*, p. 103. See also Jörgensen, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, 95-6.

[2] Redpath, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

[3] *Revelations*, Bk. VII, cap. 4, *Additio;* IV, 129; VI, 107; IV, 125, *Declaratio* (H); IV, 131.

tion of the Rule, Bridget also asked for " the indulgences which the church of St Peter *ad Vincula* possesses ". This was to be a spiritual dowry for the community she meant to establish in Sweden, and she told the Pope that Christ Himself wanted this indulgence. It was not until many years after that it was granted. The Bull of Confirmation itself must have been a bitter disappointment; all it mentioned was the erection of two monasteries, one for men and one for women—not a double-order. Both communities were to observe the Rule of St Augustine. Within a month of issuing this Bull, despite Bridget's passionate appeals for him to remain in Rome, Urban V had boarded a ship and sailed for France. He died at Avignon on December 19 that same year.

Bridget felt she must stay on in Rome, and abandon any immediate hope of returning to Sweden to establish a double-community as had been revealed to her in so many visions. One day came the heavenly voice saying: " Prepare to go to Jerusalem to visit My sepulchre and the other holy places there; and set out from Rome when I shall bid you." Not long after she heard the command: " Go now." Bridget pleaded old age and infirmity of body, but Our Lord replied: " Why plead your age? I am the Creator; I make men weak and I make them strong as it pleases Me. I will be with you, will direct you, lead you forth and bring you back, and will supply all your needs." [1] So in November 1371 she set out for the Holy Land by way of Naples. There, compassed with the griefs of Christendom as she was, Bridget, found a new sword to pierce her heart. Her son Karl, who was travelling with her, fell in love with Queen Joanna. Their flagrant affair became the gossip of the courtiers, for both were married. Joanna's third husband was far away in Spain, and Karl's wife was in Sweden. Both lovers were middle-aged. On the night of Shrove Tuesday they danced together at a carnival ball. Karl took to his bed the following day, and within a fortnight he was dead. Queen Joanna ordered a magnificent funeral, which took place in the Church of Santa Chiara, the royal mausoleum. On Passion Sunday Bridget and her fellow pilgrims sailed from Naples, and had a rough voyage across the Mediterranean before landing in Cyprus. Here again she found a court of great luxury and wickedness, but she did not fear to warn the Queen, barons, and nobles of the divine vengeance which would fall on them if they did not repent and amend their lives.

Throughout the hot summer months of 1372 Bridget was travelling around Palestine, visiting Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth—living more in heaven than on earth, for her ecstasies were almost uninterrupted. The Revelations that deal with what she saw and heard with her inward visions as well as with her bodily eyes during this pilgrimage are among the most beautiful and inspiring of any of her writings. On the return voyage to Naples she spent a few weeks in Cyprus, where she managed to convert a Spanish Friar Minor, who was confessor to the Queen, and forced him to abandon a life of great luxury, cast away all his possessions, and give up his post at court. When at long last Bridget landed at Naples, she found plague raging in the city, and Queen Joanna implored her to stop it by her prayers, promising at the same time to do penance for all her own sins.

By March 1373 she was back again in Rome. People had got accustomed to the sight of this old lady, dressed in the undyed woollen ' uniform ' of a Sister of Penance, leaving the house in the Campo dei Fiori every morning or afternoon, leaning on her daughter's arm, and followed by several clerics. Despite her age, Bridget still insisted on making the Lenten Stations. After Easter her strength

[1] *Revelations*, VI, 9.

began to fail. She was very tired, and knew that her life's work was nearly over. It had been revealed to her that the burden was now resting on the young shoulders of Catherine Benincasa, a Dominican tertiary at Siena, and that she would be the means of bringing back the papacy to Rome. Bridget knew also that it was her own daughter Katherine, whose heavenly beauty of soul was now as remarkable as her earthly beauty had been, who would rule at Vadstena as first abbess of the double-community of monks and nuns.

Bridget's work of exterior failure and interior victory was now accomplished. Among kings and courts she had kept her Franciscan poverty and simplicity. As a mother she had kept the souls given to her, and had seen many of them safely to sleep. Her prayers would protect those who, like Cecilia, were still in the world. Her work was in this world no longer.

Through the hot days of the Roman summer she lay in her bed, where every kind of spiritual temptation assailed her. Master Peter was kept busy taking down the revelations and recording the visions which were almost as frequent as in former years. Five days before her death she beheld Our Lord, who said to her: "I have treated you as a bridegroom might treat his bride, if he stayed away from her in order to make her long more ardently for him. I have given you no consolation all this time because it was the time of your proving. But now that you have been proved, make ready; for what I have promised you is about to be fulfilled: you shall be clothed as a nun at the altar and consecrated, and shall be known henceforth not only as My Bride but also as a religious and the Mother of Vadstena. Yet you shall die here in Rome, and your body will remain here until it is taken to the place prepared for it. For it is My will to release you from your labours and to accept the will for the deed." Then she heard the words: "O Rome, My Rome, the Pope despises you and will not listen to My words and takes doubtful things for certainties! And because he reckons the time of My mercy according to his will, he shall no longer hear My pleading." Many more things were said to Bridget in these last days she spent on earth, all of which were recorded by her faithful secretary. She died on the morning of Saturday, July 23, 1373, after Mass had been celebrated in her room, when she received the Last Sacraments. Closing her eyes, she whispered, "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." [1]

It was nearly a year later that her body found its final resting place. For six weeks it lay in the Church of San Lorenzo in Panisperna. When the coffin was opened only a skeleton was found after the tertiary habit had been removed.[2] It was on December 2 that Bridget's coffin was roped to the back of a mule, and the procession set out from Rome, and it was not until early in July the following year that Vadstena was reached, after a long journey through Italy, a sea voyage across the Adriatic, and on through Austria, Moravia, and Poland, where the coffin was put on a ship at Danzig. The welcome given in Sweden was tremendous. The final halt made was at Linköping, where the Bishop and his Chapter came out to do honour to Bridget, the bells of the cathedral and all churches ringing. The coffin was laid to rest in the temporary wooden church at Vadstena, where a start

[1] Cf. Redpath, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-6. All details are taken from the *Diarium Vadstenense*, an. 1372; *Revelations*, Bk. VII, cap. 31; *Proc. Can. dep. Kath.*, fols. 130^{v}, 131^{r}; *dep. Pr. Pet.*, fol. 212^{v}; *dep. Magn. Pet.*, fol. 109^{r}, sup. art. 25.

[2] *Proc. Can. dep. Kath.*, art. 50, fols. 141^{r}, 141^{v}; *dep. Pr. Pet.*, art. 26, fol. 213^{r}; *dep. Magn. Pet.*, art. 49, fol. 117^{v}.

had been made in community life after permission for the foundation had been granted by Urban V in 1370.[1] Pilgrims soon came from all over Sweden, and many miracles were wrought by Bridget's intercession. The demand for her canonization was insistent, and within a year Katherine, Prior Peter, and Magnus Perrson were back in Rome, ready to give evidence. However, for various reasons, it was not until October 7, 1391, that Bridget was canonized by Pope Boniface IX, amid scenes of great enthusiasm. Her feast is kept by the Universal Church on October 8.

> So we take leave of this great and unique tertiary saint, who at first sight is not what we are accustomed to think of as a Franciscan character. She was untouched by the atmosphere of the early Franciscan surroundings, by the poetic charm of the legends which sprang up round the first followers of the Seraphic Father. She knew nothing of Umbria, of the First Companions, or of St Francis the knight, singing the praise of Lady Poverty his bride. She received the Franciscan message in the sterner northern atmosphere, where the brothers went to preach and convert under very different conditions from those which met the missionaries in France or Spain. Sweden, moreover, knew no great Franciscan school such as prevailed in England. Northern Bridget was, and northern she remained, and in her often terrible prophecies we seem to hear the echoes not only of the Old Testament, but also of the *Edda*. The last twenty-five years of her life were passed in Italy, yet even the southern landscape left her apparently untouched. She speaks often of the beauties of nature, but it is never the vineyards and olives, or the pinetas and mountains of Italy that she recalls, but always the lakes and forests of the North.[2]

BD JOAN MARY DE MAILLÉ (1331-1414)

ON the north bank of the river Loire, about eight miles west of Tours, a strongly fortified château dominates the little town of Luynes. Within its walls a daughter was born to the wife of Hardouin, Baron de Maillé, in 1331. The Baroness was descended from the Dukes of Montbazon who were of royal lineage.

We know little about the childhood of Jeanne Marie (Joan Mary) except that, like St Joan of France (see p. 176), she was specially devout to Our Lady. Unlike Princess Joan, she had a happy childhood, so it appears. Once she nearly died, but was saved by being dedicated to St James of Compostela, as her biographer tells us. We also know that when she was small, she loved to be allowed to give away her rich dresses to poor children, and to wear the cotton frocks that

[1] *The Order of the Most Holy Saviour* made several foundations in Sweden and in north Germany, and was introduced into England in 1406, after the marriage of Princess Philippa, daughter of Henry IV, to Erik XIII of Sweden. Syon Abbey, Middlesex, was founded in 1415 by Henry V. At the time of the Reformation most of the community escaped to the continent of Europe, eventually settling at Lisbon, where they remained until 1861, when they returned to England. Since 1925 the Bridgettine nuns have had their home at Syon Abbey, Marley, South Brent, Devon. The house in the Campo dei Fiori (now the Piazza Farnese) in Rome, where St Bridget lived for so many years, is now the Mother House of a Congregation of *Brigittine Sisters*, founded in 1911 by Mother Elizabeth Hesselblad, a Swedish convert. In 1935 they were able to make a foundation at Vadstena, close to the remains of the abbey founded by Bridget herself. This Congregation has one house in England—Convent of Bd Richard, Iver Heath, Bucks.

[2] Nesta de Robeck, *Among the Franciscan Tertiaries*, pp. 170-1.

they wore instead. Most likely the simple smock was more comfortable to play in, and little Jeanne got, in this way, her first idea that poverty and liberty went hand in hand.

When she was eleven, Joan had a vision of Our Lady, holding the Holy Child in her arms, and in her free hand a vessel from which sprinkled some drops of blood on the little girl. She then held the Infant Jesus for Joan to adore, and bade her meditate often on the Passion. Joan then made an offering of her whole being to Our Lord and His Mother; and those drops of blood soaked into her mind, heart and will, giving her that 'blood-relationship' with Jesus which all Christians have, but which is only apparent in the saints.

Shortly after this incident, so it is recorded, she was given as her confessor a Franciscan from Tours. She furnished a little oratory, and every evening this Friar Minor read aloud portions of the New Testament, explaining them to the household. Her spiritual schooling had begun.

When Joan was fifteen, her father died, and her maternal grandfather, the Duc de Montbazon, became her guardian. He lost no time in finding her "a match worthy of her name, fortune and qualities", and finally chose one of her former playmates, Robert, Baron de Silly. Like many another girl, Jeanne Marie wept for her dreams of the religious life. Unlike them, she was not bidden to renounce her desire to consecrate her virginity to God. Our Lord promised—as He promised St Cecilia a thousand years before—that He would keep her for Himself if she went through the marriage service in humble obedience. It must have been a strange wedding day, for the old Duc de Montbazon died suddenly after the excitement. Young Robert de Silly, praying fervently in the hour of awe when death was in the castle, was told that he and Jeanne Marie were to live as Our Lady and St Joseph had lived, because this was the will of God. It is clear that the newly wedded husband was quite content; had he not been, it would have been possible for him to have his unconsummated marriage annulled. The story reminds us of that of Bd Elzéar and his wife Delphine, who agreed to live in perpetual virginity on the night of their marriage.[1]

When Joan was six years old, the Hundred Years' War had begun between France and England, bringing famine and the plague, which was known as 'The Black Death', in its wake. It was to carry off nearly half the population of England, and things were to be even worse on the continent of Europe. In the midst of this scourge the Château de Silly stood like a stronghold of Christianity. Joan lay ill for a long time after her marriage, and Robert had to go and fight for France. She recovered—miraculously, it is said—after he had been dangerously wounded at Poitiers and she nursed him slowly back to health. Then, in the words of Père Léon, "being no longer capable of fighting against the enemies of France, he set to work to fight against himself in order to win Heaven".[2] The English captured the Château de Silly, plundered it, and its lord was made prisoner. Joan had given away so much to the starving poor that she had not enough left to pay the ransom and the English threatened to kill Robert if his wife were unable to raise the enormous sum of three thousand florins. She could do nothing but pray. Something happened. Our Lady broke his chains and restored him to Joan.

In October, 1360, after four months of protracted negotiations, peace was declared between France and England. The documents were signed at Brétigny, near Chartres, amid great rejoicings. The country was in a bad way. Disbanded

[1] See p. 100.

[2] *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, 109.

after the peace, armed bands of men wandered about France attacking everybody who opposed them, pillaging towns and villages, and demanding heavy ransoms for the release of prisoners taken. Jeanne Marie and Robert set to work to help the poor in the ravaged lands. It must have been a heart-breaking work, for what could the resources of one poor Baron, whose castle had been looted by the English, do to meet the myriad needs of the homeless peasantry, whose fields had been trampled down and their cattle seized to feed armies ? Two stories stand out like illuminations on the black page. One scorching hot day, when the plague was raging, the hopeless misery of two poor creatures, persuaded that life had no mercy or comfort for them, was overcome by Joan, and their despair turned into hope as she kissed their putrid wounds. Another day Robert came home from a long errand across what had once been his own smiling countryside, with three little boys in his arms. He had found them left to die by the roadside. These children were adopted, and so Robert and Joan came to have a family of their own. Two years after the Treaty of Brétigny, Joan had a strange vision of Our Lord Crucified. He stretched out His Hand, touched her left eye, and she understood of the joys of heaven. From that moment, all thoughts of earthly peace and happiness vanished, and when Robert died soon afterwards, Joan accepted her loss with complete resignation.

But this was only the beginning of sorrows. His family arrived on the scene, overwhelming her with reproaches that she had encouraged her husband to give away all his money, so that there was little left for the new heir. As though war was not enough ! They claimed everything that remained, not even leaving the young widow enough to retire to the Dower House, or whatever quarters were provided for her, and live there quietly. She could only take refuge, like St Elizabeth of Hungary, in the cottage of a former servant. And she received the same treatment as this tertiary saint. So insolent was the servant that at last Joan was driven to return to her own family near Tours.

One day, after she had got back to the castle on the banks of the Loire, St Yvo of Brittany appeared to her, and advised her to leave the world and put on the habit that he was wearing. As one of her biographers tells us, St Yvo said : " If thou wilt leave the world, thou shalt taste, even here below, the joys of heaven." Poor little Baroness ! She had been frightened at all the liberty poverty promised, and clung, one fancies, to the peace and the last shelter left her in her own home. But God ordained otherwise.

Leaving La Roche, she made her way to a poor lodging in the Hospital of St Martin, situated in the heart of what is now the *vielle ville*—the old town of Tours, not far from the Cathedral. Here Our Lady appeared to her again, and bade her put on the habit of the Third Order of St Francis. She did so, and was sneered at by the other inmates of the hospital. Nevertheless she soon began to be known as no mere mumbler of prayers, for conversions came in response to the nights of intercession she offered for souls and the books she lent to those who could read. She could talk too ; and she inspired preachers to explain more clearly the doctrines of the Faith. Soon they came to invoke her when their eloquence dried up, and still do, in the city of Tours, so we believe !

A period of wandering began. Various circumstances made it come to pass that Joan had nowhere to lay her head. She had made a public vow of chastity at the hands of the Archbishop, and had got rid of all her property and other worldly goods. She handed over the Château of La Roche, which she inherited, to the

Carthusians of Liget, after providing for the various members of her family, renouncing all money or lands which might come to her. The Lady Poverty took her for her own. In and around the city of Tours, where she had so many rich relatives, she was treated as a mad-woman. For some time she accepted the offer of the nuns who had charge of the Hospital of St Martin to work there as a servant. Her brother, Baron de Maillé, met her in the street when she was laden with vegetables, and pretended not to know her. She moved from one place to another, always despised and laughed at. Finally, she took refuge in a deserted hermitage at Planche-de-Vaux, between the villages of Ambillou and Cleré, about fourteen miles north-east of Tours, where there was a chapel dedicated to Our Lady. For years now, Mary had been her mother and mistress, directing and consoling her. In return Joan restored this ruined shrine, placing within it a new statue, and spending some years as its guardian. It was at Planche-de-Vaux that she heard a magpie trying to imitate her saying: "Loué!"—"Praise God!" She taught the bird to do so until he was always crying "*Loué!*" At last, when she was too worn out to beg her food in that lonely place, she had to leave it. When she tried to walk she found herself too weak. There was nobody near whom she could call, and no medicines at hand. Full of faith, she drank a little water from the well which had supplied her for several years, and rose up strengthened. Even today, flowers are said to bloom all the year round in that hermitage garden, and cures are wrought by the water from the well. A pilgrimage is made there on Good Friday in honour of the saint who was sprinkled with blood and lived like a kinswoman of the Crucified.

Back again at Tours, Joan tried to live in Notre-Dame-de-la-Riche, but the priests would not allow her to remain in the church at night. So she was driven to beg a poor lodging from the Franciscans. There, at last, at the age of fifty-five, she took up her apostolic work again. She prayed constantly for the healing of the Great Schism, like St Francesca Romana and many another saint of this same period. Yet she did not neglect, any more than did St Francesca, the needs of her own city. She begged from Rome more extensive faculties for the priests to whom she sent her converts. This is not the only indication that although she had renounced her worldly goods and social status, she made full use of any influence she had, by birth as well as by sanctity; for King Charles IV granted the release of all prisoners when he visited Tours, in response to her request.

A condemned criminal begged her prayers, and all the ladders broke when they tried to hang him. He was finally reprieved. She taught the children, as she had taught the magpie, to cry: "*Loué! Loué!*"—a word that babies found easy and often made their first spoken word. Babies she loved. She helped their mothers when they were born, and she is said to have recalled many to life who died unbaptized. She begged for churches, made vestments, and went calmly on with a hundred parochial jobs at a time when many royal personages were asking her counsel, because her prophecies had been found to come true. She was even sent for to Paris in 1395 to have interviews with King Charles VI. It is thought that, due to her influence, he issued a decree appointing Franciscan confessors for criminals who were to be executed, and also that when he decreed one of the many expulsions of the Jews which took place in that century, he gave orders that they were to be allowed to depart unmolested. All the time, with St Catherine of Siena, St Vincent Ferrer, St John Capistran, and St Colette, she was praying and doing penance so that the Great Schism might be healed. It was

revealed to her that the prayers of the saints would be heard, and she foretold to a certain Carthusian prior that the healing of the Schism would be initiated by a Franciscan Pope.[1]

We are told that this now aged widow assisted regularly at the Divine Office in the Franciscan church at Tours. It is also related that she had an intense devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and that after the friars had left choir, she might often be seen kneeling before the high altar, above which, no doubt, was a suspended pyx, hidden by a white veil. Her biographer tells us that her veneration for the Holy Eucharist was so great that she trembled as she went up to the altar rails, and that after receiving Holy Communion her face was all on fire and her features as if transfigured. Sometimes her Franciscan confessor, Père Martin de Boisgaultier, would advise her to reduce her severe penances, but she would reply : " The Five Wounds of my Jesus are my comfort." It is due to this friar, who wrote her life in Latin, shortly after her death, that we know so much about Jeanne Marie de Maillé. There is the satisfaction of knowing that most if not all the details he records are authentic, and based on first-hand evidence.

The last gift of heaven was in accord with the first vision of her childhood. She was praying in the church of Saint-Jacques at Châtellerault, a town situated about half way between Tours and Poitiers, meditating on the martyrdom of St Stephen, when she was filled with a desire to share in his sufferings. At once she underwent a stoning at invisible hands, and although—to mark the supernatural nature of this happening—she did not bleed, she endured all its effects. This took place in December 1412, when she was eighty-one years of age. She seems to have travelled about France in her old age, for there are records of her being at Châteauroux, and at Angers. She made several journeys to Neuvy-Saint-Sépulchre in the diocese of Bourges, to venerate a relic of the Precious Blood preserved there. Then she went to Paris, and attended the baptism of the infant son of Louis of Anjou and Marie of Brittany.

Her death took place at Tours on March 28, 1414. Witnesses attested that her body became " vermeil-white ", beautiful beyond description. She had shared in the sufferings of her Divine Master, but now she shared in His joy and glory. Jeanne Marie de Maillé had been despised and rejected in her lifetime, but after her death she was given every possible honour. She was buried in the habit of the Third Order. Her tomb was below the high altar in the Franciscan church, where for more than twenty-seven years she had spent so many hours in prayers and vigils. The church soon became the most frequented shrine in the city after the basilica of St Martin. Steps were taken to obtain the canonization of this holy tertiary, but for various reasons the Cause did not go forward. Years later, when Simon de Maillé, Archbishop of Tours, wished to be buried in the same tomb as his illustrious collateral ancestress, the tomb was opened, and at the first blow of the pick-axe, a sweet scent came forth. In 1562 the city of Tours was attacked by the Calvinist troops. They drove out the Friars Minor from their church, desecrated the building, and scattered the relics which they dug up from the tomb of Jeanne Marie. After the Franciscans had returned to Tours the tomb was reopened, but nothing was found there but the ring-finger of the holy tertiary and a few bones. The cultus of Jeanne Marie continued until the French

[1] Peter Philargos, the beggar-boy who joined the Friars Minor in Crete. He was elected Pope in 1409, and took the name of Alexander V. He attended the Council of Pisa, and died in 1410.

Revolution, when the church was utterly destroyed. People soon forgot about this still uncanonized saint, and it was not until 1871, at the request of Cardinal Guibert, then Archbishop of Tours, that Pius IX confirmed the veneration which had been paid to Jeanne Marie de Maillé for nearly four centuries. Permission was granted at the same time for her feast to be kept as a double in the dioceses of Tours, Bourges, Le Mans, Laval, Angers and Poitiers. The Minister General of the Friars Minor obtained an indult from the Holy See a few months later for her feast to be observed as a semi-double on March 29. In recent years she has been linked up on November 6 with a beatified widow who became a Poor Clare. A small relic of Bd Jeanne Marie, which had been in possession of her family since 1645, can now be venerated in the Cathedral of Saint Gatien at Tours.

Virgin, wife, recluse, apostle a saint for babies and for preachers, she makes a wide appeal. May she teach us all at least as much as she taught her magpie.

BD ROBERT MALATESTA (1411-1432)

IT is a sure proof of the mysterious workings of God's grace that one of the most corrupt of all the many noble families of the early Renaissance period in Italy could produce a man of heroic virtue in the midst of vice and luxury; even more, that he should have been the brother of perhaps the most notorious of all the Malatesta clan—Sigismondo, who has been described as "a monster of domestic and public vices".

The Malatesta belonged to Montefeltro in the Apennines, and some time in the twelfth century they descended from their castles in the mountains and settled at Rimini, where they maintained their position as rulers by tyranny and cruelty. Both Dante and Byron have written of the tragic love story involving Giovanni Malatesta and Francesca da Polenta—a story that found a counterpart in later generations of the former family. Galeotto Malatesta, born in 1302, had two sons, Carlo and Pandolfo, among a large family of children. The latter was the father of Roberto Galeotto—the Franciscan tertiary whose life we are about to tell—and Sigismondo. Carlo had become lord of Rimini and Imola; Pandolfo, lord of Fano, Pesaro and Cesena. The former was a man of high character, even if a cruel soldier. He laboured for the healing of the Great Schism, and was the friend and counsellor of Pope Gregory XII. His younger brother, Pandolfo, was one of those Italian nobles who loved fighting so much that he did not care particularly on whose side he took up arms.

As Professor Arthur Tilley has pointed out: the "early emancipation from the tutelage of the Church in the cities of northern Italy is due mainly, if not entirely, to the despots who ruled them. Like every other class of men, they differed greatly in character. It is a mistake to regard Sigismondo Malatesta as a normal type. We do, however, find in the despots certain common traits which help to throw light on the general character of the Renaissance. In the first place, they were, on the whole, generous and intelligent patrons of art and learning, even if their love of art was sometimes a mere taste for magnificence, and if their sympathy with learning was largely prompted by a desire for posthumous fame. Another characteristic was their abundant energy and vitality. Knowing that their tenure of power depended mainly on success, they were ruthless towards their opponents and unscrupulous in their dealings with their neighbours, but they

governed their States well and justly. The family crimes which were almost traditional in the annals of the Carraras, the La Scalas, and the Estes, and which were not uncommon in other princely families, were more or less a matter of indifference to their subjects. But this very indifference is significant, for it testifies to a general feeling that the despot was above law and morality. The same feeling is shown in the scant respect paid by the despot and his subjects to legitimate birth. In default of legitimate issue, illegitimate sons succeeded their fathers as a matter of course." [1]

Such then was the world into which Roberto was born in 1411, when his father was governor of Brescia in Lombardy, which he had captured from the powerful Milanese family of Visconti in 1406. His parents died when he was a baby, and at the age of six he found himself Lord of Fano, Pesaro and Cesena. He and his younger brother, Sigismondo, were adopted by their uncle, Carlo, who had no children of his own. Carlo was also looking after another nephew, Gianfrancesco Gonzaga, who afterwards became Marquess of Mantua. When Gianfrancesco was sixteen, Carlo married him to Roberto's half-sister. She was the great-great-grandmother of St Aloysius Gonzaga. Meanwhile Uncle Carlo had made a match for Alberto, marrying him at the age of eighteen to Margherita d'Este, daughter of the Marquis of Ferrara.

No doubt Roberto was given the same humanist education as that given to most boys of noble birth in the fifteenth century. He would have been taught Latin and Greek, philosophy and mathematics. His tutors would not have been embarrassed by a sense of contradiction between pagan and Christian morality. It is probable that young Roberto was more familiar with pagan authors than he was with the New Testament, because his education would have been based almost entirely on the study of Greek and Roman literature. Despite all this, his childhood, like that of Aloysius Gonzaga in after years, seems to have been full of precocious but not morbid austerity. As we have pointed out already, the morals and manners of the early Renaissance were such that only austerity could insulate any one from the dangers around him. A servant, spying through a keyhole, once saw Roberto's room lit up by the presence of Our Lord when he was at his prayers. It is related that he had a vision of St Francis, whom he claimed as his patron, and who showed him his Stigmata.

Carlo Malatesta certainly chose the ideal wife for his young nephew, for Margherita d'Este was as different from the majority of her notorious family as was Roberto from his. The d'Estes had ruled at Ferrara for more than two centuries. Their record for brilliance, cruelty and immorality about equalled that of the Malatesta. " They were children ", writes Fr Martindale, " grown up and very strong, but with all the naughtiness, loveableness, terrific inexperience, slyness, intuition, noisiness, passion for making and breaking things, mania for dressing up, and pretending and then believing in their own pretence, of exuberant imagination, giant children. The Estes could be as proud of Dante's invective as of having Petrarch as their guest-friend, and of producing that second glory of the land, Ariosto. A court poet will praise Niccolò d'Este for his eight hundred mistresses, since thereby he bade fair to emulate Solomon ; yet it was Niccolò who made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and waited to dub his followers knights till he could do so in the Holy Sepulchre after Mass : on his way home, in Cyprus, showed that he could draw past his ear a mighty bow that none other could stir ; and swore to

[1] ' The Early Renaissance ', in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. VII (1932), 774-5.

God, Our Lady, St George and the peacocks they were eating, that he would fast each Friday until he were the first to break lance against the foe. This is that Niccolò who beheaded in one night his son and his second wife (Parisina Malatesta), for their guilt, and then raved through the corridors of Ferrara, gnawing his sceptre and shrieking the lady's name." [1]

Margherita was brought up in a court that rivalled that of Milan for magnificence, and in a city that her family had endowed with a university, schools, museums and wharves to develop a growing commerce. The d'Estes were soldiers first of all, but they were also patrons of learning and the fine arts. Lastly, despite their notorious vices, they were strong supporters of the Papacy, and no matter how much they might be lacking in other respects, kept the Faith and fought for it.

In the great palace at Ferrara, where her childhood was spent, Margherita's closest friend had been Caterina dei Vigri—a young lady belonging to one of the noble families of Bologna, who was one of her maids-of-honour. When Margherita married Roberto Malatesta, Caterina returned to Bologna, in spite of the appeals made to her to remain. The two young women kept in close touch with each other by letters. Later on Caterina came back to Ferrara to join some pious ladies who were living as tertiaries of St Augustine, and who were under the spiritual direction of the Observant Franciscan friars.

Carlo Malatesta died soon after his nephew's wedding, and the young man of eighteen found himself master, not only of his own domains of Fano, Pesaro and Cesena, but also of his uncle's estates of Rimini and Imola. Everything that this world could offer him now lay in his hands—wealth, social position, a great name and the favour of the reigning Pontiff, Odo Colonna (Martin V). He was one of the most powerful lords in the whole of Italy, with every temptation to a life of selfish pleasure.

The manner in which this fabulously rich young man prepared to face his future life must have been a shock to most of his courtiers. For, having been advised by St Francis himself, he joined the Third Order, found himself a Franciscan confessor, and gave himself up to works of mercy and charity, even lodging the poor in his own palace at Rimini, and waiting on them in person. There can be little doubt that Margherita also became a tertiary.

But it was only for three years that Roberto lived to be an example of heroic virtue to his family and people, for he died on October 10, 1412, at the age of twenty-one, leaving Margherita a childless widow. And that is about all we know of him.

The young widow, according to the custom of the time, was told to go back to Ferrara. Daughters were no use except for one purpose—alliances with other powerful families; so Margherita's father, without delay, set about finding her another husband.

But not only had she truly loved Roberto, but she had shared his holy life, and a second marriage, especially with the type of man her father was likely to choose for her, was more than the poor little widow could contemplate. She sought advice from Caterina, who was still living in the tertiary community at Ferrara. Her friend told her that she might rest secure in the conviction that all would be well, but on the contrary, the alliance went forward without a hitch. A suitable prince was found, and on the night before the wedding Margherita retired to bed, among satins, jewels and excitement, desperate at the absence of any protection, praying to Roberto to send her help from heaven.

[1] *Life of St Aloysius Gonzaga.*

Suddenly he appeared to her, shining in glory, and said with his old dignity and love, and with a new and heavenly serenity: "Know, Margherita, that I am your husband, and I will not suffer you to have any other. You were my bride according to the flesh; henceforth you shall be my spiritual spouse." And he went on to say that, thanks to Caterina's prayers, the wedding would not take place. Next morning a galloping messenger came with the news that the prince had died suddenly. Margherita was free to consecrate herself to God in works of charity, which she did for the rest of her life.

Caterina is better known to us under the name of St Catherine of Bologna. Ten years after the death of Roberto, the tertiaries at Ferrara had become Poor Clare nuns. A foundation was made at Bologna in 1456, and Caterina was elected the first Abbess. She died in 1463. Her body is still incorrupt, and will be found in a chapel of the church of Corpus Domini. It is a shock to find her sitting on a throne, without any glass covering, dressed in a curious vestment-like garment which is meant, no doubt, to be a glorified form of the Poor Clare habit. The skin of her body is dark and stiff, but the hands are supple and hardly cold. Thousands of people touch those hands every year. Her head is raised, and on the face is a strange expression, as though she was seeing something not only pleasant but almost amusing. As one gazes at this mummified corpse, time ceases to exist as one recalls that the body, when alive, brought strength and inspiration to Roberto Malatesta and his wife more than five centuries ago.

The saintly tertiary Roberto was never formally beatified. But heaven spoke by the miracles which took place after his death, and so, even if his brief Franciscan life was not obviously heroic, we should know that his interior life had been perfected before he died at the early age of twenty-one.

He was succeeded by his brother Sigismondo, who in the following year married Ginevra, daughter of Niccolò d'Este—the same who had murdered his wife and son on the same night. Sigismondo became one of the greatest soldiers, greatest criminals, and one of the greatest patrons of learning and art in Italy. He married two other wives, and popular tradition has it that he murdered all three of them. He left his mark all over Rimini and transformed the Gothic church of San Francesco into a half-pagan mausoleum for the Malatesta family, as well as for the bones of pedants and poets which he brought back with him from Greece. In what is now known as the 'Tempio Malatestino' Sigismondo was buried after his wild and stormy life. Here too lies Isotta, first the mistress, then the wife of Sigismondo, in a tomb supported by elephants, and around whose pillars are a chorus of angels, dancing, clashing cymbals, playing flutes, harps, horns, drums, and organs. In another chapel, Diana, Venus, Saturn, Mars, Jupiter, and all the Greek gods and goddesses are depicted on the walls and ceiling. In the chapel of the Madonna dell' Acqua, Sigismondo collected the bones of as many ancestors as he could find, making for them a magnificent tomb, showing the goddess, Pallas Athens, surrounded by the Malatesta family.

But he did not forget his tertiary brother, the saint of the Malatesta family, and in this strange pagan setting one finds the shrine of Bd Roberto. Around the chapel are bas-reliefs of children "playing, delightful things; for in one place they dance around a gushing fountain, laughing at one another, and again they play together in the sea or ride on dolphins, and there they play with the rose, and here they hide behind the letters of Sigismondo's name." [1]

[1] Edward Hutton, *The Cities of Romagna and the Marches*, p. 117.

The Third Order has drawn men and women of all classes of society in all ages, but not many of them have come from such an extraordinary half-pagan world in which Robert Malatesta lived for twenty-one years. That he should have been a tertiary of St Francis is almost a miracle.

BD JOHN OF PEACE (1353-1433)

HERE is another saint who lived in the period of the Great Schism. He died at the age of eighty, and though little has been recorded about his career, nevertheless he is an important figure in the ranks of tertiary heroes before God and his brethren.[1]

Giovanni Cini was a soldier. We are told that 1353 was the year of his birth, and that he belonged to a noble family in Pisa. It was an unhappy and turbulent period. Pope Innocent VI had succeeded to the throne of Peter the year before, but dwelt not in Rome but at Avignon. In 1352 the Pope had sent one of the cardinals to restore authority in the Papal States. Rome was the fighting ground of the nobles, who kept private troops, mostly composed of a rabble mob. In the year before Giovanni was born, the merchants combined with the mob to drive out the nobles from the cities and towns of central Italy, and those cities were made free and self-governing under the authority of the temporal power of the Papacy—still with its headquarters in the south of France.

The idea of an Emperor who would rule Europe and make it one, as the Pope ruled it spiritually and tried to preserve its spiritual unity, was still not only an idea but widely an ideal. Charlemagne had been such a man, but his heirs were only ghosts of the ideal. In 1273, the map of Europe comprised what had been Charlemagne's legacy to his heirs—the Holy Roman Empire stretching from the Baltic to south of Rome, including Corsica and Sardinia. By 1294 that Empire was a jig-saw puzzle of small nations or city states. About 1274 a great slice of central Italy was handed over to the Popes over which they were destined to rule as temporal sovereigns until the achievement of Italian unity in the nineteenth century. The popes of the next fifteen years were members of the great families of Rome—the Orsini, Savelli and Colonna. During their pontificates their families were those of the kings of the papal states as well as of the spiritual leaders of Europe. The rivalries which this state of affairs caused are obvious. The Papacy found itself embroiled in quarrels with princes about money—rights and taxes and every other form of property. Matters reached a head when one Pope endured such savage ill-treatment from the envoys of the King of France that he died, and his successor who denounced the criminal, died four weeks later—from poison, it was widely suspected. The next Pope—Clement V—had been Archbishop of Bordeaux. He came to terms with the King of France, and by the simple method of leaving Rome to be a cockpit for the great family feuds and transferring the Papal Court to Avignon—a free city, not politically French, but French of course in influence—shook the Papacy free from Italian rivalries only to bring it under the direct influence of France. This began what Petrarch termed the " Babylonish Captivity " which lasted seventy years, and which we have mentioned already.[2]

[1] There is often confusion with another John of Peace, a furrier, who died about 1433. Butler's *Lives* says the *furrier* died in 1433, but the other, our saint, about 1332—that is over a century before the date given here. It would appear the confusion continues.

[2] See p. 124.

The Eternal City rapidly deteriorated in the never-ending fight between the noble families, while the popes themselves were either French in nationality or in sympathy. In 1354—the year after the birth of Giovanni Cini—the subject of this chapter—Cola di Rienzi, who had tried bravely to get the popes back to Rome and to restore order in the city, was murdered by the mob. Peace was restored for a few years, but it was not long before civil wars broke out again among the Italian cities. They fought each other with the help of foreign mercenary troops, ready to be hired by whatever prince or republic could afford to pay the highest price for their services, or to attack any city that seemed likely to provide the heaviest ransom. For the citizens themselves were too preoccupied with commerce to fight their own battles any longer. Again and again Florence fought against Pisa, Milan, Siena and other rival cities. Horrible atrocities were committed by the mercenaries, made up of the riff-raff of many nations, most of them being Germans. St Catherine of Siena implored Gregory XI to return to Rome and restore peace in Italy—which he at last succeeded in doing with the aid of a large army of foreign soldiers, who devastated the countryside with fire and sword in the name of the Prince of Peace.

In 1426 Pisa was finally conquered by Florence, and it is probable that it was during this last phase of the long drawn-out strife that had gone on almost unceasingly since he was a boy, that Giovanni Cini was struck by the futility of the life he was leading as a soldier, and resolved to dedicate himself to the service of God. Most of his companions had been killed, but he had been spared. There is a tradition, however, that his actual conversion took place on October 8, 1396, when he had taken part in an attack on a group of priests at Pisa. Anyhow, he was filled with remorse and disgust. Had he not been married, no doubt he would have joined some religious order, but he had a family for which he was responsible. So, being unable to forsake the world altogether, he decided to join the Third Order of St Francis. The rest of his life was spent in his native city on the Arno —in part the Pisa that we know today, for the Cathedral, Baptistery and the famous leaning tower were then all standing, having been erected nearly two centuries earlier.

Père Léon tells us that henceforth " John's life was entirely devoted to works of piety and charity. He chastised his body with an iron chain and other severe austerities. To him was due the institution of the ' Society of Flagellants ' which existed in Pisa till the close of the last century." [1]

The Flagellants were originally a fanatical and heretical sect that made its appearance in the thirteenth century. We first hear of them about 1233 in connection with penitential processions organized by the Dominicans and Franciscans. The terrible plagues and famines which occurred in Italy, together with the belief that the end of the world and the reign of Antichrist would soon arrive—doctrines derived in some ways from the teachings of Abbot Joachim of Flora and his disciples —led to the formation of groups of devout men and women which exceeded those of the Third Order of St Francis to which many of them belonged. " All ages and conditions were alike subject to this mental epidemic. Clergy and laity, men and women, even children of tender years, scourged themselves in reparation for the sins of the whole world. Great processions, amounting sometimes to 10,000 souls, passed through the cities, beating themselves, and calling the faithful to repentance. With crosses and banners borne before them by the clergy, they

[1] *Auréole Séraphique* (Eng. trans.), Vol. IV, 60.

marched slowly through the towns. Stripped to the waist and with covered faces, they scourged themselves with leathern thongs till the blood ran, chanting hymns and canticles of the Passion of Christ, entering the churches and prostrating themselves before the altars. For thirty-three days and a half this penance was continued by all who undertook it, in honour of the years of Christ's life on earth. Neither mud nor snow, cold nor heat, was any obstacle." [1]

The Flagellants spread all over Italy, and about ten thousand of them marched from Rome in 1334. After the first phase the movement died out. But with the outbreak of the Black Death in 1347, together with terrible earthquakes in many parts of Italy the following year, the Flagellants reappeared. By degrees, in Italy at least, they tended to become less fanatical in spirit, gradually transforming themselves into respectable brotherhoods, devoted to penance and corporal works of mercy. Of such was the *Compagnia dei Flagellanti* founded by Giovanni Cini at Pisa. It was the later medieval Flagellants who helped to popularize devotion to the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady, and from them came mystery plays and folk-songs. They were closely bound up with tertiary life during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and their importance must not be forgotten.

Nothing more has been discovered about the life of Giovanni Cini—the ex-soldier who became a soldier of Christ. All that has been recorded is the date of his death—November 13, 1433. Père Léon informs us that " a magnificent tomb was raised over his remains in the cemetery of Pisa, and the faithful have ever since had recourse to his intercession ".[2] His cultus was approved by Pius IX in 1858. His body was translated to the church of San Francesco, which is under the care of the Conventual friars, that same year. His feast is kept as a double in the archdiocese of Pisa on November 28. Until recently the Franciscan Breviary and Missal commemorated Bd John of Peace and Bd Gabriel Ferretti on November 22.[3]

BD ANGELINA OF MARSCIANO (1377-1435)

No study of the Saints and Beati of the Third Order would be complete without an essay devoted to Angelina of Marsciano. Indeed, although her name is comparatively little known, she played a most important part in the development of the Third Order, and we shall be ignorant of one aspect of Franciscan tertiary history if we overlook the appointed rôle of Angelina as the foundress of one of the first congregations of the Third Order Regular.

The name Angelina suggests a delicate Victorian young lady with ringlets and a dress cut low on her shoulders. We need not alter that mental picture very much, for, curiously enough, in the fourteenth century, when our *Beata* was born, the dresses of ladies were cut low in the same way, and hair was worn folded over the ears or in ringlets on either side of the face. So, if we imagine our Victorian Angelina without crinoline or bonnet, and see her against the grey stone of an old castle in Umbria, set in the midst of hill-country between Orvieto and Perugia, the picture will serve.

[1] Leslie A. St. L. Toke, ' Flagellants ', in *Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VI (1909), 90.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 61. This tomb is situated on the right hand side of the Campo Santo on entering it by way of the Portico Meridionale. (Cf. *Guida d'Italia del Touring Club Italiano* (1924), Vol. I, 304.)

[3] He is also called ' soldato ' or ' stipendario ', and his later designation ' of peace ' seems to have come from the place of his residence " di Porta Pacis ".

But the name became our *Beata* better than most Victorian young ladies in England, for, sentimentality apart, there actually was something angelic about her personality. English Victorians thought of an angel in terms of white wings, melodious whispers and a simmering smile. The Lady Angelina knew that an angel is a spirit of pure intelligence and will, whose whole being is devoted to the eternal glory of God.

She was born at the Castle of Monte Giove in 1377. Her father, Giacomo Angioballi, was Lord of Marsciano, a small town in the valley of the Tiber, about six miles to the east. When she was twelve her mother, Anna Corbara, died. For the first time Angelina realized the fact of mortality—that human beings are at the beck and call of God's usher, Death. To love a human being with the whole of one's heart is to lay one's heart open to the agony of bereavement. Yet the human being who avoids love because of the pain love may afflict on the heart, is the greatest of cowards. There are too many who keep their heart straight-jacketed in this way. The saints have never done so. Read St Bernard's words on the death of his brother. And did not Our Lord Himself weep at the death of His friend Lazarus ?

Those who know nothing of the Catholic faith may be excused if they imagine that the vow of virginity or chastity is made in a negative way—to avoid the spending of love on a mortal. But a Catholic knows that it is the renunciation of the highest earthly good, wedded love, with its companionship and sharing of life and goods, in order to make room for the stupendous grace of a sharing in the life of Christ—making to Him the sacrifice of that highest earthly good, and accepting instead the loneliness of His earthly life, thereby becoming a companion and sharer of *His* life and goods so that the Church does not hesitate to call those who take this word the " Brides of Christ ".

There is, too, the desire to render up the secret beauty of the personality, " the rose of life ", to none but Christ: a desire which comes fleetingly to many, but in those who have a vocation to this state of life, it remains.

This desire came to Angelina; and it remained. She chose virginity, and turning her thoughts from the delightfully attractive rôle of a great lady of the Castello di Monte Giove, she thought only how to please Christ. She sought Him out in the persons of His poor. She fenced the garden of her soul with a hedge of thorny penance. She lived so attentive to His inclinations that every circumstance of her life became each a new opportunity to accomplish His will.

So she grew up in that old castle in southern Umbria, about half way between Perugia and Orvieto. From the hill-tops she had many a distant glimpse of the broad valley of the Tiber with the long range of the Apennines, towering above the nearer Monte Montano that hides Assisi and Foligno from the eye. Sometimes when it was very clear she would make out even the jagged and often snow-covered peaks of the Gran Sasso d'Italia in the Abruzzi, far away to the south-east, as well as the sugar loaf shape of Monte Cucco near Urbino, in the other direction. When she visited the poor in the little villages whose *campanili* break up the skyline, she would wander through a peaceful countryside of corn fields, vineyards, olive groves and small copses, where the oak trees retain their Franciscan-brown leaves throughout the winter. She would hear the cheery conversation of the peasants working in the fields, the singing of a shepherd boy and the shrill cries of some small girl trying to prevent her pigs from straying beyond the roadside where they were feeding—all these sounds would be borne up in the clear dry air. In this world

of pastoral beauty Angelina's childhood was spent, and it was among these soft hills of Umbria that she became aware of her vocation.

When she was fifteen, her father announced that he intended her to marry Giovanni dei Termi, Count of Civitella, in the Abruzzi. Angelina refused. Her father, taken aback at finding resistance in this gentlest and most obedient of daughters, persisted; and finding she meant what she said, flew into a violent passion, maintaining that if she did not change her mind before eight days, he would kill her. The pagan Roman idea of a father's absolute power over his children still persisted, like a superstition, even in the fourteenth century. Angelina learnt in those eight days what most of us take longer to learn under less heroic circumstances—that when all is said and done, we have no counsellor or any refuge but Christ. She turned to Him in her agony of mind, begging Him to preserve what she had vowed to Him, and asking the help of Our Lady, St Joseph, and the Virgin Apostle, St John. The answer came to her soul, bidding her to submit to her father's decree—just as St Cecilia had been bidden to do, as well as several tertiary saints whose stories have already been told. The legend further resembles that of St Cecilia, for it goes on to tell that the Count of Civitella, coming to claim his bride on the eve of marriage, found her conversing with an angel who vanished; and, when Angelina told him that he had been permitted to see her angel who had come to promise his help in the keeping of her vow, he—being a generous, just and noble hearted man—not only gave her permission to follow her vocation, but decided to imitate her and to make the same vow himself. It was the story of Elzéar and Delphine over again. It is quite certain that, whether or no this legend is a piece of pious embroidery, Angelina and her husband did live together as brother and sister, devoting themselves to works of mercy and charity, until the Count of Civitella died, two years later.

Angelina was then seventeen. As a widow in her own castle in the heart of the wild mountains of the Abruzzi, she was free to follow what manner of life she chose. Her choice was to take the habit of the Third Order of St Francis with some of her ladies, openly renouncing worldly ways, and turning her castle into a school of mercy and prayer.

Not content with this, driven by that apostolic spirit which has animated so many women of the Third Order, she went about the country, drawing people from vice to virtue, and especially young girls to a knowledge and love of the state of virginity which she had chosen. Several daughters of noble families followed her example, either by becoming tertiaries or by entering a convent.

The result of this apostolate was that she incurred the enmity of the young men in the Abruzzi who had planned to marry these heiresses. The people of this region, when their passions are roused, can be as fierce and as sinister as their own mountains in the storms of winter. The young nobles spread the accusation that the Countess of Civitella was a dangerous person who taught that marriage was a sin, and who wandered about causing discord in families by dissuading girls from marrying as their parents wished. She was even charged with heresy, and summoned to appear before her over-lord, Ladislas of Durazzo, King of Naples.

Angelina, surprised at the summons, innocently obeyed it. But God revealed to her the plots and the dangers—for death by burning was a common punishment for heresy. A few years later Pope Martin V nominated St John Capistran and St James of the Marches as inquisitors to take action against the Fraticelli, or against persons suspected of being in league with them. These misguided followers

of St Francis were to be tortured, their houses or friaries destroyed by fire, and if they refused to be convinced of their errors they would be burned at the stake. Such was the fate that awaited Angelina if she were found guilty of heresy. Therefore, when she appeared before Ladislas and his court, she took the wind out of his sails by addressing him in this calm manner: "Prince, I am she whom you hold to be the enemy of your state, and whom you have determined in your heart to commit to the flames. Allow me to speak in my own defence, and when I shall have done so, if you still consider me guilty, here is the fire to burn me and to reduce me to ashes!" From the folds of her dress she held out a glowing charcoal which harmed neither her grey habit nor her hands.

It was a double miracle, for Ladislas had told none of his intention to condemn this reputed heretic to death by burning. And apart from the miracle, nothing could have impressed the Neapolitans more than the courage and beauty of this delicate girl in her Franciscan habit, standing alone among the finely dressed members of the court. She then delivered an eloquent speech in the defence of the state of virginity, showing that she had never condemned marriage, but had offered that higher state only to those who had been given by God the grace to desire it.

Her innocence was established. She stayed on in Naples for a time, visiting the churches, and venerating the relics of the saints. She performed several miracles, so it is recorded, and raised to life the only son of a noble family. The people of Naples begged her to remain in their midst, but she fled from them and returned to her castle in the Abruzzi. But on that long and wearisome journey through the mountains she continued her work of seeking vocations, and before she reached Civitella her enemies were more angry with her than before. They informed the King that, miracle worker as she might be, the Countess of Civitella was a real cause of discord in his kingdom, because of the number of noble ladies she dissuaded from marriage.

At last, wearied by their complaints, in a moment of characteristic impatience, Ladislas signed an edict of banishment against Angelina and her household. Tyrants do not understand that their greatest injustice is often the disguise God's greatest blessing puts on. Angelina and those who followed her thanked God for the grace of this tribulation, and selling all they had, they gave alms to the poor. With the rest they bought what their modest needs demanded, and set forth towards Umbria, which was within the Papal States.

Nobles, beggars, merchants and devout persons escorted the ladies to the gates of Civitella, mourning their departure and asking their blessing. It was in the summer of 1395 when they set out on this long journey, hoping to reach Assisi in time to gain the Portiuncula Indulgence on August 2, if it were God's will for them.

But first of all Angelina went to Monte Giove to bid farewell to her father. The old man, touched by the courage of his girl of eighteen, offered her a home once more, but instead she begged his blessing, saying that she had been told in prayer to go to Assisi. Early one July morning she left the castle and late that evening, when the hills and mountains were turning rose-colour and gold in the setting sun, we can picture her climbing the steep road that leads up to the Seraphic City from the valley of Spoleto. Above her stood the bastion-like walls of the great monastery of San Francesco. It was in the little chapel of St Mary of the Angels, still standing in the open fields, that God made known to her on the feast of the Portiuncula His will that she should found an enclosed community of the Third Order at Foligno.

Angelina did not remain long in Assisi, once she knew what God wanted her to do. On August 3, she set out for Foligno with her seven companions. But before doing so she visited the church of San Francesco, to pray at the tomb of *Il Poverello.* No doubt, when she arrived at Foligno she visited the church of the Friars Minor, where the body of Bd Angela had been laid to rest eighty-four years earlier. Then she called on Giovanni d'Angelo, the bishop of the diocese, and obtained his permission to establish her community, subject to the necessary confirmation being granted by the Pope—Benedict IX. Ugolino di Trinci, Lord of Foligno, gave some land on which the convent could be built. It was dedicated to St Anne, but was not ready for occupation until 1397. Angelina was only twenty when she found herself Abbess of the community, among whom were several ladies of noble rank. The following year she and the other nuns were allowed to make their solemn professions, and strict enclosure was set up.

In 1399 another convent was established at Foligno, dedicated to St Agnes, because there was not room in the original community for the numbers who sought admittance. Two years later Pope Martin V gave permission for a third convent to be founded, this time at Spoleto. In 1421 Angelina had the happiness of sending some of her nuns to make a foundation in Assisi. The convent of San Quirico, close to the Bishop's Palace where St Francis renounced his birthright and where he lived for a short time before his death, is still occupied by enclosed tertiary nuns of Bd Angelina's Congregation. Those who have stayed in their guest-house will have pleasant memories of the gracious hospitality of the twentieth-century daughters of Bd Angelina of Marsciano, and the indefinable atmosphere of peace and happiness in that venerable convent founded more than five hundred years ago.

In 1427, at the request of St Bernardine of Siena, she sent four of her nuns to found a community at Viterbo where he was preaching the Lenten sermons. It was this convent which St Hyacintha Mariscotti entered more than a hundred years later. In 1428 Pope Martin V united all the convents founded by Angelina into one congregation, making her Superior-General, and putting it under the care of the Friars Minor of the Observance. In her lifetime she founded some sixteen communities, including those at Florence and Aquila, all remarkable for the holiness of life of their earliest members.

Angelina died on July 14, 1435. After her death her face shone with a marvellous brightness, and a sweet scent filled her cell. She was buried in the church of San Francesco at Foligno, where also lies her elder sister in the Third Order—Bd Angela. On the anniversary of her death in 1492, she appeared to a Franciscan friar and cured him of an illness, bidding him have her body moved to a more honourable place, to the greater glory of God who had kept it incorrupt. It was found entire and with no signs of mortality, and placed in a shrine opposite that of Bd Angela. Pope Leo XII approved her cultus in 1825, and ordered that her feast was to be kept as a double in the diocese of Foligno and by the Friars Minor on July 15. Since then the date has been changed to July 21 in the Franciscan Breviary and Missal. Her own Congregation commemorate her as a double of the second class on September 25.

Since Luigi Jacobelli published his life of Bd Angelina at Foligno in 1627, it had been accepted almost universally that she was the mother and foundress of the *first* community of cloistered nuns with solemn vows who observed the rule of the Third Order of St Francis. More recent historians have proved that this

claim cannot be substantiated, even for Italy. This is made clear by the wording of the Bull of Pope Martin V in 1428, where it says that the Mother-General of the Foligno Congregation enjoyed the privilege of admitting members of similar convents to her congregation. This, in itself, indicates that even in Italy there were other Third Order communities which had not been founded by Bd Angelina. Again, the papal decree makes no mention of vow or of enclosure, whereas another community of Third Order nuns which did not belong to the Foligno congregation received permission to keep enclosure in 1429.[1]

It was in southern Germany, not Italy, that the first communities of enclosed Third Order nuns were established, the earliest of them being that at Dillingen on the Danube, which was founded in 1241.[2] There were many other communities of enclosed tertiaries which antedate the Foligno convent, including those at Ingolstadt (1276) and probably Maristerna in Augsburg which adopted the Third Order rule in 1314. " But it must be borne in mind, however, that the strict papal enclosure really dates only from the constitution *Periculosa* of Benedict VII, 1298, and the episcopal enclosure dates from the Council of Trent. There had been rules governing enclosure in the early Middle Ages, but these were not as strict as those adopted afterwards. The rule of the First Order of St Francis forbids the friars to enter the convents of nuns. The vow of perpetual enclosure taken by the Poor Clares, strictly speaking forbade them only to leave their convents but not to admit persons from the outside." [3]

But we cannot let the figure of Bd Angelina be lost behind the history of the Congregation she founded. She must stand out in our memory as one of the most attractive tertiary saints, remarkable even in that court of remarkable people around the throne of the Lady Poverty. If we think of that court as a garden, her flower is the morning glory, that delicate white trumpet sounding in silence the praise of God; a ' Victorian ' flower, which dies as soon as it is gathered, but which has as great a vigour as the strongest plant if left untouched. As a great lady in a castle in the mountains of the Abruzzi, she would have been forgotten. As a virgin, defenceless in her poverty and simplicity, her name is remembered every day in every convent of the Third Order Regular all round the world, sounding, like a white trumpet, the glories of virginity.

ST FRANCES OF ROME (1384-1440)

IT is almost certain that some Benedictine oblates will be surprised to find their special patroness included in this motley crowd of tertiaries, but the vocation of Francesca Busso di Leoni was, like the little chapel of St Mary of the Angels, a meeting place of the Benedictine with the Franciscan spirit. Franciscan fervour

[1] Cf. *Bullarium Franciscanum*, VII, 725.

[2] The oldest of Franciscan sisterhoods existing today, whose general mother house is still at Dillingen, Bavaria, has several convents in the United States, with a mother house at Hankinson, N.D. (Cf. Fr. Marion Habig, O.F.M., ' A Unique Distinction ', in *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, Vol. XX, May, 1941.) Shortly before his death, the Most Rev. Valentine Schaaf, O.F.M., informed Fr Marion Habig, O.F.M., that researches he had made indicated that this sisterhood is indeed the oldest in the sense that they came into existence in 1241, but they were not originally a Franciscan sisterhood and only later on adopted the Rule of the Third Order.

[3] Fr Marion Habig, O.F.M., ' Cloistered Third Order Nuns ', in *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, Vol. XX (XXIX) (June, 1941), 168-72.

and Benedictine peace kissed each other there. Yet it might be said that she inherited her 'mission' from the Dominican Catherine of Siena, for she shared with St Catherine the angelic work of intercession and reparation during the Great Schism which from 1378 to 1417 broke the heart of the Church. Caterina was born in 1347, laboured in vain to avert this rent in the garment of the Bride of Christ, and died in 1380. Francesca was born in 1384 and died in 1440, leaving the Church, healed, but not yet at peace, to the prayers of the holy Poor Clare, St Catherine of Bologna.

Francesca, just like many another girl whose life we have recorded in these pages, wished to be a nun; but like them she had to bow before the command of her father. As we explained in the life of Bd Angelina of Marsciano, the power of a father over his children was absolute in those days—a relic of ancient Roman law. As long as sons or daughters were under their father's roof, they might be killed by him or sold as slaves, and the civil law was not broken. So at the age of twelve, which was considered a marriageable age for the medieval Roman nobility, Francesca was married to Lorenzo Ponziani.

In the year 1396 Boniface IX was the Roman Pope, and Benedict XIII was his rival at Avignon. A few days before the wedding there came to Francesca her future sister-in-law, Vannozza, who said to her gently: "Perhaps I can comfort you for having to give up thoughts of the religious life. I too want solitude and time for prayer. Shall we be companions? And will you let me help you?" So began a friendship which lasted for thirty-eight years.

Soon after her marriage, Francesca fell ill; and her young husband, beside himself with anxiety, finding that the doctors did her no good, sent for a man who dabbled in magic. No sooner had he come into the room than Francesca raised herself in bed, and bade him begone in such unmeasured terms that her husband had to send him away in great confusion. Without delay, heaven showed approval of her action, for there appeared to her St Alexis, that pathetic patron of the home-sick, who lived for years disguised as a beggar under the courtyard of his own mansion, and who was buried on the Aventine hill in Rome. He informed the invalid lady that he had been sent from God to know what she would choose, to be healed or to die. She replied that she would choose God's will, no other. Whereupon he laid a corner of his cloak about her, and she rose up cured. It might be said that this was a declaration of war against the powers of evil, and an alliance with the angelic powers that was to show itself so remarkably throughout her whole life. Her warfare was "not against flesh and blood," but against the spirit of wickedness in high places". She began to be conscious of the continued assistance of her own angel, who would give her a little nudge when she fell into any fault, to remind her of the exquisite purity in which she must keep her soul. The devil began to show his hatred for her. Once, when she and Vannozza sat down to rest by the Tiber on a hot summer afternoon, he threw them both into the swift-flowing river. But they prayed, and found themselves back again on the bank in safety. For the prayers of Francesca and Vannozza were growing in strength in the hours they spent in the disused attic, or in the tumble-down summer-house which were their retreats from the demands of the great, busy Roman palace where the whole Ponziani clan lived in feudal fashion.

It is almost certain that it must have been about this time that Francesca was received into the Third Order of St Francis, probably in the church of San Francesco a Ripa. Her spiritual director, Fra Bartolomeo Bondi, was a member of the

community serving this little church, which had been made over to St Francis by the pious widow Giacomina di' Settesoli in 1212. The Ponziani palace was situated just round the corner in the narrow Via dei Vascallari, in the heart of the Trastevere quarter of Rome. Even nearer to the palace was the church of St Cecilia.

When Francesca was seventeen, her first baby was born, and she called him Giovanni-Battista. About the same time, her mother-in-law died, and she found herself the head of the household, because of her capability and popularity ; chosen instead of Vannozza who was the wife of the eldest son. Vannozza preferred, all her life, to play the accompaniment to whatever tune Francesca called, and Francesca protected her, having the stronger nature. Francesca had never heard any talk about the right of women to have equality of opportunity with men, but she did what no man would have cared to tackle—brought peace to the turbulent household beside the Tiber. She managed and tended every member of it. One day, with no uncertain hand where God's honour was concerned, this young tertiary threw impetuously in the fire a book on magic which she found was being discussed after dinner.

Lorenzo and she had many a spirited fight about such things ; but as the years went by, he came to realize what a wonderful wife she was. At the time of a famine, he took fright at the way she was giving away corn and wine to the poor, until an empty granary suddenly showed forty measures of wheat and an empty cask was filled. After that miracle, he bade her do as she would. And she, awed by the realization of the loving help of heaven, lived a still stricter life than that to which she was bound by the Rule of the Third Order.

Three years after the birth of the first son, another was born, whom she named Giovanni Evangelista ; and still three years later there was a daughter, Agnese. At this period Francesca was in great anxiety about her husband. Rome was in the throes of a civil war in which the Papacy was deeply involved, and Lorenzo, fighting with the Papal troops, was wounded, and only with the utmost devotion did she succeed in nursing him back to health. Then her elder son was required as a hostage. Plague raged over the pillaged countryside. The peasants came from the wasted farms that belonged to the Ponziani family, claiming the charity of the household. Francesca, unresting, economized, comforted, nursed and watched. Little John Evangelist fell sick of the plague and died. She had not, her biographer says, even time to mourn him, because the sick, the starving and the dying called to her endlessly. Donna Ponziani was in demand in fifty different directions at once. Desperate, she organized a band of noble Roman ladies, and with her own unique practical wisdom she set them to pray in the churches until she was sure they had learnt enough courage and purity of life to be safe in the wild streets and in the hospitals crammed with untended and helpless sick. About this time, she received the gift of healing ; two stories being remembered especially of her—the one, about her restoring to a man his severed arm, which she pretended to have done by means of a valuable ointment (it was only lard) ; the other, how she restored to life an unbaptized baby.

Meanwhile Francesca was still mistress of the Ponziani palace, with every member of it dependent on her for instructions. It is of her that was first heard that story which has often been told, but not ascribed to her ; one day, having been called away no less than four times while repeating a single psalm of her Office, and having gone each time without the least impatience, she returned to find the words of it had been written in gold on the page.

She beheld her little dead son in a vision. He brought her an Archangel who was, in future, to take the place of her angel-guardian; and he brought her also the news that God was soon going to take to Himself Agnese, whom she had always believed would be a nun. Agnese died a few months later.[1] The Archangel remained, and the light in which he was veiled was always visible to her. She could read by it, as though it was the sun, but she could endure to look directly at it only for a moment. He would hide himself when she committed any slight fault, shining out again after an act of contrition.

Worn out with sorrow and penance and endless toil, she fell an easy victim to the plague. Vannozza never left her, braving the infection in faithful love. Francesca was cured suddenly, and went back to her duties.

Rome at that time was a chaos of lawlessness and plundering. In November 1414 the Council of Constance had met to discuss the reform of the Church, and Pope Martin V began to reform the city. Lorenzo came back from the wars. He was so impressed by the change in his wife's appearance by the loss of her children and the terrible conditions under which she had lived and worked, that he could not do enough for her. He even consented to pardon his life-long enemy. Giovanni-Battista was home again too; and he soon married—a flighty, difficult young lady named Mobilla. She took a dislike to the prematurely old woman who was her mother-in-law, and set to work to be as tiresome as possible, until, one day, she was suddenly stricken with a strange illness in the midst of one of her tempers, and only the touch of Francesca's hand calmed and cured her. After that, she became most devoted to her mother-in-law, and one so improved that it was felt safe to hand over the household management to her, leaving Francesca free to work in the city, which everyone agreed was her supernatural vocation. Lorenzo gave his wife a liberty of action which was very rare in those days. It meant that she could arrange her life as she thought best, and not be subject to his beck and call.

She was living very near heaven now. There was a light around her head, and a sweet scent about her when she came from Holy Communion. She received a mystical wound, and later, in a vision, Our Lady healed it. There can be little doubt that she must have come under the influence of some of the leaders of the reform movement within the Franciscan Order, which had been initiated by Paoluccio da Trinci about 1368, and which by 1414 possessed thirty-four houses, of which San Francesco a Ripa was one. That same year the distinguished canonist Giovanni da Capistrano was clothed in the habit of the Observant Friars, and two years later he was followed by a magistrate, Giacomo dalle Marca. Both would be canonized after their deaths. Francesca would have been in close touch with these and other Friars who were trying to observe the primitive Rule of the Order in its austerity, for their headquarters in Rome was only a few yards from the Ponziani palace.

Nevertheless she and the half a dozen noble ladies who were her most intimate companions were also being drawn towards the Benedictines. It was impossible for them to become nuns, and the only alternative was to have themselves enrolled as oblates, so that they might share in the prayers and good works of the monks and nuns. About a hundred years before this date the white Benedictines of Monte Oliveto, near Siena, founded by St Bernard Tolomei in 1313, had taken

[1] Both children were baptized and buried in the church of St Cecilia. Their names are inscribed on a marble slab in the sacristy floor.

over the venerable church of San Maria Domnica, better known today as San Maria in Navicella, and situated on the Coelian hill. In 1352 the monks moved to Santa Maria Nuova, overlooking the ruins of the Forum, and close to the Colosseum, where they found greater solitude. It seems that Francesca's mother, Isabella de' Roffredeschi, had taken her daughter to meet Don Antonio di Monte Savello, who was one of the Olivetan community attached to Santa Maria Nuova, when she was still a child. He remained her spiritual adviser for many years, so this attraction to the Benedictines was nothing new. On the feast of the Assumption, 1425, Francesca and her companions were clothed as oblates of St Benedict, kneeling before the miraculous picture of Our Lady, said to have been brought from Troy by Angelo Frangipane early in the twelfth century.

But Francesca retained her devotion to *Il Poverello*, and it was about this same time that she and Vannozza went on a pilgrimage to Assisi, refusing to ride or board any vehicle ; and to the scandal of their noble relatives, like St Francis and his companions they made the hundred-mile journey on foot. As they climbed the long hill after leaving Spello, and drew near to the Seraphic City, weary, dusty and foot-sore, and scorched by the sun, a friar met them. He talked so sweetly of the Passion and Sorrows of Our Lady that Francesca's Archangel shone more brightly than ever, as though with joy. Noticing that the two ladies were hungry and tired after their long journey, the friar struck a wild pear-tree with his stick, and down fell some huge pears, fresh and juicy. Then he vanished, and they knew that they had been speaking to the Little Poor Man himself. In the Chapel of the Portiuncula, which had been given to St Francis by the Benedictine monks of Monte Subasio, Francesca had a vision of Our Lady, who foretold that her oblates would one day live in community under the Rule of St Benedict. She and Vannozza then made their way back to Rome, by the road that passes through Foligno, Spoleto, Terni and Narni.

Vannozza died, and Francesca was in ecstasy at her funeral, seeing her friend in the bliss of Paradise. Lorenzo fell sick, and for two months his wife never left him. He made a good and happy death. Then Francesca spoke to her oblates in no uncertain terms of their vocation. Rome was once again in a state of turmoil. " God desires ", she said, " that we should place ourselves between His wrath and these people who provoke Him. He is waiting for us to come together so that He may enter into our midst and find there some appeasement of His anger. Why do we delay ? " They did not delay, and in 1433 took the house in the via di Torre de' Specchi at the foot of the Campidoglio, right in the very heart of Rome, where the community lives today, and there they worked, prayed and suffered for the intentions of the Papacy and for the peace of the Eternal City. One can still see in the room that was hers the beam the devil pushed aside to make her fear that the ceiling would fall. But crooked, it still holds up the ceiling after five centuries. The Great Schism had now been healed, but the Church was suffering from a weary convalescence, and Francesca nourished it with her prayers and mystical sufferings. She nourished her spiritual children with gentleness and wisdom and with human tenderness too, for she would visit each of them last thing at night and ' tuck them up ', staying to hear anything they wanted to say, and to send them to sleep with serene thoughts.

One day she learnt that her son Giovanni-Battista was ill and calling for her. She went to him. Coming back she felt so weak and tired that she called at the church to ask her confessor's blessing and to rest awhile before continuing her

way home. He, seeing her, was horrified at her look, and bade her return to the Ponziani palace in the Trastevere, across the river. Francesca went, knowing that it was the very last thing she would do—to renounce her wish to die among her loved oblates. She lingered for seven days. At the end, those who were with her saw her lips moving and asked what she was saying. "The Little Office of Our Lady", she replied. Shortly afterwards, she murmured: "The Angel has finished his task", and it was so. She died on March 9, 1440.

Each one who touched her after death received some healing in body or soul. So remarkable was this that they kept her unburied far longer than was customary. She had lived among the angels, interceding for the Church: she had served the poor like an angel. She was the child of the Seraphic St Francis—a bride of Christ in the cloister of St Benedict, and she came back to a stone's throw of a Franciscan church to die. She is a saint to pray to when we experience the assaults of the devil, or need the assistance of angels. She was canonized by Paul V in 1608, and March 9 was assigned as her feast day. Her body lies beneath the high altar in the crypt of Santa Maria Nuova—now called Santa Francesca Romana in her honour. There she is, in her oblate's habit, with the Rule in her hands, and a soft white veil around her head—the principal patron of all Benedictine oblates and one of the greatest saints who wore the habit of the Third Order of St Francis.

OTHER BEATIFIED MEMBERS OF THE THIRD ORDER

A BRIEF reference must be made to other saintly members of the Third Order who lived during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, whose names do not appear in the Roman-Seraphic Calendar. The following are the most outstanding.

BD CLARE OF RIMINI (1282-1346). She was the daughter of wealthy parents in the city of Rimini, who enjoyed every luxury when she was a girl. She was married twice and, according to the legends, lived a very scandalous life. The death of her father and brother, who were both executed during a period of civil war, helped to effect her conversion. She joined the Third Order, and after the death of her second husband, was free to give herself up to penance and expiation for her former sins. We are told that she slept on the bare boards, took no food but bread and water, and spent half the night in prayer. In many ways she reminds us of St Margaret of Cortona, for she nursed the sick, made peace among families, and tried to convert women who were leading immoral lives. She formed a community of tertiaries, who eventually became Poor Clares. She herself continued her works of mercy and charity. Her death took place on February 10, 1346. Clare Agolanti was beatified in 1784. Her feast is kept at Rimini on February 10.

BD ODDINUS BARROTTI (1324-1400). This tertiary priest was born at Fossano in Piedmont. After his ordination he returned to his home town, where, according to the legends, he devoted himself to his flock with such devotion that the Bishop had to warn him against excessive overwork. Later on Oddinus was made provost of the collegiate church at Fossano. He resigned this office to become the chaplain to a pious confraternity. It was about this time that he joined the Third Order. He made over his house as a home for poor persons, and was appointed spiritual director of a Guild of the Cross, whose members worked among pilgrims and the afflicted. Oddinus himself made several pilgrimages to Loreto and Rome. He

built a hospital and a hospice for pilgrims at Fossano. In his later years he accepted a pressing invitation to resume his office as provost of the chapter, and with it the care of a parish. He died of the plague in 1400. His formal beatification did not take place until 1808. In the diocese of Mondovi the feast of Bd Oddinus is kept on July 21.

BD BERNARD OF BADEN (1428-1458). The boyhood of this the second son of Jacob, Margrave of Baden, was spent mostly at the courts of Charles VII of France and René of Anjou. He refused to be married to Magdalen, daughter of the King of France, and vowed to live in perpetual chastity. On the death of his father in 1453, Bernard entered the service of the Emperor Frederick III. He was received into the Third Order by a Friar Minor who became his spiritual director and constant companion for the rest of his brief life. It is related that he had a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and was allowed to receive Holy Communion at least twice a week, which was most unusual in the fifteenth century. Bernard of Baden died on July 15, 1458, at the friary of Moncalieri near Turin on a journey from Genoa to France. His cultus was approved in 1481 and confirmed in 1769. His body was taken back to Baden, where it was laid to rest in the Pfarrkirche, beside his noble relatives. His feast is kept at Baden on July 24, in the archdiocese of Turin on July 15.[1]

BD PETER OF PISA (1355-1435). Pietro Gambacorti was the son of the president of the Republic of Pisa and Lucca. After a dissipated youth he received the gift of a sudden conversion, largely due to the prayers and example of his sister who was a nun. About 1377 he left Tuscany and made his way to a lonely spot in the mountains near Urbino in Umbria, where he lived as a hermit, following the Rule of the Third Order. As generally happened in such cases, disciples soon gathered round him. Eventually they settled on a wooded mountain called Montebello overlooking the Adriatic. In 1421 Pope Martin V approved the community which became the nucleus of the Jeronomite Congregation of Bd Peter of Pisa, but during the lifetime of their founder his followers were known as the Poor Brothers of the Love of Christ. At the time of the death of Bd Peter in 1435 they had founded other hermitages near Venice, Pesaro, Fano, Padua and Urbino, whose members seem to have observed the Third Order Rule. Pope Innocent XII confirmed the cultus of this *beatus* in 1693. His feast is kept on June 17 by the Jeronomites, also in the dioceses of Venice, Pisa, and elsewhere.[2]

BD MARK MARCONI (1480-1510). Born at Milliarino near Mantua about 1480, Marco dei Marconi joined the hermit community of Bd Peter of Pisa at Mantua at an early age. Here he spent the rest of his life and died on February 24, 1510. His incorrupt body is still venerated in the Church of St Matthew at Mantua, where his feast is kept on the day of his death. His cultus was finally approved by Pius X on March 2, 1906.

[1] Ringholz, O., *Der selige Markgraf Bernhard von Baden* (Freiburg, 1892).

[2] *Analecta Bolland.*, LIII, 314. Pucci, B., *Vita del b. Pietro Gambucurti da Pisa* (Foligno, 1665); *Acta ss. Bolland.*, June III, 533-41; 3a, ed. IV, 457-44; Sajanello, I. B., *Historia monumenta Ordinis S. Hieronymi congregationis B. Petri de Pisis* (Venetiis, 1728).

CHAPTER VII

REFORMERS, CONSOLERS AND MARTYRS (1464-1628)

INTRODUCTION

THE spirit of the Renaissance was definitely opposed to the Franciscan spirit, in so far as it gave encouragement to a corrupt pagan ideal of life. It led to religious indifference and to rebellion against the authority of the Church. " The sixteenth century was an age of anguish for the Church ; for the Franciscans it was one of combat and austerity, in which the Order split into two halves, each of which suffered, waxed strong, and offered mankind shining examples of holiness." [1]

In 1517 there took place the formal separation of the Conventual and Observant groups of the Friars Minor, each becoming an independent branch of the First Order in virtue of the Bull *Ite et vos in vineam meam* of Leo X. That same year Martin Luther began his definite attack on the Church with the publication of his *Ninety-Five Theses*, which were nailed to the door of the Castle church at Wittenberg in October 1518. Nevertheless the Reformation movement gave birth to a new outburst of Franciscan idealism suited to the conditions of the age. There was a widespread return to primitive austerity among the Observant friars. Some of these felt that it was their vocation to live in hermitages or small religious houses, where they could observe the primitive Rule of St Francis to the letter. Such was the origin of another split in the unity of the Order, which obtained a canonical status in July 1528, when the Bull *Religionis Zelus* of Clement VII granted complete independence to this new family, which not very long after became known as the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin. The extreme poverty and the austerity of the life of the first generation of the Capuchins were formal protests against Renaissance paganism.[2]

The sixteenth century was also an era of reforms within the ranks of the Observants. In Spain, St Peter of Alcantara achieved a widespread reform among the Observants, which group was known as the Discalced or merely Alcantarins. The manner of life was even more austere than that of the first followers of St Francis. The friars went barefoot, observed complete abstinence from flesh meat, and only the bare minimum of study was permitted. In France and the Netherlands the Recollects or Cordeliers, who appeared in the ranks of the Observants towards the end of the century, aspired to a similar austerity of life. Later on came a reform movement among the Observant Franciscans in Germany. More or less contemporary with the foundation of the Capuchins in Italy were the

[1] Agostino Gemelli, O.F.M., *The Franciscan Message to the World* (London, 1934), p. 113.

[2] Cf. Fr Cuthbert, O.S.F.C., *The Capuchins : A Contribution to the History of the Counter-Reformation*, 2 vols. (1928).

Riformati, who by 1579 were released entirely from the jurisdiction of the Observant provincials, and almost, although temporarily only, from that of the General of the Observants. They obtained possession of some of the primitive Franciscan hermitages, where they ate cooked food only twice a week, and recited daily, in addition to the Breviary offices, the Office for the Dead, the Little Office of Our Lady, and the Seven Penitential Psalms, etc. Frequent use of the discipline was another feature in the life of these friars. What all these reform movements had in common at the start was an urge for the eremitical life, but sooner or later all of them were forced to revert to an active apostolate, although each group maintained one or more 'recollection houses', i.e. friaries in which it was possible to live in prayer and penance apart from the world.

The Friars Minor Conventual continued to carry on their apostolate mainly in towns and cities, especially where there were universities. The Observants, including Alcantarins, Recollects, and Riformati, appealed more to the middle-classes, and were popular preachers. The Capuchins took up open-air preaching, both in the country and in towns, making a great appeal to the poor and unlearned, although their chief patrons were among the nobility. By the close of the sixteenth century all three branches of the Friars Minor were in almost every country in Europe fighting heresy—Lutheran, Calvinist and Anglican.[1] It was an age of great preachers, prominent among them being the Capuchins, St Felix of Cantalice, and St Laurence of Brindisi. It was also the age when the chief Franciscan devotions were popularized—the Way of the Cross and the *Quarant' Ore*, or forty hours' prayer before the Blessed Sacrament exposed. This seems to have been introduced by a Capuchin friar at Milan about 1536. It was an age of intensive foreign missionary activity among the friars. They went forth from Spain, Portugal and Italy to evangelize the heathen in North, Central and South America, India, China, and Japan.

The section of this chapter devoted to the Japanese martyrs reminds us that the Third Order took root and grew up rapidly in the Far East.

In the enclosed convents of the Poor Clares and the Third Order Regular, women were being drawn to heights of mystical prayer. Franciscan art in the sixteenth century took on the spirit of the age, so too did the architecture of most of the churches built for the Friars Minor of either branch. It was only in the humble little churches erected by the Capuchins and the various reformed groups of the Observants that there was any attempt to express the spirit of holy poverty.

The Third Order acquired a new lease of life in some countries, especially in towns where the Capuchins, Cordeliers, Alcantarins, and Recollects had friaries. Where the Catholic Church was faced with Protestant opposition, for instance in France, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands, the tertiary fraternities became exceptionally flourishing. Such then is the background against which the men and women mentioned in this chapter played their parts.

ST JOAN OF FRANCE (1464-1505)

IT was on April 23, 1464, that Charlotte of Savoy, the second wife of King Louis XI of France, gave birth to a daughter at the Château of Nogent-le-Rotrou in Normandy. It is said that she was christened Jeanne in memory of Jeanne d'Arc, who had been burnt alive thirty-three years before. The baby girl was deformed.

[1] Cf. Ant. de Sérent, *Les Frères Mineurs en face du Protestantisme au XVI siècle* (Paris, 1930).

She had a crooked shoulder ; her face was scarred on the brow, and one side of it was more developed than the other. Her pious but intensely superstitious, not to say cruel father was furious. According to some accounts he sent her away at once ; according to others he left her in charge of her mother until she was four, and then put her under the care of the Count and Countess of Linières, who were sorry for the child. They did her the utmost kindness of all, teaching her about " Him who only became Man in order to suffer ". She was a child with an unusual capacity for love, and she lavished it, in imagination, on the human being of whom she had only heard—the little Duke of Orleans, to whom, in the fashion of that age, she had been betrothed when she was still in her cradle. It is easy to picture this pathetic little girl in her long patterned gown, trotting about the castle on the high-heeled shoes that were given her to make her look taller, with a short veil over her head, casting a queer shadow behind her. It was a gloomy place, but Jeanne was happy there, because the de Linières were kind. Poor little Princess !

She was not yet six when she was taken to visit her father. She had already had small-pox, and it had not improved her looks. Louis stood at a window, so it is related, watching the arrival of an excited, terrified daughter who was longing for a loving welcome. " Good God, I had no idea she was as ugly as that ! " the King exclaimed, and because he hated opposition of any kind, he remembered only that she had come into the world when he wanted a son ; and once more—though there was now a Dauphin in the royal cradle—refused to receive his daughter.

She had been summoned to the great Château d'Amboise, on the banks of the Loire near Tours, because she was a royal Princess. She was dazed with disappointment, and was stared at rudely by the courtiers. Her mother was affectionate enough, but showed plainly that her pretty elder daughter, Anne, was her favourite. Jeanne then met her fiancé, the boy Duke of Orleans, with his hard eyes and crafty nose and sensual contemptuous mouth. He simply turned his back on her as though she was not even worth disliking. In her loneliness she found consolation in the love bestowed by one of the servants, and most of them, out of sheer pity, tried to please her. But her father, noticing this one day, shouted that she was to be treated as the least of the royal household. He would allow no new clothes to be bought for his child : she must wear cut-down dresses.

Louis XI was a queer mixture of perfidy and piety. It was quite in keeping with his character that one day, noticing how much Jeanne frequented the chapel, he ordered her to choose a confessor, enough to show that he was not without some consideration for his daughter's soul. Jeanne, thankful to be bidden to do anything by which she could please her father, thought and prayed over the matter. One day at Mass, having invoked Our Lady, to whom she had been attached from her childhood, she heard these words : " If thou desirest to be loved by the Mother, abide in the wounds of the Son." Strange words, which seemed to point the little girl to the sons of St Francis, who had worn the wounds of Christ. There was a community of the Observant Friars Minor at Amboise, and it was the Guardian, Père Jean de la Fontaine, whom she chose. He remained her spiritual director for the rest of his life.

Jeanne dreamed of being allowed to become a nun, since her fiancé plainly wished to get rid of her. Perhaps her father would permit this, glad to have her for ever out of his sight. His mania of dislike continued. On one occasion, when he chanced to set eyes on her, he shouted : " Get out ! You have no right to be

alive, and I wish somebody would kill you." On another occasion, inflamed with wine after a feast, he himself drew his sword on his daughter, and would have killed her, if the Count de Linières, who happened to be near by, had not stepped between her and the sword.

But there came a day when, according to the political policy of the King, it was highly desirable that Jeanne's engagement to the Duke of Orleans should be kept, and that the Duke should be forced to keep it. Both the Duke and his mother protested that he was under no obligation to wed this hunchback. The Duke himself informed his lawyer in writing that he did so only to save his own life. But married they were, and as for all his protests the Duke did not refuse to receive the loving obedience and caresses of his wife. Jeanne herself was almost happy at being allowed, at last, to love somebody.

On August 30, 1483, Louis XI died in the arms of St Francis of Paola, the founder of the Order of Minims, at Plessis-les-Tours, near Orleans, which was one of his favourite places of pilgrimage. Jeanne's brother ascended the throne as Charles VIII. He married Anne of Brittany, but died without issue in 1498. The Duke of Orleans, as the direct descendant of Charles V (1364-80), the founder of the house of Valois, found himself King of France as Louis XII. Hardly had he been crowned than he applied to Pope Alexander VI for a declaration of nullity of his marriage with Jeanne, protesting that he had been forced into it under threat of being killed, and that for this reason it was not valid. The King, one of whose grandmothers was Valentina Visconti, claimed the Duchy of Milan, usurped by the Sforzas. For this reason he had allied himself with the Borgia Pope, and was confident that the Roman canonists would support his cause. A commission of learned and eminent men was set up to try the case, and the account of it makes bitter reading.

Of the four counts adduced by Louis' lawyers against the marriage, two were shown to be invalid, as covered by Papal dispensations, but the third proved damning to Jeanne's case. It was the diriment impediment of *Metus*—fear—and there was plenty of evidence to show that Louis XI had been an excessively harsh and tyrannical man, and that he had threatened the boy Duke and his mother with death if the marriage did not take place. The fourth count, impotence in Jeanne herself, was not gone into, as the third decided the matter. But about the fourth, it was known that Louis XI had been convinced that Jeanne could not bear children because of her bodily deformities, and that the marriage would therefore in time add the broad lands of Orleans to the crown of France. There is little doubt that after its four months of careful scrutiny the Commission was compelled to come to the decision it did.

Canonists at that time held that subsequent cohabitation removed the impediment of fear. This opinion has long since been abandoned ; but, in any case, the King swore that in the normal and natural sense the marriage had never been consummated. During the protracted deliberations of the Commission, Jeanne's resources began to fail, and the King willingly provided her with the money to continue the defence of her marriage.

It was Père Gilbert Nicolai, afterwards known as Gabriel-Marie in accordance with a Brief of Leo X, who brought the news to Jeanne. This is what this Franciscan friar is reported to have said : " Madame, I have some patience to sell. My sleeves are full of it, won't you buy some ? It is an article you have always wanted."

"I know what it is", Jeanne replied quietly. "I am no longer Queen of France. God be praised! I know He allows this in order to detach me from the world, and to give me the means of serving Him better than I have done."

All she asked was to meet Louis once more that she might beg his pardon for any faults of hers, and to show that she cherished no resentment against him. Then, with the title and estates of the Duchesse de Berry, which the King bestowed on her, she retired to Bourges, where she made her home in the old palace of the Dukes of Berry, and left behind her the world which had never been anything more but a purgatory. Not long after this Louis married Anne of Brittany, the widow of Charles VIII.

Jeanne was happy enough in this old city, set on a hill, surrounded by wide stretching pastures, through which flow the rivers Yèvre and Auron, and dominated by its great Gothic cathedral, whose thirteenth-century stained glass is among the finest in France. She was given a royal welcome when she arrived in Bourges, but first she insisted on visiting the cathedral, dedicated to St Stephen, where she prayed for the grace to suffer martyrdom, as he had done. In the garden of her palace she built a Calvary, a Pièta, and a Sepulchre, where she used to meditate often on the Passion. She lived in great austerity, but was so full of charity for the poor that the people called her "the good Duchess". In fact, she fulfilled all her duties with great conscientiousness—just as she had done during her married life.

Our Lady claimed her. She inspired Jeanne with the idea of founding a Religious Order in her honour. This was in 1500—about two years after the royal marriage was declared null, and when Jeanne was already a Franciscan tertiary. According to the generally accepted tradition she had been clothed with the habit of the Third Order many years before, when she had chosen Père Jean de la Fontaine as her confessor.

"Embody in the Rule", said Our Lady, "all that is written about me in the Gospels; and get it approved by the Sovereign Pontiff." Jeanne asked Père Gilbert Nicolai, the then Provincial of the Friars Minors Observant in Aquitaine, to draw up a Rule. He did so, begging Our Lady to direct his pen, and when it was completed, he laid it on her altar. The whole spirit of the Order of Our Lady, now generally known as the Annonciades, is definitely Franciscan, based on mutual charity—a union and concord of hearts.

The inspiration seems to have come from heaven just when reparation was needed, for the attacks on Our Lady's honour were very soon to be made by Protestants.[1] Jeanne gathered round her twelve girls from Touraine who became the first members of her new Order. The nuns were enclosed, and given a grey habit, like that of the Franciscans, with a red scapular in honour of the Passion, white cord (with ten knots for each "Virtue" of Our Lady), a black veil to commemorate her Sorrows, and a white cloak for her Immaculate Conception—another Franciscan devotion. The Superior was to be known as "Ancelle"—the word derived from the Latin *ancilla*, a handmaid.

The project was blessed with the sign of the Cross. Once the Rule had been drawn up, a Franciscan friar, Guillaume Morin, was sent to Rome to obtain papal approbation for it. There he was told that the Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215) and the Second Council of Lyons (1274) had forbidden the foundation of

[1] Twenty-eight years later John Calvin found a patron at Bourges in the Duchess of Berry who lived there with many German and Swiss Protestants in her court.

new religious orders. All he could do was to return to France, and he lost the manuscript when crossing the Alps. Jeanne took this rebuff as a penance for her sins, but Père Gilbert Nicolai bade her not to abandon hope. He wrote the Rule again, and took it to Rome himself. In October 1499 Louis XII had entered the city of Milan in triumph. Alexander VI was waging war against the tyrants who were devastating the States of the Church, and was away from Rome. Eventually Père Gilbert Nicolai obtained an audience with the Pope, who himself was quite prepared to confirm the Rule. But none of the cardinals would support him, and matters reached a deadlock. One night Cardinal Ferrara, who had great influence in the Sacred College, had a dream in which he saw St Laurence and St Francis, who blessed Gilbert Nicolai and the Rule in his hands. He had been one of the cardinals who were most bitterly opposed to the new Order. The following morning he summoned the French Franciscan friar and promised to assist him. Although Alexander VI was mainly preoccupied at that moment in arranging for the third marriage of his daughter, Lucrezia Borgia, he managed to find time to have a Bull drawn up. It was published on February 14, 1501. The Rule was approved, and Père Gilbert Nicolai named Visitor-General of the new Order of the Annunciation of Our Lady.

The Franciscan Provincial lost no time on his journey back to France. Jeanne gave orders for a convent to be built near her palace in Bourges, and on the feast of Pentecost 1502, she and the first four postulants were clothed as novices. The foundress herself was solemnly professed the following June.

During Mass on January 25, 1505, three years after Alexander VI had granted a second confirmation of the Rule of the new Order, Jeanne's first spiritual director appeared to Père Gilbert Nicolai and warned him that her death would occur shortly. She herself had received a similar message. She died ten days later, and was buried with great pomp in the convent chapel. The King ordered that his first wife's funeral should be worthy of her royal rank, and assisted at it. Kneeling before her coffin, he begged her pardon for the many wrongs he had done her, and invoked her intercession.

In 1552 Bourges was attacked by the Calvinist troops. They desecrated the convent chapel, opened the tomb of the Foundress, and dragged her body into the courtyard. It was incorrupt as though she had died only that day, and the soldiers would hardly believe that she was dead, for when they touched her, they heard sighs from the corpse. Terrified, they plunged a sword into her side and the blood flowed. Still more terrified, they hastily burned the body to get rid of her.

At the time of the French Revolution there were about forty houses of the Annonciades in France and Belgium. Only seven or eight exist today, one of them being in England, at St Margaret's-at-Cliffe, near Dover. In 1514 Pope Leo X permitted the Annonciades to honour their Foundress with a special Office and Mass, but it was not until 1742 that she was beatified by Benedict XIV. She was canonized by Pius XII at Pentecost, 1950. Her feast is now kept on February 14, and as a double-major by the Friars Minor, Poor Clares, and Third Order Regular.[1] St Joan of France is also honoured in the diocese of Bourges, and by the Order of Minims.

Thirty-five years of humiliation: six years of peace. These made up the lifetime of the unwanted child, the plain little hunchback. In them, she served God as an obedient daughter and a devoted wife and founded an Order which is

[1] Capuchins and Conventuals, March 28.

said, like that of St Francis, to have received the promise that it shall continue to the end of the world. Her love of Our Lady was immense, and the Annonciades still keep the memory of her falling into ecstasy at the words of the Hail Mary: *Dominus tecum.* Remembering how as a child Jeanne longed for affection, she is a saint to be loved, especially those who belong to her own family of the Third Order of St Francis.

BD PAULA GAMBARA COSTA (1473-1515)

HERE is another tertiary who was a contemporary of St Joan of France, and whose lives have not a little in common, since both made unhappy marriages. Paola Gambara was born at Brescia, an ancient city on the plain of Lombardy, at the foot of seven hills. Her parents were of noble rank. We know little of her childhood, except that it related that she had a love of solitude and a distaste for all worldly amusements.

At about the age of twelve she was married to Luigi Costa, Count of Benasco, whose estates in Piedmont were hidden away in the valley of the Tenaro, beneath the northern slopes of the Maritime Alps that form the boundary between Liguria and Piedmont. We can picture her making a long journey of nearly a hundred miles to her new home, surrounded by chestnut and beech forests. As she gazed out of the windows of her castle in winter and looked south, the high peaks of the mountains would have been white with snow.

From what is recorded, it seems that Paola and Luigi were not an ideally matched couple, for he was devoted to pleasure and self-indulgence. In order to please her husband, Paola did her best to share his worldly life. But God had other plans for her. About fifty miles away to the west of the castle of Benasco, one of the holiest members of the Franciscan Order at that date was living in retirement at Cuneo, after a life of strenuous missionary activity. Bd Angelo of Chivasso was eighty-two when he resigned his office of Vicar-General of the Observant Friars Minor, after having been re-elected three times. His sanctity was famous throughout Italy. Paola took him as her spiritual director, and he watched over her until his death in 1495. He bade her join the Third Order, and to devote herself to prayer and the service of the poor. This venerable Franciscan must have realized that the young Countess of Benasco was no ordinary soul, for he gave a rule of life that far exceeded the ordinary Rule then binding on tertiaries, which had been approved by Nicholas IV in 1289.

We are told that she rose before dawn and said her morning prayers in the chapel of her castle. Then she went to Mass, often remaining several hours in church. She recited the Little Office of Our Lady, said the Rosary, and made two periods of mental prayer every day. She fasted on vigils of Our Lady and on other vigils, and made her confession once a fortnight. She made a vow always to obey her husband in everything lawful and to take a charitable view of his failings, and to do all in her power to prevent their coming to the knowledge of others. Her eldest son was born in 1488 when she was barely fifteen. Her husband strongly objected to her Franciscan charity to the poor and did all he could to prevent her giving away so much to those who asked alms or food from her. He treated her with great cruelty, especially when he brought in a lady of doubtful morals who became his mistress, and got her to spy on his young wife.

The servants also turned against Paola, treating her with contempt. But she never complained, merely adding to her prayers and penances for the conversion of her husband. The woman whom he had brought to live in the castle fell ill. Paola nursed her, and managed to convince her of the sinfulness of her life before she died. The illness had been very brief, and because the body was much swollen, Paola was accused of having poisoned the woman. By this time she must have been very lonely, for her Franciscan confessor died when she was only twenty-two.

In the solitude of her oratory in the castle, Paola prayed at the foot of the Cross, offering up the insults and humiliations to which she was subjected, for the conversion of her misguided husband. She increased her penances and mortifications.

Our Lord rewarded her with many graces, and sometimes appeared to her in person. At last she had the consolation of seeing Luigi give up his former manner of life. His conversion was genuine, and from now onwards he gave his wife complete liberty to devote herself to works of charity. No longer did he jeer at the grey habit of the Third Order, which it seems she had given up wearing publicly in an effort to please him in what, after all, was an indifferent matter.

Some time later he died. We have no details of his last moments, but we may presume that his end was peaceful. Paola was now free to arrange her life as she felt best. Père Léon says that " she lived for God alone, meditating continually on the Passion of Our Saviour, and practising every virtue, while offering up her own body as a living victim for the sins of the world. Her income was entirely devoted to the relief of the poor, of whom she made herself the humble servant."[1]

And that is about all we know of this saintly tertiary during the last years of her brief life on earth. The castle of Benasco was so remote from the outside world that it was easy for her to escape from publicity. Only the inhabitants of the town and neighbouring villages knew of the holiness and wonderful charity of Donna Paola, now a widow, whose solitary life resembled that of a nun.

The distant mountains were clothed in their winter snow when Paola fell asleep in the Lord. It was the twenty-fourth day of January, 1515. She was buried in the church of the Friars Minor of the Observance at Bene Vagiana, where many miracles took place at her tomb. Her cultus was approved by Gregory XVI. Her feast is kept in the dioceses of Mondovi and Brescia on February 24. In the Franciscan Missal and Breviary she is now commemorated with two other widowed *Beatae* of the Second and Third Orders on June 15.

BD LOUISA ALBERTONI (1473-1533)

STILL remaining in the same period, we pass on to the life of another widowed tertiary of noble rank. Ludovica degl' Albertoni—to give her the correct style—was born in 1474. Her father was Stephano Albertoni, and her mother, Lucrezia Tebaldi, was a niece of Cardinal Jacobo Tebaldi. When she opened her eyes in Rome Sixtus IV had been Pope for three years, and the Renaissance was in its glory. Pico della Mirandola was at school ; a politician at twenty. Michelangelo was born a year later than Louisa. But whatever went on outside the walls of her father's palace, Louisa, having a wise and loving mother, grew up a witty, obedient, loving little girl, liking good better than evil, as happy children do ; liking to pray to God and to give alms to His poor. She lavished on them the enthusiastic pity

[1] *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, 535.

of a child. Her thoughts were still absorbed in the world of the convent where she had been educated when her hand was asked in marriage by a very suitable young man named Giacomo di Cithara. No girl of her rank and period expected to be allowed to choose her husband, any more than a girl of our own age is allowed to choose her own school. And having no definite religious vocation to uphold her dreams of convent-life, Louisa had to give them up. She was no mere dreamer however. Her seventeenth-century biographer, Fra Giovanni Paolo, an Observant Friar Minor, uses the word " virile " in describing her youth. She seems to have accepted the new state of affairs fully. But, imagining her first glances at Giacomo di Cithara, one hopes they showed her what she was later to find—a sympathy with her ideals and a real love for her bright nature. The marriage took place and henceforth, as Fra Paolo puts it, " her light ever shone clearly in his eyes, and the sound of his lute ever filled her soul with melody ".

Pondering her life, with the cares of a great Roman palace on her shoulders and babies in her arms, and comparing it with the simplicities of her own vocation this Friar Minor comes to the conclusion that " because of her interior liberty of spirit, she did not fear the yoke of matrimony ". He says that her husband liked her way of dressing simply and with dignity at a time when fashions were fantastic, and that she soon had something of a salon, for the best Roman society admired her wit and wisdom. She was evidently a true woman of the Renaissance, inasmuch as she enjoyed to the full the intellectual companionship of her husband and his cultured friends. She seems to have been brilliantly happy, as they only are who are not in perpetual fear of losing their happiness. Her fear was more distinguished, more virile : " she was timorous, fearing lest property should impoverish her spirit."

Giacomo died in 1507, when she was only thirty-three. It is more than likely that on April 11 of the previous year they had made their way to St Peter's, and watched Pope Julius II lay the foundation stone of the new basilica in the presence of thirty-five cardinals. As a rich widow, all the pleasures and liberties of Renaissance Rome were within reach and call of Louisa. She could have kept her own court, patroness of artists and *literati* and, like Vittoria Colonna (1490-1547), still have preserved her virtue. But Louisa, unlike some of her friends, did not devote the rest of her life to the promotion of art and literature. The individualism of the new age, with its selfishness and sensuality, began to repel her just when she was at liberty to do what she really liked best. She went over to its rival individualism, the Franciscan, which taught that even the laity, even women, might play their part—which no one else could play, if they refused it—in building up Christendom, working in a humble and joyous poverty, denying self, to achieve something more glorious than the dreams of Greece. She rejected the many offers of marriage made to her by Roman nobles. She would not enter a cloister, because of her obligations to her daughters—Camilla, Sylvia and Antonia. But she would claim that liberty—almost lost since the first ages of the Church, and regained only in the Dominican and Franciscan Third Orders—to live, uncloistered, in poverty, chastity, penance, prayer and charity.

One day she made her way across the Tiber to the little church of San Francesco a Ripa, where at the hands of a Friar Minor of the Observance she was clothed with the habit of the Third Order. Members of this community were to be her spiritual directors for the next twenty-six years, and to this same church her body would be brought back after her death.

Her biographer tells us that she " received the habit with so much happiness that everyone could perceive the joy that was in her heart: with so much devotion that all could read from her face how recollected was her mind: with so much humility that it was very clear how she prayed to have this habit, which, poor and of ashen hue, was the noble livery, the illustrious purple of the Knights of the Crucified ". He goes on to say that henceforth " she bound in strong bands the ferocious beast of the appetites. This had the effect of deepening her tranquillity of spirit. She trampled underfoot the blossom of earthly delights to enjoy more surely the fruits of Paradise." She did not wear her habit to appear devout, but " dressed in ashes the better to conserve the fire of love ".

In order to understand the sort of life lived by Louisa Albertoni between 1507 and 1533, it is essential to have a mental picture of the background. It was not only for her own personal sanctification that this noble Roman lady joined the Third Order of Penance, about four years after Julius II had been elected Pope. This worldly-minded soldierly pontiff had been a Franciscan in his younger days, but this was difficult to remember when the Romans saw him riding out of the city at the head of his army to regain possession of provinces in the north of Italy which formed part of the Papal States. He died in 1513, and was succeeded by Lorenzo dei Medici, who took the name of Leo X. His pontificate, lasting eight years, was characterized by his love of pleasure and worldly extravagance. No doubt news reached Louisa that Luther and his disciples were beginning to plant the seeds of heresy in Germany. She must have sighed at the gossip of strange doings in the Vatican, where the Pope was far more taken up with hunting, dancing, gorgeous pageants and dramatic performances, and on decorating his many palaces than on the spiritual welfare of the Church. Tales of what went on at some of those papal banquets, where the very mixed company were entertained by the jests and caperings of buffoons, would have been enough to make her double her prayers and penances.

Leo X died in 1521, and the next Pope, Adrian VI, was a conscientious, unimaginative Dutchman—full of good intentions, but he only reigned about eighteen months. He was succeeded by Giulio de' Medici, who, as Clement VII, ruled over the Church until his death in 1534. The pontificate of this Italian prince and politician was marked by many a tribulation. One by one, England, Denmark, parts of Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands broke away from Catholic unity. The heretical teachings of Luther, Zwingli, Bucer and Calvin were accepted by the princes and peoples of other countries.

It is quite likely that in the spring of 1525, when the streets of Rome were crowded with pilgrims from all parts of Europe who had come to gain the Jubilee Indulgences, Louisa would have heard the story of the lay brother of the Franciscan Observants who had made his way from the Marches of Ancona in order to obtain permission from the Pope himself to observe the Rule to the letter as St Francis gave it, and to wear the habit as worn by his first followers. Fra Matteo da Bascio, ' gate-crashed ' into the Vatican, and cast himself at the feet of Clement VII, who said to him: " We grant you all you ask of Us." Eight years previous to this incident, the Franciscan Order, at Pentecost 1517, had been separated into two independent families, when Leo X reversed the law by which the Observants owed a nominal subjection to the Conventuals, and placed the Conventuals under a nominal subjection to the Observants. The simple-minded lay-brother who came to Rome in 1525 was the forerunner of the movement which, three years

later, would result in the creation of that new group of Friars Minor who eventually became known as Capuchins.

Louisa must have heard rumours that the troops of the Emperor Charles V were marching through Italy. One day in September 1526 came word that the Pope was a prisoner in the castle of Sant' Angelo. She must have endured agonies of mind during the next few months. The city was laid to waste, churches were desecrated, and even their sacred vessels seized by the soldiers. Women and children were slaughtered and violated—not even nuns were spared. Most of the cardinals were made prisoners, and treated with every indignity. This state of affairs continued for nearly three years. It was not until 1530 that the Pope came to terms with the Emperor after paying a vast sum for his release. " The abomination of desolation ", described by the prophet Daniel, had been set up in the holy place, but Louisa did not act on the advice of Our Lord and " take refuge in the mountains ".[1]

She stayed in Rome, knowing that " where the body lies the eagles will gather ", confident that though heaven and earth should pass away, the works of God will stand.

Scourges, a bed of boards, a pittance of food and long vigils were not merely for the saving of Louisa's own soul during the three years that Rome was at the mercy of the troops of Charles V. They were needed for the sins of men who claimed to be practising Catholics, although many of the soldiers in the service of the Emperor were German Lutherans or Italian freebooters with no religion.

She did not conceive of herself as a good woman. According to her biographer, whenever she heard that someone had committed a grave sin, she would say with a deep sigh, even with tears : " Alas, if I am not assisted by the divine hand of Jesus my Spouse, I shall fall one day into greater sin than that ! " Kneeling humbly at the feet of her informant she would beg him " most earnestly to commend her to the Lord, so that, not considering her sins and demerits, but the infinite value of His Precious Blood poured out for the redemption of souls, He would deign to protect her that day, and not allow her to do anything that might displease His Divine Majesty." Fr Paolo, her confessor, is wordy sometimes, but how clearly he makes us see that knowledge of her own humanity, and that fear of its infection by a moral corruption more deadly and more penetrating than the plague, of which men, women and children were dying in the streets of Rome in 1528. This scourge had made its appearance in the north of Italy the previous year.

Louisa sold what remained of her estates in order to distribute to the famine-stricken loaves of bread, with gold and silver pieces hidden in them, praying that the neediest might get the loaf with the largest coin. Henceforth she would share the lot of the most helpless, and live as they did on alms. She looked upon herself as the mother of the helpless, and helped them, desperate and blaspheming as they must often have been, with the patience she had learnt with her own children.

There was still her bodily strength to be offered in sacrifice. She was stricken with that form of malaria known as tertian-fever, in which acute paroxysms occur on alternate days. Undernourished, she fell an easy prey to the disease. She bore her suffering with the utmost patience. When the Roman ladies sought her out, holding pomanders to their noses for fear of infection, they wept to see her in such weakness and such poverty.

[1] *Matthew* 24. 26.

But she said with sincerity ringing in her words: "Let God scourge my body if He will pardon my soul. I willingly support all evils, and pray Jesus to permit many greater ones, if thereby He may receive my spirit." She had felt the horror of sin and thought of her own faults as others thought of infection from the plague. When the beggars came to her door for news of their benefactress, she would say: "Tell them that if I have been their mother in life, my death shall not make them motherless. I will take care of them from heaven and remember their needs."

It is quite possible that among the noble ladies who came to visit her was Vittoria Colonna, who had already begun to use her influence to obtain papal confirmation for the new Franciscan family of the Capuchins, whose members had made their first foundation in Rome in 1529. By the time that Louisa was on her death bed, the humble, bearded friars could be seen going about the streets, dressed in their patched habits and short cloaks, poor among the poor, like sparrows in bare trees. For it was dangerous to be abroad at that time when most people who could afford to do so stayed indoors for fear of the plague and robbers.

Cardinals too came to visit the noble invalid. Louisa said to them: "Ah, let me leave the world! Perhaps I have been a disloyal Jonah by whom the Barque of Peter has been disturbed, but when I am thrown into the ocean of an obscure grave, it will restore the calm and the Church of God will enjoy continuing peace." Here we seem to see the very tired wit of a sick woman trying to be courteous to princes of the Church. But when the cardinals persisted in venerating her, with something of her old imperiousness she sent them away, and turning to the crucifix was heard to say, vigorously: "How much have I betrayed You in my miserable life! How must I have hidden my sin in that they can believe me a *Beata*! They do not see what is within, but only what appears! My Jesu, my good Jesu, You see into hearts, You know well what little merit this soul of mine has laid up in all its days: pardon my sins!—And do not impute it to me that they call me a *Beata*, but pardon also their mistake."

It is recorded that after she had received the Last Sacraments, she begged the prayers of her confessor, saying: "Do not abandon me in this pass so dangerous to my soul." Then she asked that her door might be shut and that no one should come till she summoned them. Hour after hour passed, but they dared not go in. At last, at the end of the day, they heard her voice. In the words of her biographer, "she seemed to have come back from Paradise".

Asked where she would like to be buried, she replied that she wished to be laid beside her husband in the church of San Francesco a Ripa, because what God had joined must not be put asunder.

Crucifix in hand, invoking Our Lady to pray for her "now, now, at the hour of my death", she kissed the Five Wounds. She died at the age of sixty on January 31, 1533.

The poor canonized Louisa at once, crying through the streets that a saint was dead. All the cardinals assisted at her funeral, and one of them preached the sermon. The Roman Senate asked the Pope to consider the cause of her beatification, pointing out that she had obtained great graces for the city. But it was not until 1671 that Clement X approved of her cultus. In 1625 the Marchese Baldassare-Albertoni gave orders for a gorgeous baroque chapel to be built on the left side of the church of San Francesco a Ripa. Bernini was commissioned to carve a marble statue of Louisa, who is represented in the habit of the Third Order. Many miracles have been performed at the tomb of this saintly tertiary. Until a

few years ago her feast was kept by the Friars Minor on January 31 : it has now been transferred to February 28, on which date Bd Ludovica is commemorated as a semi-double with other widows of the Second and Third Orders.

ST ANGELA MERICI (1470-1540)

THE Lago di Garda—that inland sea in north Italy surrounded by lofty mountains, on whose lower slopes flourish olives, lemons and other sub-tropical plants, and whose summits are gay with Alpine flowers or white with a garment of snow in winter—serves as a symbol of the wide mind and mature holiness of Angela Merici, who was born at Desenzano, a busy little town at the southern end of the lake in the year 1470.

To some of our readers ' Lake Garda ' may suggest a race between two streaks of silver steel which cut the water at record pace : this too provides another symbol, well expressing Angela's spirit. She went direct to God.

When she was only five, she had begun to go straight to God, seeking solitary places on the shores of the lake because she felt Him drawing her to talk with Him. She wanted, with a child's eagerness, to do so uninterruptedly. No one can be more absorbed in a single interest than a child. Angela was absorbed in God.

If anyone imagines that being absorbed in God makes a prig of a child, they have simply never seen a child who is so occupied. Perhaps the most striking characteristic then is a complete normality. " For of such is the kingdom of heaven "—and a child *distracted from God* is a child in exile. Only His responses to the desires He has provoked produce that sure wonder and pure laughter and pure freedom from care of self-consciousness which make a child supremely lovable and marvellous to his elders.

Let us get this clear. The picture of a very young artist doing penance that most of us—even the strongest of us—would find impossible to soul and body—is a picture which has practically no meaning for us. It is like a sentence in a language we do not know. Therefore, it is a false picture, because Angela is a saint, in other words, her personality is eternal and not under the law of any time-spirit—she belongs to unchangeable things, to the ever-living and the never-old—and therefore her *true* picture will show a most intelligible being. The child who is so absorbed in some interest that she forgets her dinner, is a common phenomenon ! The child who thinks the prudence of her elders a strange quality is also not uncommon. But when the preoccupation is God, and the substitute for prudence is Providence, the child has the wisdom as well as the idealism of innocence on her side of the argument. The resilience of a child finds the hardship of an austerity easier than do those who have made a habit of comfort-seeking. Therefore, one begins to see that there is nothing *unnatural* in a child's austerities—once the attraction is absorbing enough. The great attraction is the grace, the *super-natural*, the point of all.

Angela, growing in grace, kept these qualities unspoilt. Italian children grow up quickly, and in the fifteenth century they were married at an age when, today, they would still be in the junior school. All the more so in the case of Angela, because her parents had died when she was very young. But from the first she seems to have been considered by all who knew her as belonging wholly to God,

There was something about her so shining and definite—like the sword of a guardian angel—that they called her " the virgin of Jesus " before she was thirteen. That is a curious maturity which allies itself to innocence in the saints—a " marriage ripeness " of the spirit. It is the antithesis of precociousness. Its tacit refusal of all joys that are less than divine has nothing negative about it, nothing fearful or awkward or stiff. It is simply that the soul flowers early, being, by God's choice, preserved from the blight of evil—which it will, instead, encounter in a special and acute form of suffering later on.

In the year 1483, when she was thirteen, Angela joined the Third Order of St Francis. A few miles from Desenzano is a small island in Lake Garda, known as Isola dei Frati—the Island of the Friars. Thirty years before Angela's birth, St Bernardine of Siena had lived on this island for a while, and it was a large community, for the friary was a house of studies. Perhaps it was here that Angela first got to know the sons of St Francis, anyhow they would often have passed through her native town. It is recorded that from now onwards her progress in virtue was so rapid, although she had hitherto led a holy life, she seemed only now to begin to advance along the road to sanctity.

In Angela, her free-will clearly chose to let nothing divert her attention from that attraction. For nine years her spiritual life was as solitary as a child when it plays contentedly by itself. Her life, however, was no play: it must have been incomparably more intense than that of any ardent seeker after success or pleasure. But it was not contented in the real sense of the word, which is " full to the brim ". To quote the other St Angela—of Foligno—she might have said: " I saw a fullness in God in which I embraced the whole universe, above and beyond the seas, the abyss, the ocean, and everything. In all these things I saw only the Divine Power, and I saw it in a way impossible to describe. Then my soul could not contain itself for marvelling and cried out: ' This world is full of God.' And I understood how small is the world, above and beyond the seas, the abyss, the ocean and everything, and how the power of God fills and overflows all."

A call to the solitary life is, it appears from what we know of the saints, very often a call to preparation for active charity—except in cases where it is a preparation for a life of purely passive suffering—vicarious suffering and reparation.

Angela was twenty-two when she saw in a vision that for which she had been prepared in her solitary years of prayer and penance as a Franciscan tertiary. She saw a mysterious ladder which virgins were ascending, two by two, crowned with diadems and singing canticles, accompanied by angelic music. Among them she saw one she had known, lately dead, who came to her saying: " Angela, know that God has favoured you with this vision to make known to you that, before you die, you will found at Brescia a community of virgins like these, and that He hereby commands you to do so."

This vision Angela made known to her Franciscan confessor, who was satisfied that it was no delusion. What most reassures us (apart from its historical fulfilment) is the way in which she behaved.

She did nothing hastily to realize it, but merely set herself to become more holy, waiting on God to show her what steps to take, for she was still living in the little town of Desenzano.

Understanding from God that the community she was to found was to make its work to open schools for girls, she and some of her friends began to gather together the girls of the town and to instruct them at least in the catechism, while they

continued to visit the poor and sick as they had hitherto done, and to instruct the ignorant and work for the conversion of sinners. But this was probably no more than the fulfilment of their ordinary vocation as tertiaries, or at least Angela's own Rule, if they were not also members of the Third Order, as seems probable.

Meanwhile the powers of evil were aware that great things were afoot. Angela was fiercely assaulted. One day, Satan made himself known in the appearance of an angel of light, and came into her room to distract her from prayer with temptations to vainglory. But her Franciscan humility found a foreign note ringing in his praises. " Begone ! " she said. " Think not to impose on me, I know who thou art and I know only too well what I am in the sight of God. I am but a sinner, a vile instrument whom the grace of Jesus Christ makes use of for His Glory. Begone, then ! Return to the abyss of hell, and there announce thy defeat and the triumph of my God ! "

We may wonder what qualifications Angela had for opening a school. Heaven has seen to that. She had received infused knowledge, and spoke Latin as though it were the dialect of her province. It is also recorded that she could explain the most difficult passages of Scripture and theological questions so exactly and brilliantly that her fame spread far and wide, and learned men came to consult this remarkable woman who, about 1516, had removed from Lake Garda to the neighbouring city of Brescia.

Heaven, like Rome, is not in a hurry. When Angela was fifty-five, the Order was not yet founded, nor any school established at Brescia. In 1524 Angela set out on a pilgrimage to the Holy Places in Palestine, just as her Seraphic Father had done in his lifetime. When she returned to Italy it was the Jubilee Year, and her miracles made fame follow her to Rome. She had an audience with Pope Clement VII, who wanted to keep her there, but, with her own simplicity and directness, Angela explained that she had to return to Brescia in order to fulfil God's will, so the Medici Pope made no further effort to delay her departure. When she arrived at Milan, she was welcomed by Francesco Sforza—made Duke by the Emperor Charles V in 1522, when the latter's troops had recaptured the city from the French. The north of Italy was being ravaged by the French and Spanish armies. Many of the inhabitants of Brescia had fled already, and when Angela got back there, she felt obliged to seek refuge at Cremona. The political situation went from bad to worse. The Papal States were raided by the disaffected family of Colonna and their lawless followers. In September 1526 they imprisoned Clement VII in the Castle of Sant' Angelo.

News of all these horrors, also that the plague was killing off thousands of the inhabitants of the Marches of Ancona, and spreading to other provinces of Italy, must have reached Angela. Following war and plague came famine, for the Spanish and French armies had laid waste the countryside wherever they passed.

Shut up in her room at Cremona, Angela added to her penances of reparation, and spent even longer hours in prayer when she thought of the dead and the dying. She answered a question to those who feared to lose her because of her ever failing bodily strength, saying : " I am not afraid to die. I only tremble at one thought—the thought of the Judgment which terrified such men as Jerome, Arsenius and Hilarion. But I hope that Our Saviour will take pity on my soul, which He created in His own image, and redeemed with His Precious Blood." She was not going to die then. She was cured suddenly, and rose from her bed

with a sigh, crying: "I have only seen from afar the heaven for which I have longed. God has not thought me worthy of it." She set off on a pilgrimage to the 'Sacro Monte' at Varallo, where in 1481 Bd Bernardino Caimi of Milan, a Friar Minor of the Observance, had erected a series of chapels or 'stations', depicting the Holy Places of Palestine and incidents in the life of Our Lord, where pilgrims could gain the indulgences if they were unable to visit the Holy Land. Here Angela, recalling her own pilgrimage to Jerusalem, gave thanks for her recovery of health.

Peace was restored to Italy in 1529, and with it Angela was able to return to Brescia. Two years later, almost forty years after her vision, she laid the foundations of the Order which was to embody an actual realization of the vision. Twelve Franciscan tertiaries of Brescia placed themselves under her direction for the carrying out of her purpose. St Ursula appeared to her promising to be her protectress, and so Angela called the new Order "The Company of St Ursula". November 25, 1535, is considered the date of its inauguration—three years later still. Even then, it was a single group of Franciscan tertiaries who met together only for spiritual exercises and for their work of education. It was not until four years after Angela's death that Pope Paul III approved the Rule of the new institute. Finally, it was St Charles Borromeo who, in 1582, got Gregory XIII to confirm the Ursuline Constitutions, establishing the Order with vows and all the usual externals of the religious life.

Only a great saint could have persevered so perfectly in obedience to a vision, while renouncing any step that might be traced to human impatience. What a patron she is for those who need an education in the renouncement of hurry! For the last five years of her life she had formed her little company in the spirit which was to be theirs, a spirit so Franciscan and yet, like most off-shoots from the parent stem of the Franciscan Order, so original.

Then, having told her daughters that it had been revealed to her that her Order should last to the end of the world, she died most calmly, uttering the Holy Name of Jesus, on January 27, 1540. Her body is still incorrupt, and rests in a chapel of the church of St Afra at Brescia, clothed in the habit of the Third Order of St Francis, and holding the staff which had been her companion on pilgrimages. She was beatified by Clement XIII in 1768, and canonized by Pius VII in 1807. Her feast is observed as a double by the Universal Church on May 31.

This is the slightest of sketches of a great foundress—a sketch drawn entirely from the tertiary point of view. It may help to throw a new light on the tertiary vocation—pointing clearly to that tremendous *patience* which should dignify the work of the least Franciscan who knows that he or she labours for eternity, and that with God there is no such thing as being pressed for time—the heroism of the unheroic. Patience—the layman's chance for heroism. Patience, which dignifies the poor and the apostle, distinguishing them from the unlucky and the philanthropist. Patience, which is so eternal that it is never slow or laggard or inert, but is ever present and attentive to its purpose with equal courage and humility.

St Angela waited fifty years for the fulfilment of her vocation. And yet, if ever again we stand on the shore of Lago di Garda and see the silver streak of a motor boat cleaving the calm blue water at an incredible speed, we shall think of St Angela who wasted no time.

BD HIPPOLYTUS GALANTINI (1565-1620)

By the middle of the sixteenth century an eloquent preacher could be almost certain that there would be not even standing room in a big church, once news got round a town that he would appear in the pulpit on this or that date. It had been due largely to sermons that the traditional faith of Europe had been undermined, and heresy of one species or another had taken the place of Catholicism as the established form of religion. So there arose a great band of preachers, trained to expound the Faith in a way that could be grasped by simple, uneducated people, as well as by the critical intelligentsia. This was the era of St Peter of Alcantara, St Felix of Cantalice, and many other famous Franciscan preachers. When the Franciscan Martyrs of Gorcum were watering the ground of Holland with their blood, preparing the way for the return of Catholicism in that country, down in Italy, in the city of Florence, a child of eight was preaching to other children. He had begun to do so at the age of five. His father, Filippo Galantini, was a weaver. Little Ippolito ran after preachers just like a boy of our own day runs after film stars. He had a passion for sermons, and listened rapturously to them, moreover, he remembered what he heard, and later on would entertain his small friends by clever imitations of some well-known preacher. They enjoyed watching their companion standing up by a mile-stone or a wayside-shrine, and clapped their hands and shouted " Bravo ! " when he had finished putting things in their own familiar way in the always vivid *lingua toscana*. They craned their necks at him, just as did their grown-up relations at any great preacher who had been billed to appear in Santa Croce, the Annunziata, Santa Maria Novella, or Ognissanti. Ippolito was so absorbed in his subject that his interest was infectious. He *made* the children listen. He insisted on their realizing the wonders of the Faith, God's immensity and goodness, the awfulness of sin, the splendours of heaven, and the valour of the saints. These things were *true* ! Darting glances at them from his black eyes and gesticulating with his eloquent Italian hands, he held them spell-bound until they were shouted for by their parents, or until hunger spoke louder than Ippolito.

He did not merely preach sermons, he revelled in the catechism classes given by the Jesuit priests at their church of San Giovannino. In 1574, when he was nine years old, he made his first Communion. By this time he had begun to be as in love with listening as he had been with speaking. He was absorbed in his new discovery that he could commune with God, and that God would preach to him, silently, in his own heart. He longed to join some religious order, wondering if he would ever become one of those grave Dominicans who paced the cool cloisters of San Marco and Santa Maria Novella in their white habits and black cloaks. Then came the thought that perhaps he would find his vocation with one or other branch of the Friars Minor which had churches in and around Florence—Ognissanti, San Salvatore al Monte, Santa Croce, or up on the hill at Fiesole. But his father needed him at home to help with the looms and earn a livelihood.

If the childish passion for preaching was quenched in the new discovery of prayer, it revived as Ippolito began to understand the life of grace. He would leave his home in the Via Palazzuolo, not far from the Franciscan church of Ognissanti, and watch the children playing in the streets. He could not bear to see them ignorant of the life of the spirit, and by the time that he was twelve years

old he had made himself responsible for gathering together neglected children—not to preach to them, for he understood now that a preacher needed more than the wish to preach—but to teach them their catechism, take them to Mass and to receive the Sacraments. The then Archbishop of Florence, Cardinal Alessandro dei Medici, had just issued a decree enforcing the teaching of the catechism in his diocese, and had appointed one of his priests, Don Jacopo Ansaldi, to see that these instructions were carried out. It was Don Jacopo who realized already that Ippolito was no ordinary boy and appointed him master of Christian doctrine at the church of Santa Lucia sul Prato. This youthful teacher found other boys of his own age to help him. They must have looked a queer little group, Ippolito and his friends, with their flock of smaller, poorer children, kneeling, as we may visualize them, before the dim gold and blue glories of Our Lady's shrine in the church called Santissima Annunziata, which St Aloysius loved. It is more than probable that these two boys, who belonged to such different social worlds—the one a nobleman, the other the son of a weaver—would have come across each other, for both were in Florence together and of practically the same age.

It continued, this unboyish movement of his. It did not die away as many such boyish undertakings do, in a year or two. Something bound Ippolito and his helpers together. Perhaps they followed him into the Third Order of St Francis which he joined when he was quite young, for there is sufficient evidence that he was clothed with the habit in the church of Ognissanti, which must have been his usual place of worship, since it was quite close to his home. By degrees this group of devout boys grew into a quasi-community, whose members, while living in their own homes and earning their livings in one way of another, met on certain days to kindle in the hearts of children a new zeal for the interests of God and of souls. Those who had never been to school found that these youths did not use long words and that they were patient. In carnival time, when Florence went mad-drunk with folly, irresponsible with the time-honoured opportunity for exuberance, the school was filled with the shouts of the children who were encouraged to have a carnival in their own way, safe from the leering dangers in the streets.

At the age of seventeen, Ippolito was appointed director of what was known as the Compagnia di Santa Lucia, which he reorganized completely. This brought him into closer contact with his fellow citizens, for it was a widespread parochial lay association. He launched an active campaign of teaching, and his personality seems to have been so remarkable that more and more persons joined this confraternity. It is easy to understand that his youth and social status aroused jealousy, with the result that, after some years, Ippolito felt he must resign his office. The Compagnia di Santa Lucia was handed over to some devout women who concentrated on teaching girls, and Ippolito himself accepted the post of guardian of a similar organization which had been started at the Franciscan church of Ognissanti. He did not worry about worldly success: he was concerned only with the needs of human beings who were part of the Mystical Body of Christ—the one great Crucified. The poor, the sick, those in prisons, as well as untaught children and the ignorant, became the objects of his care. In 1590 there came a terrible famine in the cities of Bologna, Urbino and Modena. Ippolito roused the nobles and merchants of Florence to go and feed Christ's hungry in His poor—many of whom had fled to Tuscany—just as he had infected the children with his own enthusiasm when he preached by the roadside many years before.

Although by this time he was the friend of bishops and princes, he kept his childlike dependence on those wiser than himself, and did nothing without advice and direction. A child's innocence still shone in his eyes. He thought little of his own ideas and mistrusted himself. Like a boy who saves every halfpenny to buy some desired object, Ippolito saved all he could—by stinting himself—to lavish it on the needy.

Once again, jealousy crept in and Ippolito had to give up his post as director of the Compagnia dei Ognissanti. He found a new sphere of work at the church of San Domenico in Palazzuolo, but did not remain there very long. His friendship with the Cardinal Archbishop, Alessandro dei Medici, led to his being put in charge of the Oratorio dei Bini, but even this official recognition of a wonderful apostolate did not prevent criticism in high places.

A great spiritual revival had taken place in Florence by this time, largely due to the influence of the Cardinal Archbishop, who was a very different character from many other members of his powerful family. Alessandro dei Medici was a friend of St Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, and often sought the advice of this holy Carmelite nun. It is more than likely that Ippolito visited her, and that he would have known that other Florentine saint, Catherine Ricci, who was also his contemporary.

He nearly died about this time, and after his recovery the doctors sent him to some baths near Pisa, where he combined his cure with preaching a mission in one of the nearby churches. Then his father died, and he was left to support his mother and family. Many debts had to be paid, but hard though he worked at his looms there seemed little hope of ever obtaining financial security. A miracle took place—a friend, on hearing of Ippolito's difficulties, turned up and paid all the money that was owing. Ippolito was freed from further worry.

By the end of the sixteenth century this son of a weaver had arrived at very much the same position in Florence as that of St Philip Neri in Rome—an apostle of youth. People realized at last that he was engaged in a unique work of Christian education, and wanted to help him. Ippolito told them that he must have a chapel belonging to the congregation of which he was the recognized head, and that it must be located in a part of the city where it would be accessible to the majority of the poorer classes. Eventually he decided on a site behind the church of Ognissanti. The new chapel was opened on the feast of St Francis, October 4, 1603. The *compagnia* was reorganized and new rules drawn up. Pope Clement VII gave his blessing, and by his wish it was renamed the Congregation of St Francis for Christian Doctrine. But most people continued to refer to it as the " Compagnia d'Ippolito ". The Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand I, became its special protector, and the Cardinal Archbishop continued to do all he could to encourage its apostolate.

As Miss Nesta de Robeck says in her life of Bd Ippolito Galantini: " The rule to be observed was that of the Third Order, and beyond this the whole association presents to us all the aspects of a well-run school and club. Ippolito could not admit that a man ever finishes with learning, and there were classes for every age from the youngest to the oldest." [1] She also tells us that " the most generally used textbook was the Christian doctrine of Cardinal Bellarmine, and the teaching in the Compagnia was a complete course of Christian education. Every state of life was considered; boys learnt their duties as sons, fathers, and citizens, and the

[1] *Among the Franciscan Tertiaries*, p. 214.

virtues advocated by Ippolito in dealing with other men open visions of a Christian society where charity, justice, and peace are indeed the ruling powers. It was an admirable spiritual training, full of wisdom and balance, and of an exceedingly high standard. Each one was taught, first of all, to consider the greatness of God, and from that all the other virtues and duties were deduced." [1]

Ippolito had an intense devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and it must have astonished people at that date to see him receiving Holy Communion almost daily. Every year the Congregation of St Francis organized the Forty Hours' devotion in their chapel, generally at Pentecost. Carnival time was devoted to prayer and good works. On Shrove Tuesday Ippolito gathered together the poorest of the poor, and entertained them to dinner. " They were the honoured guests, honoured because in their need they represented the Poverty of Our Lord, and the nobles of Florence held it as a privilege to help to serve them." [2]

Miss de Robeck tells us that until recent times this custom continued, saying that " many of us can remember it well. Outside, perhaps, was a cold February afternoon, but within all was cheerful. The tables were set in the way made familiar by so many Renaissance pictures, and there was much fine old plate and majolica and table cloths with embroidered ends. There were huge loaves of bread and many flasks of wine, and the steaming dishes smelt exceedingly good, and there was no doubt as to the guests' enjoyment. Many people were there helping who bore the same names as those who had helped Ippolito, and he and St Francis looked down from the walls at the entertainment of their friends. Alas ! that the high prices after the [First World] War and the reduced state of the *Compagnia* brought this old custom to an end." [3]

There was hardly anything that this saintly tertiary did not do to make peace and promote charity in Florence. He organized the visitation of prisons, found nurses for hospitals, and the latter work resulted in a friendship with St Camillus of Lellis, the founder of the Clerks Regular of the Infirm, who is now recognized as the special patron of the sick and of hospitals. One typical feature of the apostolate of the Compagnia was an annual picnic in the country, generally at Fiesole, where the friars of San Francesco joined in the harmless merriment. Vespers would be sung in the friary church, and then, more often than not, there would be a *Sacra Rapprezentazione*, otherwise a mystery play, easy to perform in a country where most men and women are born actors, as St Francis himself knew when he and his companions tried to re-enact what took place in the stable at Bethlehem in the cave at Greccio. " Ippolito always aimed at sanctifying the whole of life, not in refusing it ; and if his ragamuffins from the street, his workmen and students could learn by acting themselves, every facility for it was given them. Nothing about the Compagnia was sad or dreary or dull, and that because it was intensely Christian." [4]

After his death, many people attested to the miracles he had performed, and now many he had cured by supernatural gifts of healing. Other extraordinary graces were granted him—visions of the future, but it was seldom that he ever spoke of them. His spiritual life was hidden with God, so far as he could do so. Sometimes he found relaxation, if one may so describe it, in pilgrimages to Camaldoli or Mount Alvernia, or further away to Assisi and Loreto. Towards the end of his life he suffered from an abscess in his chest, also from deafness, but he

[1] *Among the Franciscan Tertiaries*, p. 215.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 217.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 218.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 219.

continued to be the lay apostle of Florence. He died on Good Friday, 1620, and from the moment the news of his death was broadcast, hundreds of people were begging for some relic.

" Such was the life of this Florentine workman who became the counsellor and friend of princes, the apostle of his own city, and of something more, for Ippolito Galantini may well be considered one of the pioneers of all those good works which aim at the right education of the people. Throughout his life he fought against ignorance, and his talents and strength of mind and body were consumed in the strife. The Compagnia di San Francesco now has sadly dwindled, and the church in Via Palazzuolo is often shut. There it stands, however, and there Ippolito lies in his own home. But the rooms which once were full of his boys are now almost empty. Portraits of him and his successors still hang around the big hall, but few know his story, or penetrate into the adjoining library. One large room is now a museum with some fine pictures and *objets d'art* given at one time or another to the Compagnia. There are two lovely Donatello heads, a splendid banner painting of St Francis, and needlework altar frontal, and there stand too the ewers and basins and plates which used to serve for the Cena dei Vanchettoni. We do not go there, however, only for these, but to bring a tribute of homage to this great man, who had left us such a memory of what one layman can do for his fellows. He was beatified in 1825." [1]

Bd Hippolytus Galantini is commemorated as a semi-double in the Roman-Seraphic Missal and Breviary, with two other confessors, on March 20. In the dioceses of Florence, Siena, Pisa, Lucca, etc., his feast is observed as a double on the same date.

THE TERTIARY MARTYRS IN JAPAN (1597, 1624-1632)

In 1542, the same year in which St Francis Xavier landed at Goa in India, three Portuguese Franciscan friars, Fathers Anthony a Nota, Francis Zaimoto, and Anthony Peixata, were cast ashore on Japan after a storm at sea. They appear to have remained in these hitherto un-Christianized islands for several years. No record of their missionary activities has been discovered. All that we know is that when they left they took three natives with them, whom St Francis Xavier instructed at Goa, where they were baptized by the Franciscan bishop, John of Albuquerque, in 1548. The following year these three Japanese converts returned to their own country with St Francis and two other Jesuits, who, having learned enough of the language, began to preach to the people. St Francis went back to Goa in 1552, and sent other Jesuits to Japan. Later on they were joined by Franciscans, Augustinians and Dominicans. The first Friar Minor who settled in Japan was a lay brother, Fra Juan Pobre of Zamora, who arrived from China in 1584. The following year Pope Gregory XIII issued a brief *Ex pastorali officio* which forbade members of religious orders other than the Society of Jesus to engage in missionary work in Japan. In 1587 the government gave orders that the Jesuits were to be banished; however, some of them continued their apostolate in secret. News of what was happening reached the Spanish Governor of the Philippines. He sent a Dominican as his envoy to the Japanese dictator, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, in the hope of obtaining permission for the missionaries to be left in peace.

This Friar Preacher, Fr Juan Cobos, was murdered on the island of Formosa

[1] *Among the Franciscan Tertiaries*, pp. 225-6.

on his return voyage to Manila, but before his death he had written to the governor of the Philippines to arrange that ten Franciscans should be sent to Japan, despite the papal injunction that only Jesuits could work in the country. The excuse was that a brief of Sixtus V issued in 1586 authorized the Discalced Friars Minor in the Philippines to preach the Christian religion throughout the Far East, wherever there were pagans to be converted.

On May 21, 1593, Fr Peter Baptist and three other friars sailed for Japan. They managed to obtain permission to build a church, convent and school at Miyako, now called Kyoto. Prejudice against the missionaries was broken down by the establishment of a hospital, most of its patients being lepers. Within a few years the Franciscan community had been increased to more than a dozen friars and students. All seemed to be going well until a Spanish warship, *San Felipe*, sailed into the harbour of Urado in October 1596. She had been badly damaged in a severe storm at sea, which took place at the time of a great earthquake, and had to be grounded. Orders were given by the Governor, Hideyoshi, that the precious cargo must be confiscated. The Spaniards were furious, and hinted that if such action was taken, their King might have his revenge by invading Japan. This frightened Hideyoshi, who ordered the arrest of every Christian missionary in Japan. At Miyako, the Franciscan priests, lay brothers, and twelve tertiaries were imprisoned. The same fate befell one priest and three tertiaries at Osaka. Other Franciscans living at Nagasaki were kept in prison, but sent back to the Philippines later on.

In December 1596 the captives at Miyako heard that they were to suffer the death-penalty. On January 3, twenty-four were taken out into the public square and branded as criminals, each having part of his left ear cut off. Then, in the intense cold of mid winter, they were made to walk to Nagasaki, a journey which took them nearly a month. On February 5, 1597, the twenty-six protomartyrs of Japan were roped to crosses and their bodies transfixed with lances. The executions took place on a hill outside the city walls, which became known as the Holy Hill, or the Hill of the Martyrs. The story is told that on their way the victims sang the *Benedictus* and that the children were as gay as if they were going to a festival. Few people know better how to keep a festival than the Japanese. The crosses were set up against the sunset.

Here are some brief facts about the tertiary martyrs. First there was MICHAEL COSAQUI, at one time the maker of crossbows. After their conversion, he and his wife turned their home into an orphanage, and helped to make many other converts. It is related that he loved to assist at midnight Matins in the friary church, and that he spent long hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. He also helped the friars as an interpreter and catechist. His eleven year-old son, THOMAS COSAQUI, who was a tertiary Mass-server, suffered martyrdom with his father.

THOMAS DANKI had been converted by the Jesuits as a young merchant at Miyako, but later on gave up the practice of his religion. He was brought back by the Franciscans, and his wife and children were baptized. He became a most devout brother of the Third Order, spending as much time as he could spare in nursing the sick, and teaching the Faith to children. His street-preaching aroused the hatred of the pagan bonzes.

ANTHONY DOYNAN was the son of a Japanese mother and Chinese father, both pious Christians. He joined the Third Order as soon as the Franciscans arrived at Nagasaki. His intense devotion to Our Lady suggested that when he grew up

he would do good work as a catechist, but he laid down his life for God at the age of fourteen.

FRANCIS FAHELANTI of Miyako was a shoemaker before his conversion. His love for the Little Poor Man of Assisi was so great that he took the name of Francis when he was confirmed in 1586, and used it in preference to his name of Cajus. More than once he had begged for the grace of martyrdom, and it was granted him.

GABRIEL IZE of Duisco came from a noble family, and had been a page of the emperor as a boy. His baptism had to be kept secret for fear of protests and persecution. When it was revealed, his parents were horrified, but not even their tears could induce him to return to paganism. He became a pious tertiary, and made many converts by his preaching, among whom, later on, was his own father, who also joined the Third Order. Gabriel's goodness won for him the name of " The Saint of Miyako ".

Also a native of Miyako was FRANCIS KICHI, whose mental gifts and hard work resulted in his becoming one of the leading physicians in Japan. His conversion was due largely to the contacts with Catholic soldiers during the war waged by the Japanese and the Koreans. Both he and his wife joined the Third Order after their baptisms. It is recorded that he was such a beloved physician that he was often called " the angel of mercy ". He translated Catholic books into Japanese, and paid for their publication. He was an old man when he was crucified.

BONAVENTURE (or Ventura), likewise a native of Miyako, had a Christian father and a pagan mother. Baptized as a baby, he fell under the influence of his mother, and spent several years serving in a pagan temple. It was the newly-arrived Franciscans who brought him back to the Faith. He caused a sensation by appearing at their church clothed in sackcloth, with a rope round his neck. He became a new man, joined the Third Order, and took on the duties of a catechist, winning many souls by his example and by his words.

MATHIAS OF MIYAKO was a true son of St Francis, who nursed the sick in the hospital which had been founded by the friars; hard on himself, but sparing nothing for the sick and the dying.

JOHN QUIZIA (or Quizuja) took a long time before he was convinced finally that he must become a Christian. After his baptism he was clothed as a tertiary and allowed to preach as a catechist. He also worked as a nurse in the hospital at Miyako.

COSMAS RAQUISA (or Raquaja) belonged to a noble family which had lost its fortune. Cosmas was forced to earn his living by arrow-making. It is not recorded how or when he became a Catholic. As a tertiary he was employed in teaching and catechizing.

It was JOACHIM SAQUIOR'S wife who, when he was in danger of death, called in a catechist to baptize him. After what seemed to be a miraculous recovery, he helped the Franciscans at Osaka to build a new friary. He joined the Third Order, and, with his wife's consent, took up his abode with the friars. His close contact with them, not to mention his penitential way of living, singled him as one of the first victims of the persecution of the Japanese Christians.

Not much is known about the early life of PETER SEQUEXEIN, except that he was a farmer at Miyako, and one of the first converts made by the Franciscans. We are told that as a tertiary brother he was remarkable for his spirit of obedience, and he brought many into the Church both by his example and his prayers.

PAUL SUZUKI (or Susuqui) belonged to a different social status—an intellectual

who took a long time before he was convinced of the truth of Christianity. His life as a member of the Third Order was as exemplary as his former life had been dissolute. He spent many hours daily in prayer, and his bodily penances were on a heroic scale. His house at Miyako was turned into a hospital, which he directed himself. For the benefit of the missionaries he compiled a Japanese grammar and dictionary. He wrote catechisms and pamphlets for the benefit of converts. Paul Suzuki, like Gabriel Ize, became known as " The Saint of Miyako ".

The Ibarki family produced three tertiary martyrs—LEO KARASUMARU, who looked after St Anne's Hospital at Miyako, his nine year-old brother LEO, and his nephew PAUL. All these seventeen Japanese tertiaries were staunch Catholics, helping the Franciscan missionaries in every possible way. All were beatified by Pope Urban VIII in 1627, and canonized by Pope Pius IX on June 8, 1862.

There is a tradition that there was a heavy dew and a blood red sunset on the evening after the crucifixion of the twenty-six martyrs of Nagasaki. Fuji-san, the snow-capped volcano that is almost the symbol of Japan, had never looked down on such flowers as those that drooped on the twenty-six crosses to which they were tied. From those few, planted on that hill outside the city walls, and watered by the dew of their own blood, how many more were to spring, as gay, as gracious, as everlasting.

The story is told that after his martyrdom, Fra Pedro Bautista Blásquez, the second envoy sent to Japan by the Governor of the Philippines, who had founded the Franciscan missions in that country, was seen by many, celebrating Mass in the church of the friars at Nagasaki. Kneeling beside him as server was the fourteen-year-old boy Anthony Doynan, dressed neither in his azure-blue kimono nor a brown tertiary habit, but in the white robe of a martyr.

Hideyoshi, who had been responsible for the banishment of the missionaries in Japan and the crucifixion of the twenty-six Christians at Nagasaki, died in 1599. His successor, Tokugawa Ieyasu, decided that it would be diplomatic to be on friendly terms with the Spaniards in the Philippine Islands. Christians were persecuted no longer, and by 1601 the Franciscans had seven friaries in Japan. However, this happy state of affairs came to an end in December 1613, when Ieyasu ordered that all missionaries were to be expelled and their churches destroyed. This step was largely due to the arrival of Dutch and English merchants, who roused Japanese antagonism against all Europeans. Between 1617 and 1679 innumerable Franciscan friars were martyred. Throughout the persecution of Christians, which was at its worst between 1617 and 1632, three hundred and fifty children of St Francis belonging to the First and Third Orders laid down their lives for the Faith.

On September 10, 1622, two Japanese tertiaries were among the five martyrs—LEO SATSUMA, a catechist, and LUCY FREITAS, a valiant noble lady of eighty years, whom people called " The Mother of the Friars ". Lucy went to her death wearing her tertiary habit and clasping a crucifix. " Have a brave heart ! " she cried to those around. " Let women show a courage that will confound the pagans ! " The soldiers struck her, tore off her clothes, took away the crucifix, but she went on singing the *Magnificat*. She died at the stake, praying for her persecutors as the flames crept up around her body. Leo Satsuma also ended his mortal life by fire.

Two years later, on August 24, 1624, LOUIS BABA, a Japanese Brother of the

Third Order, was one of the three Franciscans who were tied to stakes and burned by fire. Eleven more children of St Francis suffered martyrdom on August 17, 1627, eight of whom were tertiaries. FRANCIS CUFIOYE had been a hard working catechist for many years. MARTIN GOMEZ had given shelter to many missionaries and persecuted Christians, and eventually he was taken prisoner and condemned to death. Little has been recorded about MICHAEL KIESAIMON (Chizaimon), except that he was a devout and charitable Brother of Penance. LUKE KIEMON (Chiemon), like Martin Gomez, was arrested finally because he had given shelter to missionaries who were on the run. LOUIS MATZUO might have escaped the death penalty had he not been so courageous in professing his Faith openly on every possible occasion. THOMAS VO went to prison and had the death sentence passed upon him merely because he had hidden priests. CASPAR and MARY VAZ were a married couple whose house at Nagasaki was a refuge for any persecuted Christians. Both were thrown into prison. Caspar was burned alive, and Mary had her head cut off.

On September 7 that same year three more Japanese tertiaries suffered martyrdom at Nagasaki—THOMAS TZUGI, a secular priest, ALOYSIUS MAQUI, and his stepson, JOHN MAQUI—the last two on the charge that they had harboured Christians who had been condemned to death. All three were burned alive.

Fifteen members of the First and Third Orders of St Francis laid down their lives for the Faith on September 8, 1628, thirteen of them being Japanese tertiaries. JOHN TOMACHI and his four sons—DOMINIC, MICHAEL, THOMAS and PAUL (the last a boy of seven)—were imprisoned because they were known to be pious Catholics and members of the Third Order. The father had to watch his sons being beheaded, and then he offered his own neck to the sword.

LOUIS NIFAZI, at one time a pagan soldier, was beheaded with his two sons, FRANCIS aged five and DOMINIC aged two. Both these boys, even the baby Dominic, had been given the habit of the Third Order, such being the custom in that time of persecution.

MATTHEW ALVAREZ was a Japanese sculptor who had adopted a Portuguese name. Together with his friend, MICHAEL JAMADA, he was imprisoned on the usual charge of giving shelter to missionaries. Both were burned alive at the stake. Jamada's three year-old son, LAWRENCE, was killed on the same day. He was another baby tertiary.

LOUISA OF OMURA and her son RAMON, who had been imprisoned for a long time because they had kept priests hidden in their house, were two more members of the Third Order who suffered martyrdom on Our Lady's Birthday, 1628. All the above, and many more Japanese martyrs who died between 1617 and 1632, were beatified by Pope Pius IX on July 27, 1867.

There were other Japanese Franciscan tertiaries besides those mentioned already who have been beatified, including JOHN OF IKENDA and MATHIAS FIASCHI, who laid down their lives on September 12, 1622. In the following December fifty Christians were burned alive near Tokyo, among whom was the tertiary FARAMONDO, a nephew of the shogun. It is reckoned that there were over two million martyrs in Japan during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, of whom about three hundred and fifty were members of the Third Order of St Francis.

Despite constant persecution, missionaries found their way into Japan. The last known Franciscan martyr was Fra ALFONSO OF ST JOSEPH. He was murdered at sea in 1679. By 1715 only one Catholic priest was left in the islands, Fr Sidotti, who died in prison.

From 1638 until about the middle of the nineteenth century Japan closed its doors to all Europeans, except the Dutch, who were admitted to the ports only for trading purposes. It was not until 1846 that Catholic mission work was resumed, when Gregory XVI made Japan an apostolic vicariate under the care of the Paris Foreign Missions Society. The pioneer missionaries discovered about twenty thousand Catholics who, as the descendants of the matryrs, had kept the treasure of the Faith, baptized and taught their children from generation to generation, who refused to have anything to do with Protestants, and who—most touching detail—had inserted the name of St Francis into the *Confiteor*. The Franciscans returned to Japan in 1907, where they are now very numerous. In 1953 there were reckoned to be 171,785 Catholics in Japan, with 28,428 catechumens, and 483 churches and chapels.

Near Tokyo there is a large Catholic hospital in charge of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary—a truly Japanese hospital, full of the delights that must minister to the spirit, lest it fall sick for lack of beauty. Goldfish glitter in their tanks, and bright birds flutter in an aviary, while of course there are flowers everywhere, arranged by Japanese nurses; for flower arrangement is an art every Japanese girl learns at school. It is the most modern of hospitals. One wonders what Bd Lucy Freitas, Bd Mary Vaz, and Bd Louisa of Omura, if they look down from heaven, think of the Franciscan nun house-surgeon in her sterilized operating clothes, with a steel instrument in her rubber gloved hands? And do the four boy tertiary martyrs, Bd Paul Tomachi and his three brothers, laugh with joy to see Japanese children cared for by these smiling white nuns?

When we meditate on the saints of the Third Order we must never forget these Japanese martyrs, because when we have something to suffer for God they will communicate to us as much of their secret as we need to know. They remind us too that the Third Order is world-wide, embracing all nations as does the Church itself. There is a spiritual thrill in the realization that Japan gave more martyrs to the Franciscan Order than any other country in the world. "Grant us also, Thy servants, some part and fellowship with Thy martyrs. . . ." We follow those words in our missals, and it is in the spirit of our Order that we should follow them also in deed.

CHAPTER VIII

COUNTER-REFORMATION MYSTICS (1585-1791)

INTRODUCTION

STRANGE as it may appear at first sight, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced a large number of Franciscan tertiaries who achieved the heights of sanctity, even if not many of them have been beatified and canonized.[1] In this chapter we deal with four of those whose cultus has been sanctioned by the Church—all of them being what is best described as 'mystics', in the sense that they did not devote themselves to an active apostolate. What they have in common is that they merely sought to be hidden and unknown, so that they could concentrate on prayer and penance. Two were Italian, one German and the other French.

The most curious feature of seventeenth-century Franciscanism is the extraordinary appeal the Third Order had for the aristocracy in the still Catholic countries of Europe. In Flanders lords and ladies became so numerous in the Third Order that poor people began to be excluded, and the time came when they were admitted only with a recommendation from one of the 'upper classes', lest they should lower the social tone of the local confraternities. Fr Agostino Gemelli explains this odd way of treating the Franciscan passion for poverty as follows: "When we study more deeply the Franciscan literature of the times, and read the devotional works written by spiritual directors for the men of position and great ladies who were their penitents, we cannot help observing how Franciscan idealism, taking advantage of the sympathy with which it was viewed by those classes farthest removed from its spirit, gained the same hold over the seventeenth-century nobility that it had had formerly over the medieval *bourgeoisie*. For, though the structure of society may change, human nature and the message of St Francis remain the same." [2]

Still, one cannot help feeling that the attraction for the Third Order among the aristocracy may have been largely a pious convention, and one wonders how many of those noble tertiaries observed the strict letter of the Rule of Nicholas IV, to which they were bound after their profession. It was severe enough to make even the most devout man or woman think twice before being clothed with the habit and cord of the Third Order.

The Capuchins in particular found their way into castles and palaces, and became the favourite spiritual advisers of many a sovereign, prince and noble. They carried on what might be described as a political apostolate, trying to restore peace between nations.[3] In the first half of the seventeenth century the friars of

[1] Cf. Henri Bremond, *Histoire du sentiment religieux en France*, especially Vols. II, VII, VIII (Paris, 1914-29).

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

[3] Fr Cuthbert, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, chap. VIII: 'An Adventure into Politics'.

all three families had fought corrupt paganism by preaching Christian humanism, developing the cheerful optimism of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Franciscan idealism. Now they found themselves faced with a new heresy—Jansenism—and once again they appealed to the Love of God and the compassion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as antidotes to the fatalism and rigorism of the Jansenists.[1] A new meaning was given to the old message " Pax et Bonum ", above all when dealing with Calvinists and Lutheran heretics. Countless treatises on the spiritual life were published by Franciscans during the seventeenth century, above all in France. Never has the level of Franciscan scholarship been so high, for there were many other learned friars besides Luke Wadding, the historian.

The mystical life was encouraged in many ways, above all by retreats for tertiaries and other layfolk. Within the several reformed bodies of the Friars Minor of the Observance, which by the middle of the seventeenth century were practically independent families, though subject to the Minister-General of the Observants, there was a persistent urge to form little communities far away from towns and cities, which in Italy became known as *retiri.* In 1664 the General-Chapter of the Order decreed that there should be at least one such Retreat House in every province.

By way of contrast to the extreme laxity of observance in some of the older established Poor Clare convents, there were other communities of Poor Clares and of the enclosed Third Order Regular where the nuns were living lives of penance and holiness.

It is doubtful if any of the previous centuries produced as many artists who loved to paint pictures of St Francis and the saints of his Order, even if they depicted them, more often than not, with a skull, cross and instruments of penance.[2] " The idyllic spirit of the early Franciscans was as far removed from the tormented soul of the seventeenth century as their churches, with wide spanning arches, ornate marble altars, and elaborate choir-stalls, were removed from the early Franciscan churches with their simple lines and well-proportioned naves." [3]

The Third Order endured many trials during the eighteenth century, due to the half free-thinking, half epicurean influence of society in general. Religion was at a low ebb in all Catholic countries, especially in France and Austria. The erastian policy of the Emperor Joseph II of Austria encouraged even the other rulers of Europe to interfere in the government of the Church, especially the religious orders, whose liberty of action was curtailed. In Spain the Friars Minor were not allowed to hold General Chapters without the express permission of " His Most Catholic Majesty ". In Tuscany, the Grand Dukes forbade the stricter communities of Friars to wear wooden clogs, and the use of leather sandals was made obligatory! Friaries in many countries were suppressed or founded in the most autocratic manner at the whim of the reigning sovereign.

Pope Benedict XIV (1740-58) defended the Franciscans as much as lay in his power. He encouraged the erection of the Stations of the Cross, ordered that the Court Preachers at Rome should always be Capuchins, and helped to spread devotion to the Immaculate Conception. Clement XIV (1769-74) had been a Conventual Franciscan in his younger days, and he tried his best to defend the

[1] Cf. Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism;* Bremond, *Histoire du sentiment religieux en France,* Vols. II, IV; Knox, *Enthusiasm,* Chaps. IX, X.

[2] Leone Bracaloni, O.F.M., *L'Arte Francescana* (Todi, 1924), Chap. IX : ' L'epoca della Riforma.'

[3] Gemelli, *op. cit.,* p. 167.

religious orders, including the Friars Minor, whose houses were being dissolved in France, Austria, Bavaria and Poland.

Tertiaries in Italy could take their choice of many famous Franciscan preachers who were travelling around the country converting sinners by their eloquent sermons. The most popular among them was St Leonard of Port Maurice, whose influence extended to all classes of society, but there were others of almost equal fame.[1]

It was an age of sinners, yet it produced saints. For instance, there was the humble Capuchin laybrother, St Crispin of Viterbo; the Alcantarin laybrother, Bd Giles-Mary of St Joseph, not to mention the great Franciscan ascetical writers and preachers, such as St John Joseph of the Cross, Bd Leopold of Gaiche, Bd Angelo of Acri, Bd Thomas of Cori, and Bd Theophilus of Corte—all of whom were worthy fellow labourers with St Leonard of Port Maurice.[2] Besides St Mary Francis of the Five Wounds, whose story is told in this chapter, there were other women who rose to heights of sanctity in the Second or Third Orders of St Francis some of whom have had their cultus confirmed by the Church.

The Franciscan foreign missions carried on in spite of the persecutions which afflicted the Order in Europe. An amazing apostolate was maintained by the Italian and Spanish friars in China throughout the eighteenth century.[3] They were to be found also in Egypt, Abyssinia and Palestine. Overseas they were engaged in the evangelization of the Argentine, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. They were mainly responsible for planting the faith in California. It was Padre Junipero Serra who was the great missioner of the Pacific coast, and who founded San Francisco.[4]

But dark days were ahead: the anti-religious movement which had been smouldering throughout the eighteenth century, burst into flames with the French Revolution, and affected other countries in Europe. By 1798 most of the Franciscan friaries in Italy had been suppressed, and their communities disbanded. This persecution of religion in general affected the life of tertiaries, whether living in the world or in convents.

Such then was the background of the five Counter-Reformation tertiary mystics who have been grouped together in this chapter; each in his or her own way expressed the character of this era. The only way in which we can understand them is to see them on a canvas painted with dark thunder clouds and flashes of lightning: St Francis is beside them, but no longer is he God's troubadour, rather is he an emaciated figure, gazing at a skull and crossbones. He sings no message of peace and happiness in this world—the saintly Franciscans of the eighteenth century had no thoughts but for the world to come.

ST HYACINTHA MARISCOTTI (1585-1640)

HERE is the second child of a distinguished noble family in the Papal States whose ancestor, Marius the Scot, had settled in Italy at the time of Charlemagne, and

[1] *San Leonardo da Porto Maurizio, Prediche delle Missioni, con aggiunta di necrologi, lettere e documenti, a cura di P. Benedetto Innocenti* (Arezzo, 1929).

[2] B. Innocenti, 'Le Relazioni tra S. Leonardo da Porto Maurizio e Teofilo da Corte', in *Studi Francescani* (April-June, 1931).

[3] Marion Habig, O.F.M., *In Journeyings Often* (New York, 1953); Otto Maas, *Die Franziskanermissionen im Reiche der Mitte* (Weil, 1939).

[4] Cf. Leonhard Lemmens, *Geschichte der Franziskanermissionen* (Muenster W., 1929).

whose descendants had intermarried with the Conti, the Farnese, the Orsini, and with other Roman families.

St Hyacintha, otherwise known as Giacinta, was born in 1585 at Vignanello, a small walled-town a few miles north of Viterbo in the Papal States. She was the daughter of Marc-Antonio di Mariscotti and Ottavia Orsini. She was baptized by the Bishop of Civita Castellana, and given the name of Clarice. The first thing we know of her is reassuring. She did what other children have done: she fell into a well. Feeling herself falling, she did what quite ordinary Catholic children would do—prayed to Our Lady. And somehow she did not fall to the bottom, but was still at the brink when a servant heard her cries. Her early nineteenth-century biographer remarks that this did not make a lasting impression on Clarice, and that she was sent to school with the Third Order Franciscan nuns in their convent of San Bernardino at Viterbo, where her elder sister, Innocentia, was already a nun. It was in vain that the latter talked to her about the dangers and emptiness of the world. Clarice was much too frivolous and volatile to endure convent-life, and soon had to be sent home. It strikes one that the Mariscotti family began to think too early what this daughter ought to do and not to do, and did not remember that children rarely do what they are expected to do, and that beyond keeping them from actual harm, it is best to keep them happy rather than exhorted.

The psychological state of affairs becomes even clearer in the next picture. Her younger sister, Ortensia, was given in marriage before her—an unusual thing in those days. Now her biographer makes out that it was evil-natured of her to be jealous. It is surely quite obvious that once again the child was made to feel that she was not wanted, and that she bitterly resented the injustice, knowing herself mishandled. She stands out from the pages of Padre Flaminio Annibale's Italian life—best described as a set-piece of fireworks, lacking psychology as completely as it is possible for a biography to do—an unhappy tempestuous little figure. Ortensia had made a brilliant marriage with the Marchese Capirucchi. Her family smiled on their youngest daughter. And Clarice, with her beauty, stayed on in the old castle at Vignanello, and heard the servants whisper that she had been " left on the shelf ", and that nobody wanted *her* for a wife.

When she was nineteen—long past the usual marriageable age at that time—it had become unbearable, and she was, it is pretty clear, in the grip of that disease which besets the lonely and troubled—neurasthenia. Only in those days no one knew it by that name. Perhaps in sheer desperation Clarice had tried an extra dose of church-going to relieve her boredom, and that this gave her father sufficient justification in suggesting that she should be a nun. Anyway she agreed to this proposal. Thankful, Count Marc-Antonio gave her a magnificent send-off, and the nuns were probably too afraid of their noble patron, her father, to do other than accept his unwanted daughter with open arms and hope for the best. Perhaps having prayed so long with Innocentia for her ' conversion ', they readily believed their prayers had been heard—so they had, in no small measure, but not at that time.

It became clear that Sister Giacinta—as Clarice was now called—intended to live as a great lady who had chosen the cloister, and her father, thankful to have solved the domestic problem, shrugged his shoulders and saw to it that several rooms in the convent at Viterbo, which he may have held for the nuns, since the Rule forbade them to hold property in their own name, were finely furnished.

Sister Giacinta had her own cook, and ate alone. Her habit was of the finest cloth, and her veil of silk. The fact that she was professed the following year, and that the other nuns seem to have kept their Rule with reasonable fidelity, suggests that she only entered as a secular tertiary, while the rest of the community were living according to the Constitutions of the Third Order Regular. This is an adequate explanation of an otherwise contradictory state of affairs.[1] For Clarice was not a worldly woman living in a lax community. We are told that she was modest and chaste, and that no one even found a breath of suspicion to touch her on these grounds. Moreover, she was obedient to her parents—obedient with that kind of pride which is too proud to be a rebel, since there is always something vulgar in rebellion. Her fine rooms and fine habit were to soothe her dignity, not to attract visitors. And, if it is allowed to put a charitable construction on something done by a saint before her conversion, as we are exhorted to do for sinners, is it not possible that she had the neurasthenic's bad digestion and could not live on the beans and other coarse food of the Franciscan nuns? If, as we have suggested, she was merely living in the convent as an Oblate lived in a Benedictine abbey, there was no reason why she should not have her own servant and table, for these would have been allowed her had she become one of the oblate-community of the Tor de' Specchi in Rome, founded by St Francesca Romana.

The story that seems to set a *nihil obstat* on this suggestion that Sister Giacinta was living in a state of mental strain rather than sin, is the otherwise fantastic one of the visit of Ortensia, now a young married woman. She is said to have put a diamond ring on Giacinta's finger, which the latter tore off, and then fainted with jealousy. The story is mere melodrama until one takes it to pieces. Why should Ortensia offer her nun-sister a diamond ring? Was it not, to say the least, rather patronizing? And would not Giacinta's reaction be: "A diamond ring! Good God, do you think it is diamonds I am wanting? I have seen jewels enough in my own home. Do you really think this of me? Is there no one who understands that all I have ever wanted was to be taken seriously, and not regarded as a child with a twisted intention?" Then the hysterical fainting fit is easy to accept as a fact.

As one reads on in Padre Flaminio Annibale's turgid biography, one becomes more attached to this theory about Giacinta. The next thing one finds is what one expects to find, that she fell ill, and the doctors could make nothing of her disease. They seldom can today, when some bitter discomfort of the mind wears out and irritates the body. She was too ill to go to confession, and her confessor had to come to her. When he sees the splendour in which she lives, he, a poor Franciscan of the Observance, is shocked by it and says brusquely that

[1] The Council of Trent confirmed the Constitution of Boniface VIII, promulgated in 1298, which laid down that only persons of irreproachable life were to be allowed admission to convents of women, and only when there was a reasonable excuse approved by ecclesiastical authority. The Council further decreed that no nun might leave her enclosure without a written permit from her bishop. In 1566 St Pius V imposed enclosure on communities of the Third Order Regular, and defined the cases in which a professed nun might go out of her convent. But even in the first half of the seventeenth century there was little or no uniformity in the way in which these papal regulations were carried out. In the life of St Teresa of Avila we read of much visiting by relations and friends. We must not judge what went on at Viterbo by the current conventual arrangements of quite obsolete standardization. In many convents at that date it was common to have special quarters for 'lady boarders', and sometimes they were within the actual enclosure.

he cannot hear her confession in such surroundings. Perhaps he suspects, as the simple do by instinct, that this illness of hers is a very real illness, but *not*, as many people can instinctively perceive, a *bodily* disease ? Perhaps it is quite enough for him that Giacinta is a tertiary and is living in this splendour, for the Third Order Rule, even as late as the early seventeenth century, was a great deal stricter than it is today.

Then comes the piteous outburst from the depth of that lonely heart, now at breaking point with bodily weakness, mental strain and years of misery : " Father, is there no remedy for me ? Have I shut myself up in the cloister to lose my soul there ? Must I renounce every hope of salvation ? " You note that she does not say anything about breaking her Rule, which would be most heavily on her conscience if she had been a Regular tertiary.

The Friar Minor knows what to do with anyone who speaks to him in those words, and he promises that everything will be all right if she amends her ways. So poor Giacinta " broke her heart with tears "—but tears of relief that anyone had promised that everything would be all right, one fancies—" and promised amendment ". She did as her confessor bade her, put on a poor habit, went to the nuns, took the discipline in the refectory (where public penances were done), and begged their pardon with tears. Evidently she was soon well enough to do this : which is exactly what would happen after the relief of such an outburst if our theory is correct.

Then, again as one would have expected, she slipped back gradually into her old ways. She wanted approval, and she soon found that even good women find it hard not to patronize the prodigal just a little. Besides, the whole edifice of her conversion was built on the shifting sand of a misunderstanding. She was not contrite for her fine habit and her furniture, for the simple reason that she knew subconsciously she had no vocation, and was merely an empty-headed girl living like a princess shut up in a tower. Yet her conscience told her that she had chosen the cloister, which meant the essence of a cloistered life, and not the mere geographical sense of it. So once again there was the conflict of heart, and again it wore out her bodily strength so that she fell ill and the doctors could do nothing for her. One is touched to read that she " promised conversion ". Did she ever lack the will to do right ? Was it not only that she fought injustice and nothing would " come right " ?

Fortunately, when the wise on earth cannot understand, those who are wise with the light of heaven can see further. Sister Giacinta, lying in bed, read on the statue of her favourite saint, Catherine of Siena, these words : " What do I wish for, Lord, or what could I wish for, outside of Thee ? " So somebody had found in God, not a judge but a Fulfiller of Desires. She prayed to St Catherine, begging to be taken to this Divine Person who would not ask her to starve her heart any more, but would fill it and heal it. And she heard a voice, whether with the ears of her body or of her soul we are not told : " Enter bravely upon this way ; I will be your advocate, and will protect you always."

Then she understood. Here was her chance to be a true and eternal success. Heaven was near and kind. That enchanting personality, that adviser of Kings and Popes, that conqueror of the rebel, Self—Catherine of Siena would be her friend. An arm was about her shoulders, and somebody believed in her and cared for her.

Like a fountain that had been covered by a stone now removed, Giacinta's

courage leapt up and came to its glory. She was now about thirty years of age—a mature woman, in mind as well as in body. She was not alone, and she had something to conquer. No more illness! Now we see the immense strength of character that had been shut in, cramped, tortured by the sense of injustice. For she went straight to the Superior and handed over to her the fine habits and furniture, also her private income. She kept only a lovely crucifix and a reliquary—wanting something to love, but these she gave away at the first suggestion that she should do so. Whether or not she asked to become a member of the community now or later is not certain. She became a saint so quickly that holiness hides everything else. Listen to some of her doings, and see the portrait it draws. She turned everything out of her cell except a great wooden cross, attached to which was a chain once used for hanging the bodies of robbers. Chained to this, she would sleep on a plank bed with sacking for a blanket. " It holds my horse for me ! " she said with that old ring of pride in her voice, meaning her body. Sister Giacinta inherited not a little of the pride and toughness of her many illustrious ancestors, but how differently they manifest themselves in this case.

She wore the discarded and ragged habit left behind by a dead nun, and this when she had put it off to take the discipline, she would ask again from Our Lady as an alms. At first she allowed herself three tunics, one to wear, the other to change into, and a third when she had the colic ! Again we see some justification for having her own cook. She was to die of this bad digestion. But once agai she begged the Mother Superior to tell her whether there was anything more she could possibly retrench, and the third tunic was sympathetically suggested. For years Giacinta managed without this extra warmth. One interesting point is that she shut herself up so completely from the outside world that she forgot the names and values of pieces of money. This looks like a wincing away from the symbols of her unhappy youth. Sometimes a neurasthenic symptom may remain like a scar when the disorder is completely cured. And how completely it was cured, her other habits show.

She becomes the serenely happy creature who has found her niche in existence, and who knows that it was made for her by Love. One thinks of Virgil's words in her connection : *Sera comans hyacinthus*—" the late flowering hyacinth ".

Renouncing the visits and letters from her relations that were not according to the Rule, she made for herself a heavenly family of sinner-saints, choosing St Augustine and St Mary of Egypt as her parents ; St William the Hermit and St Margaret of Cortona for brother and sister ; St Peter for uncle, and the Three Children of the canticle *Benedicite omnia opera Domini, Domino* (which she recited almost daily at Lauds) for nephews ! Oh, she was wise ! She knew herself. She knew her hungry heart, and filled it with the friendship of those who lived ever in tenderest charity. She knew now that, although she had entered the convent to get away from prying eyes, she had still done it under obedience to her father, and for this obedience she had been granted the grace of a vocation, though this grace could come only when peace had come. And the true enemy of her peace had been, as it is for every soul, *self*. Self had wanted love, care, success, and would not attend to the truth that they were all to be had, " a hundredfold in this life ", at the price of renouncing self and seeking only the Kingdom of God. Giacinta hated herself for a fool, her own unkindest companion, and with scourges of holly and gorse she laid wound upon wound. She made the burning Italian sun and the icy wind that blows over the Apennines in winter her accomplices in

punishing the traitor. She knew her own physical strength, but also her weakness. Solitude she feared for her melancholy temperament. Sometimes it seemed to catch her by the throat, this remaining in her tiny cell. On those occasions she would " go outside to breathe a little ", and then when the fresh air had steadied her, she would shut herself in again, saying with that wilful smile: " If I die of it, patience ! Die then, but I must stay here ! " And since, in a happy mind, the will can conquer anything, the happiness of conquest overcome the melancholy of the temperament she had inherited. But she knew that pride will seep through if there is a crack left for him, and when the nuns mentioned her mortifications she would answer: " I am chastened but not mortified." The proof that there was no more neurasthenia is both that her health improved, and that no longer had criticism any power to hurt her.

Temptations put self to death faster than penances; and she had no lack of temptations. She was tempted to take life as easily as a nun in a Franciscan community might do after sixteen years of a colic which appeared to be her chronic infirmity. Her patience was tried by the nuns who criticized her bitterly for her austerity, which she did not attempt to explain, only answering gently: " God wants it so ", with admirable simplicity. She had one confidante at first, but this Sister was finally talked away from her by the others. She was tempted against faith: to believe that God did not, after all, exist; for which temptation flowers and birds were her medicine. She was tempted with the idea, which, had she but known it, is common among the hungry-hearted—to believe that heaven will be boring ! And to this fear she made answer with sardonic logic: " Well, the only alternative is hell ! " Would eternity be nothing but praises, or would it be Love ? Once more St Catherine consoled her with the message: " You will come to the holy love of God." She could not believe this was true, and begged a sign. " Make so-and-so bring me a rose ! " So-and-so found so splendid a rose in his garden, out of season, that he bethought him to take it to the Bishop, but at the very door of the palace he changed his mind and brought it to Sister Giacinta. And clasping it in the hand which wielded the scourge, Giacinta walked in ecstasy, crying: " I *shall* come to true love ! I *shall* come to true love ! "

Already she was beginning to be loved, that is, was beginning to be understood and appreciated by the people of Viterbo. She seems to have had a wonderful way with those who were troubled by unlawful loves and lusts—she who had not been troubled by the sins of the flesh. Having learnt sympathy by so great a lack of it, she comforted many who could not find their way to peace. She encouraged her disciples to found two confraternities for the praise of God, and for the care of the poor and aged.[1] She was able to give much because, as she had given all to God, He could refuse her nothing, and whenever she wanted anything for the poor, it soon appeared. There is something specially maternal in her saying: " Why cannot I change myself into bread and clothing to give to the poor ? " Then she would exclaim: " Why will not my heart multiply itself so that I can cover them all ? " It is recorded that a child was afraid to be left alone in one of the rooms of the gloomy palace which was her home: another was as greedy as a magpie: another was afraid to go to Communion because of persistent faults of frailty—Sister Giacinta pushed them all towards Love, and all was well. Now she understood Our Lady, and loved her so much that she would put her head out

[1] One of these confraternities, the Sacconi, or Oblates of Mary, existed until 1870, when it was dissolved.

of her cell-window to hear a neighbour calling another named 'Maria'. She signed herself 'Giacinta di Maria', and loved to be addressed as 'Suora Maria' instead of Giacinta, or to have this name put on any of the things set aside for her use.

Her love for souls became so great and her apostolic zeal so intense that her biographer tells us that she would exclaim: "O my God, why can I not go out into the streets and public places? I would cry out with all my strength. Is it possible to be so senseless as not to realize that this world is nothing? O my God! unknown God! is it possible that men can care more for the foul mire of this earth than for Thee, true Treasure and only good, for they eternally ruin themselves by offending Thee?" Granted that the actual words may be largely the invention of the pious late eighteenth-century Franciscan, no doubt they are based on stories which were handed down after the death of the saint.

Sister Giacinta's favourite devotions were in keeping with her Franciscan vocation. At Christmas she spent every spare moment of her time praying before *Gesù Bambino* in His crib. As to the Passion of Jesus, she could hardly look at a crucifix without bursting into tears. There is a tradition that it was due to her influence that the devotion of the *Quarant' ore*, or Forty Hours' adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, was introduced into the churches at Viterbo during the last three days of the Carnival before Lent.[1] Her biographer says: "she would willingly have sacrificed a thousand lives to spread this devotion, and her whole life was an uninterrupted hymn of praise to the Mother of God." Her spirituality was typical of that baroque world to which she belonged; Giacinta's way to God was the "way of love which is the burden of the ascetical and mystical writings which loom largely in the literary output of the Capuchins during the Counter-Reformation period".[2] For this reason it is not easy for the present generation to understand or appreciate such a saint, for we live in a world that is so different. Clarice Mariscotti was born the same year that Sixtus V became Pope: she lived through the successive pontificates of eight Popes—momentous years for the Church.

Death came on January 30, 1640, when she was fifty-five, on the day she had foretold it, saying: "I am going to my own country this evening." In death her wasted, thorn-festered body had become beautiful—white and ruddy, giving off a scent which heartened and enchanted all. Those who looked on her were filled with joy, and many miracles were granted in her name by the True Love whom she had sought and indeed found.

She was beatified in 1726 by Benedict XIII, who belonged to the same Orsini family from which her mother was descended. In 1807 she was canonized by Pius VII. The incorrupt body of St Hyacintha Mariscotti rests in the chapel of the Convent of San Bernardino at Viterbo, within whose enclosure she had dwelt forty-four years. Her feast is kept as a double-major on January 30 by all branches of the Franciscan Order, also in the diocese of Viterbo and in the united diocese of Civita Castellana, Orte and Gallese.

ST MARY ANNE OF JESUS (1618-1645)

THE full name of this South American tertiary is Marianna de Paredes y Flores, who was surnamed "of Jesus", and she is known popularly as "The Lily of Quito", because a lily grew up miraculously on the spot where her blood had been

[1] From about 1540 the Capuchins had spread this devotion wherever they went, especially in northern and central Italy. [2] Fr Cuthbert, O.S.F.C., *The Capuchins*, Vol. II, 417.

poured. It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand this recently canonized member of the Third Order of St Francis unless one knows something of her background and of the world in which she lived.

Pizarro had sighted the coast of what is now the republic of Ecuador in 1525, but it was not until nine years later that Sebástian de Balacázar and his Spanish soldiers penetrated into the high mountains of the interior, making their way north from Peru, and established three towns. One of them was San Francisco de Quito, which was erected into a city in 1541, and made the capital of a province. Quito is situated in a lovely valley, nearly 10,000 feet above sea level, and only a few miles south of the equator—hence the name Ecuador. Surrounded by the snow-covered peaks of the Andes, it has a mild bracing climate, with warm days and cool nights. Throughout the year the sun rises and sets about six in the morning and six in the evening. Almost daily brief showers of rain ensure a prolific vegetation.

When one thinks of the immense distance from Spain, and the difficulties of transport in the sixteenth century, the erection of so many large and magnificent churches in Quito within a hundred years after its foundation seems almost a miracle. The first of them was the church of San Francisco, begun in 1535 and completed about 1581, equal in size and splendour to almost any Franciscan church in Europe. The galleried cloisters surrounding the open garth may have helped many a Spanish friar to be less home-sick. Not to be outdone, the Friars Preachers built the magnificent church and monastery of San Domingo, which were started about 1580. The following year the Hermit Friars of St Augustine began work on their baroque church. The first Bishop of Quito had been nominated in 1545, and by 1573 the diocese could boast of a stately cathedral, where the altars and chapels gleamed with gold and silver. The effect must have been far more gorgeous than most cathedrals in Spain. By 1605 the Jesuits, determined to go one better than other religious orders which had preceded them, started to build the ' Iglesia de la Compañia ', the interior of which would surpass that of the Gesù in Rome for sheer magnificence of decoration. Not an inch of the walls and barrel-vaulted roof and the dome were left without gilded and painted stucco decorations. An immense retablo in the usual Spanish style towered up behind the high altar. In 1599 the Recollect Friars Minor arrived in Quito, and built the much more traditionally Franciscan church of San Diego, as if to remind their brethren at San Francisco of the meaning of seraphic poverty. So, within sixty years of the foundation of the city of Quito, this remote spot, high up in the Andes, had grown into a centre of intense Catholic life and culture. It was into this exotic world, so far away from Spain, that Marianna was born on October 31, 1618. The greater part of her twenty-seven years on this earth, on the days she ventured forth from the house of her parents or relations, were spent in one or other of the churches we have mentioned. Moreover, her spirituality is as baroque as their architecture: it takes on the same character as their almost feverish riot of ornament. She cannot be appreciated until we can visualize her praying in these churches.

Marianna's ancestry was nothing if not noble. Her father, Don Heronimo Flores Zenel de Paredes, belonged to an illustrious family from Toledo. Her mother's name was Doña Marianna Crasnobles de Xaramilo. Even the very sound of these names is enough to enable us to picture the background of her childhood—as stately and dignified as that of any noble household in sixteenth-century Spain. Marianna was nothing if not precocious in piety. At the process

of her beatification in 1754 it was juridically attested that her birth was accompanied by quite inexplicable phenomena in the heavens, indeed it would have been odd if such an extraordinary child could have been born without thunder, lightning and an earthquake! She began to pray before she could walk, and seems to have been filled with a love of God and an intense devotion to Mary Immaculate by the time she had learned to talk. When she was ten years old she made the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Already she had had several miraculous escapes from death. Her first Communion had been made at the age of seven, which was very unusual at that time.

Left an orphan when she was still a child, Marianna was entrusted to the care of her elder sister and brother-in-law, who treated her with the same affection as if she had been their own daughter. By this date she had begun to recite the rosary and to make the Stations of the Cross daily. In order to scourge her body she made disciplines from thorn bushes or prickly leaves.

One day, when she was about twelve, she heard a sermon preached which filled her with the desire to go to Japan as a missionary. It is probable that this sermon dealt with the twenty-six Franciscan martyrs of Nagasaki who had been beatified by Urban VIII in 1627 (see p. 198). Marianna persuaded some companions to join her in this missionary expedition, and began to prepare for the journey. How they expected to find their way down to the shore, and across the more than eight thousand miles of ocean is not recorded. No doubt she believed that God was quite capable of performing a miracle if He wanted them to reach Japan, and die there as martyrs. Her project was discovered, and we may presume that her sister and brother-in-law told her that she was a naughty little girl. Not that there was anything unusual in women missionaries at that time. It is possible that Marianna had heard of the Franciscan Sisters who had crossed the Atlantic as early as 1530 in order to teach girls of Spanish-Indian race in Mexico.

The next we are told is that she felt that her vocation was to be a hermit on a mountain near Quito, but this proved impossible. Then there was talk of her entering a convent, a scheme which may have been encouraged by her relatives, for what better place could be found for this orphan girl of noble family? Once again nothing came of this scheme. Something happened on several occasions which seemed to be an intervention of Providence. Finally Marianna was convinced that she was to seek and find God, not in any religious community, but in the world.

It was about this time, or possibly earlier, that she was received into the Third Order in the Church of San Francisco. The interior, where Gothic arches are encrusted with Baroque decorations, was not quite so overwhelmingly gorgeous as it became later on, but most of its side-chapels had been completed by the end of the sixteenth century. The foundations had been laid as early as 1535, after the Spanish governor, Balacázar, had granted land to the Belgian Friar Minor, Fra Jocodo Ricke, who became the first apostle of what is now Ecuador. The massive façade, with its twin towers, reminiscent of the Escorial, must have been finished for it was begun in 1581, so it is possible that Marianna climbed the wide steps, and passed in and out of the great entrance door, on the day that she was clothed as a tertiary. At that date the Franciscans had been directing a school of arts and crafts in Quito for more than fifty years. It was a Friar Minor, Antonio Rodriguez, born in this city, who designed the churches of Santo Domingo and Santa Clara. The only reason for mentioning these facts is to stress the world of culture and beauty in which our tertiary saint lived—it was no raw, rough colony.

From now onwards this young Sister of Penance lived in the house of her married sister, only leaving it to go to church. Her spiritual director was a Jesuit, so we may take it that she unburdened her soul in one of the magnificent confessionals in the ' Iglesia de la Compañia ', but it is doubtful if her eyes lingered on the riotous twisted columns of the re-tablo, glinting with gold and silver leaf—they would have been fixed on the tabernacle above the high altar.

As to her bodily austerities and penances, one hardly dare mention them, yet they are absolutely in keeping with the spirit of those statues at which she must have gazed in any of the churches—martyrs splashed with blood and writhing in agony ; crucifixes as poignantly realistic as art and craftsmanship could make them ; life-size statues of the scourging of Our Lord, with His body dripping with blood ; not forgetting statues of Our Lady whose sorrows are many more than seven.

Marianna kept a perpetual fast, contenting herself with an ounce of dry bread every eight or ten days. Sworn witnesses for the cause of her beatification attested that for many years she lived on the Eucharistic Bread which she received every morning at the altar. Not satisfied with depriving herself of food, she resolved to share in the thirst of Our Lord on His Cross. On hot summer days she would raise a glass of water to her parched lips, and withdraw it instantly.

Moreover, it is attested that she kept a coffin in her room, and slept in it every Friday night. At other times it contained a life-size doll, clothed in a Franciscan habit, with a shrouded face—serving as an ever present *memento mori.* She bound her legs and arms with chains. A wire girdle encircled her waist, and if this was not enough, she always wore a hairshirt. These did not inflict the pain she longed for, so she added a spiked iron cincture. Every Friday she put on two crowns ; the one of thorns, the other of spiked iron. From midday to three o'clock on Fridays she mounted on a cross, fixed to the wall of her room, suspended by her hair, her two wrists passed through nooses attached to the ends of the cross beams. Not even at night did she allow herself any real rest, for normally she slept on a plank covered with sharp thorns, and then only for three hours.

Yet Marianna was no self-centred recluse, at least during the latter years of her life. Her old missionary zeal reasserted itself, and she realized that there were pagans and sinners to be converted in Quito as well as in Japan. She won the love and admiration of rich and poor by her assiduous devotion to works of charity. She visited the sick in their own homes, and cured many merely by making the sign of the Cross over them, and sprinkling them with holy water. It is recorded that she raised to life a dead woman. She was not afraid to use her influence with men and women of all social classes to give up sinful practices into which they had fallen, and what she did not achieve by persuasion was effected by prayer.

People came to her when they were in doubt about their future, for she had acquired the gift of prophecy, and saw distant events as if they had taken place already. Her visions and ecstasies became more and more frequent.

In the first months of 1645, Quito was ravaged by a terrible epidemic of the plague, followed by a severe earthquake. On the fourth Sunday in Lent, Marianna heard a sermon preached in the Jesuit church which moved her so much that after Mass she resolved to offer herself publicly as a victim for the sins of the people. Then, quite suddenly, the epidemic ceased, and there were no more earthquakes. The latter are fairly frequent occurrences in Quito owing to the volcanoes among the mountains. Marianna collapsed with a mysterious sickness that baffled every doctor. She died on May 26, at the age of

twenty-seven. After her death a white lily sprang up in the garden on the ground where her blood had been poured after many bleedings during her last illness.

Such is about all we know of the extraordinary life of this seventeenth-century South American tertiary. Her cause was introduced at Rome in 1754, but it was not until 1853 that she was beatified by Pius IX. Her canonization by Pius XII took place in 1950. The feast of St Maria Anna is celebrated by the Franciscan Order on May 26 as a lesser double ; also in the diocese of Quito.[1]

BD MARY CRESCENTIA HÖSS (1682-1744)

THE scene changes from South America to southern Germany. We move to Bavaria, and find ourselves in the busy old town of Kaufbeuren, set in the broad valley of the Wertach, about fifty miles south-west of Munich, dominated by the lofty peaks of the Allgäu mountains. Here it was, on October 20, 1682, that one of the greatest post-Reformation tertiaries was born—Anna-Maria Crescentia Höss.

Her father was a poor weaver, and her mother an equally pious Catholic. At a very early age she was taught to say her prayers and loved to listen to the stories from the Gospels told by her parents, shedding bitter tears at the sufferings of Our Lord. It is recorded that she made a vow of virginity at the age of five. Two years later she was allowed to make her first Communion in the parish church of St Martin, because the priest discovered that she already knew her catechism perfectly, and that her mental and spiritual gifts far exceeded those of many a grown-up person. Anna-Maria had already begun to converse with her guardian angel, just as did St Francesca Romana at an early age, and one day he appeared to her holding a cross in his hand and the habit of the Third Order in the other. At that moment she was kneeling in the chapel of the Franciscan Sisters in the Mayerhoff convent at Kaufbeuren. She heard a voice saying to her : " This shall be your dwelling place."

Already this little girl had begun to emulate St Elizabeth of Hungary in her charity towards the poor, though she had not much to give away. She starved herself rather than let the needy go hungry, and she carried on a real apostolate among the Lutheran inhabitants of the town, converting many of them from heresy. Her parents began to realize that their daughter's vocation probably lay in the religious state. One day her father asked the Mother Superior of the convent if Anna-Maria could be admitted as a postulant. But he was told that a dowry was necessary before this could be considered, and he was unable to raise the money. So Anna-Maria had to wait seven long years until she could become a nun. She lived at home and helped her parents with their weaving. According to some biographers her father tried to prevent her from entering a convent, for no doubt he needed her help. Finally, it was with the assistance of the Protestant burgomaster that she was clothed with the habit of the Third Order at the age of twenty-one, and became a novice in the convent at whose doors she had begged to be admitted ever since she was a child.

It was not long before Sister Maria Crescentia aroused the jealousy and suspicion of the community, which at that time does not seem to have been particularly

[1] She is not the earliest American born person to be beatified or canonized. St Philip of Jesus, who was one of the Franciscans crucified at Nagasaki in 1597, was born in Mexico. St Rose of Lima (1586-1617) was canonized in 1671.

fervent. Anyhow, the Superior and the older nuns, who probably resented the intervention of a Lutheran burgomaster on behalf of this poor weaver's daughter, taunted her with being penniless. They mistrusted her frequent ecstasies and the intensity of her devotion, going so far as to maintain that she was a hypocrite, and that she suffered from diabolical possession, even that she indulged in witchcraft. Her own cell was taken away from her, and for three years she had no place in the convent to call her own. She was forced to beg an unwanted corner of first this and then that sister when she wanted to lie down.

Then a damp dark cellar was set aside for her use. Here she could hide herself alone with God. Some of the younger nuns did their best to sympathize with Maria Crescentia for the cruel manner in which she was treated by the rest of the community. But she merely smiled and said it was what she deserved for her sins.

But the day came when a new Mother Superior was elected, and the long despised sister was chosen for the office of portress, which she filled for fifteen years, a proof that the community had begun to realize at last that she could be trusted. So great was her compassion for the poor that she would give away to the beggars who knocked at the door all her own portion of food, except soup. In 1731 she was appointed novice-mistress, and ten years later she was elected Superior with the unanimous votes of the community.

That same year, 1741, the Elector Charles Albert of Bavaria, who had long aspired to the imperial dignity in virtue of being descended from Ferdinand I of Austria, had himself crowned King of Bohemia at Prague. The following year he was elected Roman Emperor as Charles VII. The Bavarians, French and Saxon troops had attacked those of the Empress Maria Theresa, and in 1742 she was forced to arrange a truce with them. With the aid of the soldiers of King George II of England the Empress defeated the French at Dettingen in 1743. The greater part of central Europe suffered greatly during this war, and it must have caused distress even in the remote town of Kaufbeuren. The least that the Mother Superior of the little Franciscan community could do was to add to her mortifications and penances. She slept on a hard plank, only allowing herself two or three hours' rest at night. She fasted perpetually, contenting herself with a bowl of soup, taken at midday. Again and again the devil appeared to her in bodily form, and when he found that she did not give way to his temptations he brutally assaulted her. We are told that she had visions and ecstasies, including the mystical experience of the sufferings of Our Lord in His Passion, that lasted from nine in the morning until after three o'clock in the afternoon. No doubt it was revealed to her that the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, which was signed four years after her death, would end the long drawn out conflict of the Austrian succession.

Once Sister Maria Crescentia became Superior the whole spiritual tone of the community changed. Despite the troubled condition of Bavaria, with wars and rumours of wars, vocations multiplied and foundations were made in other towns. Later on convents were established beyond Bavaria, and, with the sanction of the Empress Maria Theresa, even in Hungary. The convent at Kaufbeuren dated from the fifteenth century, but it was not until after the middle of the eighteenth century that it became the Mother House of a large congregation.[1] The now more

[1] The first community of the Franciscan Third Order Regular in the United States was founded from Kaufbeuren, when six sisters came to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1849. This community has grown into a large congregation, now numbering more than six hundred sisters.

than sixty-year-old Superior used to say to her nuns that he penances most pleasing to God are those which He Himself imposes, if we will but bear meekly and patiently what He sends us, or what our neighbours inflict on us." The fame of her sanctity spread far beyond this little town at the foot of the mountains, and many distinguished visitors, lay and clerical, Protestants as well as Catholics, found their way up the valley to ask her advice and prayers. She corresponded with bishops, cardinals and princes, all of whom welcomed her guidance in affairs of Church and State, for she had the gift of prophecy as well as the power to read souls.

Worn out by her excessive austerities and visions, Maria Crescentia passed out of this life during the night of April 5, 1744, just a year before the Bavarians made peace with Austria, after the death of Charles VII in January 1745. Her tomb was visited by thousands of pilgrims and many miracles were wrought through her intercession. The process of her canonization was begun in 1775, but it was not until 1900 that she was beatified by Leo XIII. Her feast has the rank of a double in the Roman-Seraphic Missal and Breviary, where it occurs on April 6.[1] The dioceses of Augsburg, Bambery and Munich also find a place for this tertiary *beata* in their calendars.

Bd Maria Crescentia Höss was a contemporary of St Mary Frances of the Five Wounds, at least for the greater part of her life. Just as in Italy, perhaps even more so in Germany, there was a decay of religion, and a growing scepticism among the intellectuals. The spirit of Bavarian Catholicism during the first half of the eighteenth century is recorded in the fantastic architecture of the baroque and roccoco styles, used both in secular and in ecclesiastical buildings. When Maria Crescentia was living in her damp cellar, despised and mistrusted by her own community, and offering her sufferings for the sins of mankind as well as her own, the Elector Maximilian II had begun the triumphal progress of roccoco architecture with the erection of Schloss Schleissheim, near Munich, which was continued by his successor, Karl Albert, afterwards Emperor. Ottobeuren, Weingarten, and many other great Benedictine abbeys, as well as Jesuit, Franciscan and other churches, were built in the wildest and most luxurious roccoco style—lovely in themselves, but preaching a Gospel very different from that of the Order of Penance founded by the Little Poor Man of Assisi. There was great poverty and great luxury side by side in Bavaria, as in all parts of Europe, during the first half of the eighteenth century. Christ was suffering in His Mystical Body, and Maria Crescentia Höss was one of the elect souls He chose into whom His sufferings could overflow.

She was carrying on the work of reparation that had been the vocation too of that other Bavarian tertiary—Bd Elizabeth of Reute, who had lived not so many miles away two centuries earlier. These two women have the distinction in the gallery of Third Order saints of being the only tertiaries of German nationality whose cultus has been approved by the Church. For even if St Elizabeth of Thuringia spent most of her life in Germany, she was Hungarian by birth.

ST BENEDICT JOSEPH LABRE (1748-1783)

HERE is another saint who, like his contemporary, Mary Frances of the Five Wounds, is to be admired and venerated rather than imitated. Again, much that has been written about him is stiff with a peculiarly solemn mood of awe,

[1] Capuchins, April 5.

innocent of that saving grace of humour which might put us on really happy terms with a saint. It is that touch of humour with which Franciscans speak of the saints of their own family that has made them seem nearer to ordinary life than those of other Orders. When one can speak of a saint with an affectionate smile rather than with the bated breath of the awe-struck, that saint has become real to us. When we remember someone we love and admire, we do not goggle and gape at their virtues, but recall rather, some story about them at which we like to smile, or some trait which seemed deeply and essentially characteristic of them. It is in this way, we think, that a Franciscan life of St Benedict Joseph Labre should be written.

He was born in the month of St Joseph, within the octave of St Benedict (actually the Feast of the Good Thief), March 26, 1748, in the village of Amettes, situated in the heart of Picardy, about half way between Bethune and Saint-Pol. His parents were merchants, comfortably off, solid reasonable folk and good Catholics. Benoît Joseph was a docile but determined little boy. He cared nothing for games, and although he had a good brain, he seemed to have made up his mind to learn nothing much more than reading, writing and Latin. Probably he never remembered the time when the world of childhood had been as real to him as the infinite eternity of God. God, who intended him for the life that we call extraordinary, gave him values different from those of the common run of person who has a less extraordinary (though a no less special) vocation. Just as the poet is born with his talent and the musician with his, so Benoît was born with a talent for absorption in eternal things, with this difference, that one talent is planted in the mind and the other in the soul. Benoît's spiritual talent drew him to desire to be alone with God, dependent on Him for everything; and the reasoning of other people, who suggested that he should be with children of his own age and dependent on his family for his needs, seemed to him as strange as though they had wished him to dwell with somebody very ignorant and weak, when he had the chance to be with Somebody infinitely wise, delightful and strong.

As is related by one of his biographers, his mother said to him: "You want to be a hermit, Benoît, but what would you do about food if you lived in a cave in some distant mountain-side?" The little boy replied: "I should eat herbs and roots as did the hermits of old." He must have wondered what she was fussing about. Then his mother remarked: "But in those days people had stronger constitutions than they have now." Perhaps this was said more recently by Matt Talbot in Dublin when he had the same desires, citing St Benedict Joseph Labre: "God is not less powerful today than He was then", which was the latter's answer, no doubt without the least thought of criticizing his mother; but wondering all the time why people had such odd ideas, he added: "God worked miracles to support them then, and why should you suppose He will not do so now?"

When Benoît reached the age of twelve, he was sent to study with his uncle who was the parish priest of Erin, a small village in the valley of the Ternoise, between Saint-Pol and Montreuil-sur-Mer, not far from the ancient abbey and pilgrimage shrine of Sainte Berthe. Here he remained for six years, puzzling the good man not a little, because combined with immense devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, absolute obedience and many unmistakable virtues, there was what his uncle may have called an almost mulish inability to be led along the line of study he was expected to follow. His brains put up the shutters when, having attained with ease to a certain proficiency in Latin, sufficient to enable him to translate the

Scriptures, he was expected to pursue his study of the classics. No! Thus far and no further. Benoît was sixteen, and he knew his own mind. He also knew his own vocation. He would not, because he could not: God did not lead him in that direction, and no earthly attraction, even the desire to please his family, had any power to move him if God did not beckon. God attracted him henceforward only to the study of mystical and ascetical theology. A priest friend of his uncle's tried to reason with him, using an argument that he thought would win the lad's very kind heart. "Don't you see," he said, "study is necessary for you if you are to be a priest, and then you will be able to help your uncle in his old age." Benoît replied: "But I shall not be there to help him; my vocation is in the desert." The mental vision of this strange youth could see far beyond the rolling countryside of Picardy, with its brick villages and farms. This story was repeated, with the result that Benoît had to explain himself to his uncle. He said that he knew that God was drawing him so strongly to a total abandonment of the world that he doubted if there was any alternative but to become a Trappist monk. It was useless to point out that he was a boy of eighteen, very thin for his age, and with little bodily strength. Despite poor health, Benoît was accustomed to spend hours on his knees, and on one occasion at least, when visiting the Blessed Sacrament during the Forty Hours' exposition, he remained in church from morning to night, kneeling all the time. Moreover, he refused an invitation to a meal which had been prepared for him during the afternoon by a pious woman who had compassion on him. It is related that during Lent he would go two or three days without taking food or drink.

In 1766 a serious epidemic of fever broke out in the parish of Erin. To Benoît, this was merely a wonderful chance to obtain the death of a martyr for charity. He went to and fro among the cottages where the victims lay in their squalor, as though he was taking part in some joyous festival. It seemed to him that these poor people were being reminded of the judgments of God in time to receive that greatest grace—a good death—while he himself was being given the great privilege of serving them together with the hope of dying for them. But it was his priest-uncle who died, and Benoît came through unscathed. One truly Franciscan touch is the fact that he did not forget to look after the cattle of the families who were bed-ridden with fever. He cut grass and made hay for the beasts, which would otherwise have been forgotten.

After his uncle's funeral, Benoît determined to test his vocation with the Trappists. But he had another uncle who was a priest, the Abbé Vincent, and to him his parents sent their difficult son so that he could continue his studies. All that happened was that this uncle was won over to his nephew's point of view. He soon realized that the lad was already living a life more austere than that of the average Trappist, and he came to the conclusion that his nephew might be called to the religious state. Nevertheless he suggested that Benoît should try the Carthusians in preference to the Trappists, and told him to apply to the Chartreuse at Val-Sainte Aldegonde. But the Prior did not see his way to accept him as a postulant, and recommended another Charterhouse, that of Neuville, near Montreuil-sur-Mer. Here the answer was that he must wait until he was twenty, and that he could not be admitted without a knowledge of plainchant and logic. So, unable to resist him any longer, his parents saw this thin lanky youth with his one obsessive idea, setting off in the worst weather, in the poor clothes he insisted on wearing, facing a walk of nearly a hundred and fifty miles to the Abbey of La Grande

Trappe in Normandy. His slight figure was soon lost in the blinding rain, against which a warm coat would not have been sufficient protection. Yet he managed to find his way to this famous monastery near Montagne, apparently none the worse for the hardships of the long journey. The abbot considered his request, but, having looked at him, said that he was still to young to face the austerities of the Trappist life. Bowing to the will of God, Benoît made his way back to Picardy, arriving benumbed with cold, fatigue and lack of food.

Having recovered his health, Benoît wanted to be off again to La Grande Trappe, but his parents made him see that it would be more prudent to write to the Abbot to ensure that the doors of the monastery would be opened. After what must have seemed an interminable delay, a letter arrived for Benoît. In it he read that the Abbot regretted that he did not feel that a few months could have made any great difference to the general health of the would-be postulant, for which reason it was impossible for him to be admitted to the novitiate. So he was forced to reconsider the Carthusians. The Prior of Neuville, no doubt feeling sorry for this earnest young man, consented to give him a trial, despite his ignorance of logic and plainchant. Once again Benoît set out from Amettes and trudged along the roads to the Charterhouse, a distance of about twenty miles from his home. Within six weeks the Prior told him he had no vocation, and bade him follow his own call. He had not found peace or happiness in the Carthusian cell, merely " interior agitations and pains of mind ". Taking this as an indication of God's will, and with his own holy mulishness, he wrote to his parents saying that he would trouble them no more. Perhaps they were not altogether surprised to read that their incomprehensible son was already on his way to the Cistercian monastery of Sept-Fonds. Perhaps he explained to them that its observances were not quite so severe as those of La Grande Trappe.

It was in September 1769 that he began this three-hundred-mile journey across France on foot. He arrived at Sept-Fonds, situated in the diocese of Moulins, some time in November. This famous abbey, founded in the twelfth century, had taken on a new lease of life about 1660, and been largely rebuilt on a magnificent scale. The community was still very flourishing when Benoît became a postulant. But his health, which had endured his own incredible treatment of his body, broke down under the not very austere interpretation of the Cistercian rule. He became very ill, but the symptoms were mental rather than physical. His body began to waste away with the strain on his mind. The Abbot removed him from the novitiate to the infirmary, leaving him in peace there as a guest.

At last Benoît understood. God and he were to be alone, as God chooses to be alone with His hermits and anchorites. To quote the words of one of his biographers: " God made known to him that it was His will that he should follow the traces of St Alexis, abandoning entirely his country, his parents, comforts, and whatever is flattering to the world, leading a new sort of life, the poorest, hardest and most penitential, and that he should lead it not in the desert, nor in a cloister, but in the midst of the world, visiting celebrated shrines by pious pilgrimages as much as he was able."

" When God speaks, it is both word and work." Benoît was now at peace, consoled by the clear shining of his vocation. God had made a tryst with him, and to keep it could be nothing but joy. If Benoît has seemed to be opposed to the prudent so far, let us note that he did not make off with his private inspiration, but chose a wise confessor and put the matter before him. The interior light shone

through Benoît's word, and the Cistercian confessor would only agree that God did indeed so call him.

Thus were inaugurated the pilgrimages which began in the spring of 1770 and ended on the very day of his death thirteen years later.

Rome would be the first pilgrimage. He made his way east, up and over the Mont Cenis pass, and down into Piedmont. Having reached Chieri, he wrote to his parents, bidding them not to worry about him. Apparently he had not yet abandoned the idea of the religious life, for he stated that he hoped to test his vocation in one of the many Italian monasteries. So the final conviction that this was not God's will for him must have come after he left Sept-Fonds. He may have had scruples, and wondered if he was giving way to a natural attraction for the life of a tramp. This letter was the last that his father and mother received from their son.

For the next seven years he was always on the move, wandering around Europe. It has not been easy to trace his footsteps in any detail, but we know that he visited the shrines of Assisi, Mont' Alvernia, Loreto, Naples, Bari and Fabriano in Italy; Marseilles, Paray-le-Monial and other holy places in France; Compostela in Spain; and Einsiedeln in Switzerland. It is impossible not to regret that this roving recluse kept no diary of his travels—what a fascinating book it would have been!

He ' travelled light ', as we say today, all his few possessions being tied up in a bundle. They consisted of a breviary, a copy of the *Imitation of Christ*, and a few other pious books. He had no change of clothes, and was content with the ragged tunic which covered his body. A rosary hung around his neck. A small crucifix rested on his breast. When he arrived in any town the greater part of each day was spent praying in churches. More often than not he took no food until night fall, and even then it was generally the scraps offered him in charity, or picked up from the dust bins or refuse heaps. He slept on the bare ground, often in the open air, no matter what was the time of year or the weather. He felt himself lucky if he found a church porch, where he could lie down in peace. The burning sun of summer and the glacial winds of winter found him defenceless. Yet, as one of his biographers says: " In so many thousands of miles passed over in this manner, amongst so many insults, inconveniences, so much want and the most sparing quantity of food, he never fell so ill as to be obliged by sickness to remain in any house or hospital; he was always strong, always well, cheerful at all times and in every place."

It is not certain if Benoît was clothed with the habit of the Third Order, for no record of it has been found. But it is certain that he belonged to the Franciscan Confraternity of the Cord, into which he was received in November, 1770, during his first journeys around Italy. The little cord, like that which all secular tertiaries wear, was found next to his skin after his death. St Benedict Joseph Labre was so whole-hearted a son of St Francis both in his spirit and in his manner of life that it matters very little in the long run if he was a professed member of the Third Order. He had no need of a regular novitiate. He certainly made his profession before the angels and saints even if he did not do so in the presence of a Friar Minor or an appointed delegate.

We have seen that, ever since he was a small boy, he had been concerned unto absorption with the things of eternity—that is, with things seen with the eye of God. It will take some hard facts to drive that difference between our lives and

his firmly into our minds. He—the most charitable of men—was not concerned with what other people thought about him, but only what God thought about him. He had no dignity to consider—not even that which belongs to the membership of a Religious Order. God called him to the deepest and most solitary form of poverty. He had no lay-brother to wash his shirts for him, no clean, though poor cell. He soon became the prey of vermin. What did it matter ? It was a living, creeping hair-shirt. People only gave him a wider berth. As for himself and his body, he cared no more for it than if it had been rotting in the grave. He was never seen to move a hand to scratch himself even when he was being eaten alive by lice. And after his death, it was found that he had on either knee a soft tumour, yet he knelt all day praying. Many monks and nuns spend seven hours a day in choir, and to this they add their own private prayers. But Benoît went to church at dawn and, as often as not, stayed there till the doors were closed at dusk. He did not work. He prayed and endured—that was his whole life. That was his comment on life. When charitable people saw him in his last years, weak and spent so that they bade him go to some almshouse, lest he should fall dead in the street, he only replied : " What will that matter to me ? " Such was his comment on death.

During the early months of 1783 he was back again in Rome, after what proved to be his final series of pilgrimages, and now the miraculous gift of strength was withdrawn. At the beginning of Lent he caught a chill and looked like a dying person. For two years before his death he was prevailed upon to accept the nightly shelter of a hospice whenever he was in Rome. It was attested by the authorities that he always came back there in time for evening prayers, and never asked the porter to let him out before the doors were opened in the morning, yet according to other equally trustworthy persons, he was seen in churches where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed on some great *festa* at a late hour of the night. Benedict Joseph Labre is among the number of those saints who were not always bound by the laws of time and space, but like the saints in heaven broke them with a higher law of love.

On the morning of the Wednesday in Holy Week, 1783, the Warden of the Hospice in the Piazza San Martino ai Monti saw him setting out for his day in church, looking as though his death agony had already begun. He begged the poor mendicant to remain indoors, but to no purpose : all he could do was to make him take a stick on which to lean. He had not very far to go in order to reach the little church of the Madonna dei Monti in the Via dei Serpenti, which with the Gesù was his favourite church in Rome, but this walk proved too much for his failing strength. He dragged himself through the door, but felt so faint that he crept out again into the fresh air.

One likes to remember that this little baroque church, the last ever entered by this intensely Franciscan saint, had been erected on the site of one of the first convents of Poor Clares, dating from the time of St Francis.

The sanctity of this strange French pilgrim was well known in Rome by then, and when he was seen coming out of the church, too ill to help himself, many people vied with each other in offering him the shelter of their houses, though they knew well in what condition were his rags. He chose to accept the offer of a butcher who carried him to his own house at No. 3 Via dei Serpenti, and although he begged to be laid on the floor, this kind hearted man put him on a bed and covered him up with blankets. There he lay, in the attitude in which so many people had

often found him in the ruins of the Colosseum or on the pavement outside some church, with his hands folded on his breast. At eight o'clock in the evening when the bells of Rome were ringing the Angelus for the last time before Holy Saturday, he ceased to breathe. Until Easter Monday Rome crowded to get a sight of him, to touch the bed on which he had died, or his bier. After four days his body was still without any sign of corruption, and the limbs were flexible. Some people said they smelt a fragrant scent coming from the coffin.[1]

Those who were left in possession of his filthy verminous rags and his bundle could not satisfy the demands for morsels of them. Yet everyone knew what state they were in. Even the holes in his hands were alive with lice. Cleaned they were, however, and the bits of clothing were jealously shared among the nobles, merchants and the poorest of the poor, who begged for them. Many miracles were wrought by the mere touch of these relics. It is related that Benoît himself appeared in shining glory to many hopeless invalids and healed them.

No! Don't let us shudder at this saint. During two world wars, in the trenches and in concentration camps, men—even women—who had never seen vermin before were in the same state as Benoît after a few weeks. Benoît was fighting in an age-long war against the flesh. He endured filth because of those who permit the spiritual vermin of sensuality and lust to creep carelessly into their souls. Alone with God in his unwalled hermitage, he saw the truth about life. If we have been rather frightened at his mortifications, we shall be glad to smile at some of his odd ways of expressing the truths he saw. For true charity he had always a grateful and humble acknowledgment. But when a wealthy pious woman of Rome shook his shoulder to rouse him from prayer that she might invite him to dine at her house, " recovering himself from his displeasure, as one disturbed from the enjoyment of something very agreeable, he quickly answered: ' Dinner! Dinner! I dine in the street.' " When invited to spend the night at another house, his only reply was: " Too many women! " Yet to the gentle wife of his friend and host at Loreto, he was quite obedient, and would eat what she set before him, once more the docile boy who was obstinate only when anyone tried to turn him from his vocation. He walked through towns and cities like a man absorbed in prayer, never lifting his eyes; but in the country, on the lonely roads which he chose for himself in preference to the highways, he would burst out into exultation over the beauty of the flowers and birds, in the manner of St Francis himself. He was as careful as possible to annoy no one with his dirt, keeping away from them in churches, and going last of all to the confessional or to the altar rails for Holy Communion. We have a delightful snapshot of him finding the shoe of a tiny girl who had lost it in the mud, and one where he consoles another for her unkind stepmother. He tried never to make an inadvertent sound when he was deep in prayer, and finding a whole church disturbed by a woman who sat near him and who sighed, bowed, and jangled her rosary, he turned to her with the annihilating question: " What's the good of it all? "

These little human touches we can remember thankfully, because we cannot hope to comprehend the depth and height of his prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, or in the *Santa Casa* of Loreto, where he prayed to Our Lady. May he obtain for us a little of his obstinacy in refusing to be led aside from our vocation, and may he teach us to ask ourselves that question about so much that fills up our time: " What's the good of it all? "

[1] The room in which he died can still be visited,

He may have worn only the Cord of St Francis, and not the habit of the Third Order. But he wore, as clothing for his very spirit, the spirit of the Franciscan Order, summed up in the motto : " My God and my All." Please, St Benedict, obtain for us a rag, a shred of that habit and bind it on with the cord of love.

He was beatified by Pius IX in 1860, and canonized by Leo XIII in 1881. He is commemorated by the Franciscan Order on April 16, but just as he would have wished, he takes a second place, for this date is also the feast of the Solemn Commemoration of St Francis, and of another Cordbearer, St Bernadette of Lourdes. His body lies beneath a side altar in the Church of the Madonna dei Monti in Rome, where his intercession is still sought daily by rich and poor.

ST MARY FRANCES OF THE FIVE WOUNDS (1715-1791)

ABOUT the same time as Sister Maria Crescentia Höss had been appointed portress of her convent in Bavaria, an expectant mother in Naples was being troubled by such depressing thoughts and what she feared might be actual phantoms of the devil that she sought the advice of two holy priests, both since canonized—Fra Giovanni Giuseppe della Croce, a Franciscan of the Reform of St Peter of Alcantara, and Padre Francesco di Girolamo, who was a Jesuit. Both reassured her, and foretold that the baby would one day attain to the heights of sanctity. That they were right was evident from the first.

On March 25—the feast of the Annunciation—1715, Barbara Gallo gave birth to a girl, who was christened Anna Maria Rosa. Her parents belonged to a middle-class family. Her mother was pious and gentle, but her father was a hard man with a fiery temper—a fairly typical Neapolitan. It is related that even at the precocious age of four, Anna Maria spent hours of the day and night in prayer. She was born with a vocation for which it pleased God to give her from the dawn of reason, the spiritual life which He usually wishes us to reach by a much longer path of devotion to His will and of climbing, step by step, following the leading of the Holy Child in growing. Prayer to this child was as natural as playing with toys is to the average child. God kept her so attracted and absorbed by Him that created things were merely idle toys, and she had no desire to play with cotton reels when set down on the beach where the sea of infinite beauty, with its inexhaustible freshness, sparkled in the sun.

Perhaps she did not even notice the island of Capri rising up out of the blue sea, and may have been unconscious of the fishing boats and other sailing craft.

Anna Maria thirsted for more knowledge about God, and so her Angel Guardian was allowed to instruct her. It is easy to imagine her first Communion, and to understand why her confessor allowed her to make it at the age of seven. Considering the custom of that time, it is even more astonishing that she was allowed to communicate daily. When she reached the age of sixteen, a rich young man, of devout and serious character, asked her hand in marriage. She refused him, saying that she wished to consecrate herself to God in the Third Order of St Francis. The result was a furious outburst of temper on the part of her father. He gave his daughter a sound thrashing, locked her up in a room on a diet of bread and water, but this treatment only made her glad to have something to offer to God. However, a Franciscan friar managed to persuade the indignant parent that it was of no use trying to bully his daughter, and in the end he agreed to allow her to do as she wished.

So on the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady, September 8, 1731, Anna Maria was clothed with the habit of the Third Order Secular in the church of Santa Lucia del Monte, and took the name by which we all know her and can henceforth call her—*Suor Maria Francesca delle cinque Piaghe di Gesù*—' Sister Mary Frances of the Five Wounds of Jesus '. This little church, hidden away in a maze of narrow streets in the heart of Naples, had been in charge of the Alcantarin Franciscans who had come from Spain about the middle of the seventeenth century. In 1708 the Spanish Friars had returned to their own country, and the Italian remnant which was left asked San Giovanni Giuseppe della Cruce to obtain permission from the Holy See for the erection of an Italian Province of the Alcantarin branch of the Order of Friars Minor. This great saint was still alive and had his headquarters at Santa Lucia del Monte when Anna Maria Gallo became a tertiary, and it was one of the friars of this community, Padre Felice, who took on her spiritual direction.

To understand the background against which the life of this saintly tertiary was lived—not that she was probably directly conscious of it—it may be as well to explain that, after being governed for more than two hundred years by Spanish viceroys, Naples was conquered by the Austrians in the war of the Spanish succession and was given a king in the person of Charles III, son of the Emperor Leopold. In 1734 Charles of Bourbon, son of Duke Philip of Parma, with the aid of Spanish troops, recaptured Naples, and assumed the title of King. Sister Maria Francesca knew by actual experience what were the horrors of war, for battles were fought in the streets of her native city. It was no peaceful background —far from it.

But with her clothing as a tertiary began the second period of her life. It is impossible to describe it in detail, but it can be summed up by saying that she seemed to be made to stand beneath the Cross and let the Passion *overflow* into her own human life, so that, so far as she was concerned, Naples of the mid-eighteenth century was her Calvary. Her one desire clearly was to be so united to Our Lord that she might partake of His sufferings for the world around her. She felt in her body the very pains of the Passion, and was loaded with so many illnesses that, she remarked in a curious and impersonal manner, she seemed to have endured all that could be endured. To quote from her biographer: " She seemed never weary of suffering, she was not even incommoded by it. . . . She often took on herself the illnesses of her neighbours and particularly of her benefactors. To physical suffering was added mental pain from the persecution of her father, of her sisters and of other persons jealous of her virtues. Even her confessors made her suffer by the severity of their direction in order to test her state. Her Divine Spouse suffered her to endure the pains of dryness and desolation which several times reduced her to the last extremity.

" But Our Lord was mindful of His Own : He often came to visit her and filled her soul with consolation. Her ecstasies became so frequent for many years, that her life was spent in raptures." [1] We are also told that Sister Maria Francesca's compassion embraced the sick, miserable and afflicted. There was no sorrow or trouble she would not do her best to relieve. When she had nothing else to give, she would add to her penances in order to move the Heart of Jesus to have compassion on the sufferings of others. Her frequent miracles added to the notoriety

[1] Père Léon, *Auréole Séraphique* (Eng. trans.), Vol. III. These details are based on the Italian life by P. Laviosa, published in connection with the beatification in 1843.

and made it more difficult for her to live in seclusion. Remember, too, that she was not living in a convent, but in the home of a secular priest in the heart of Naples, probably a flat in a tenement house, occupied by other families.

From the time she became a Franciscan tertiary in 1715 until her death more than seventy years later, most of Europe was in an almost never ending state of war. No nation was ever at peace for very long. The Stuarts tried and failed to regain the kingdoms of England and Scotland. There were the Wars of the Spanish, Polish, and Austrian Successions; the Seven Years' War, and the American War which ended with the declaration of independence for the United States. Religion was growing cold, and scepticism was rife among the intellectuals. The Jesuits were expelled from Naples in 1767, and before the death of Sister Maria Francesca, Pope Clement XIV had been forced to disband the Society. Two violent eruptions of Vesuvius occurred in 1759 and 1767, when the people of Naples feared that the lava might even flow down into, or the hot ashes bury their city. More than 50,000 people lost their lives in the great earthquake at Lisbon in 1755. Another earthquake of terrific violence overthrew Messina and other towns of Sicily in 1783. Preachers warned their listeners that these were signs of God's wrath with the sinful world, but men and women soon forgot and reverted to a life of selfish pleasure. Were not the prayers and penances of Sister Maria Francesca needed?

With the eyes of her soul she could see the sins of the world, multiplying one by one, not to mention the persecutions of Catholics in many countries—the blasphemies, the despair, the loss of innocence, the luxury and vices of courts, the miseries of the poor. The life of Sister Maria Francesca might be compared to an almost never ending Garden of Gethsemane where she—like her Divine Master—" was in an agony, and prayed still more earnestly ". In spirit, she, too, was nailed to a cross, from which she looked down on the sinners of the world, saying: " Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing." She offered her own body to Our Lord into which His sufferings could overflow. She was indeed a true daughter of St Francis who bore the stigmata, and as a true daughter of the Church, whose charity is unbounded, followed human beings even beyond the gates of death. Her biographer says that she offered all her daily Communions, Masses and Indulgences for the dead, and that she often begged Our Lord to give her their sins, and that her confessor remarked one day, " How is it that any souls remain in purgatory? " for he had such a firm belief in the efficacy of her prayers.

Yes! Sister Maria Francesca was a " true daughter of St Francis ", but not the saint as pictured for us by his contemporaries. Her Franciscan spirit is rather that portrayed by Zurbaran in his famous painting of St Francis, stressing the ecstatic pain and bliss in which he passed his last years. The same Baroque Franciscanism was expressed by El Greco in his painting of San Bernardino of Siena, now hanging in the Prado at Madrid. " The flame-like figures of El Greco are embodied ecstasies ", as Mr E. I. Watkin points out,[1] and Maria Francesca could be put into this category.

The more one studies her life, the more one feels how she was part and parcel of eighteenth-century Naples in which the ecstasy of a proud and dazzling worldly luxury was contrasted with an ecstasy of spiritual passion, manifested in the lavish decoration of churches, " that luxuriance, indeed riot of colour and form and,

[1] *Catholic Art and Culture* (revised edn., 1947), p. 108.

where possible, opulence of precious materials which offend the taste of many whose temper is less ecstatic ".[1]

For more than seventy years Maria Francesca lived in Naples, her first home being a tenement house in the midst of its narrow, noisy, squalid slums and stately palaces. During the last thirty-eight years of her life she was housekeeper to a secular priest. She prayed before those wax images of the saints, dressed up in silks and satins and decked out with jewels, which are preserved in glass cases in most of the baroque and roccoco churches, where the scent of stale incense mingles with that of the garbage in the streets. She was often pushed aside by the gorgeous coaches of the nobility, in which sat magnificently dressed ladies on their way to the Teatro San Carlo, opened in 1762, where they would laugh at the jokes and listen to the tinkling tunes of some *opera buffa*. They ignored this poor tertiary, but she was known and loved by the half-naked beggars and starving children, loafing or playing in the dark alleys beneath festoons of ragged garments hung out to dry. We can see her in imagination, making her way home at sunset, probably too absorbed in God to notice the dull glow of fire lighting up Vesuvius, or the myriad lights of teeming towns and villages across the bay, like a distant swarm of fire-flies. Then, back in her own room, she would resume her prayers and penances after she had cooked and served supper for her employer.

In the end, it was the sufferings of the Church that killed her. She could bear it no longer and begged to die. " I can see nothing but disasters—troubles in the present, greater troubles in the future. I pray God that I may not live to witness them." God heard her prayer, before the French Revolution shook Europe in 1792. Her death took place on October 6,1791, the day after the feast of St Francis. She was laid to rest within the church of Santa Lucia del Monte, where she had been admitted to the Third Order sixty years before. She was beatified by Gregory XVI in 1843, and canonized by Pius IX in 1867. Her feast is kept as a double by the Franciscan Order, as well as by the Archdiocese of Naples, on October 6.

Seen against the background of her time, the extraordinary life of St Mary Frances of the Five Wounds is understandable. She is not a saint to be imitated, but then what should one ever try to *imitate* in saints except their obedience to the leading of the Holy Ghost in discharging the duties of their state of life, and in their opportunities to live in a round of ordinary duties—is not this the whole purpose of God for saints ? Yet the world today needs the sufferings, however small or unsought these may be, that tertiaries of St Francis can bear in union with Our Lord. The very crumbs of sufferings may be gathered up—so great is the need of suffering and purification in our own world.

[1] Watkin, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

CHAPTER IX

SAINTLY TERTIARIES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

BY the middle of the nineteenth century St Francis had regained his former popularity among Catholics, and there were even some outside the Church who were beginning to discover that there was a medieval saint who seemed to share some of their opinions. As early as 1826 the Romantic School of German writers had adopted St Francis, classing him as the greatest troubadour of the Middle Ages. Both Chateaubriand in France and Manzoni in Italy were inspired by Franciscan idealism. The Little Poor Man found a more orthodox apologist in Ozanam—the founder of the Society of St Vincent de Paul—whose book on the Franciscan poets became a classic.

All three families of the Friars Minor suffered badly during the French Revolution and during the Napoleonic Wars which followed. The persecution of the religious orders which had started towards the end of the eighteenth century was continued by Napoleon. In Spain, friaries were closed by the government in 1820, and again ten years later. There were bitter persecutions in Poland and in other countries. In Italy, the Franciscans took a long time to recover even a small part of the status and influence they had lost. Just when it looked as if their future was more secure, all Italian religious orders were suppressed in 1866, and their property confiscated. For the next twenty years the Friars Minor in Italy shared the fate of other religious, and were often treated as if they were criminals or political agitators. Vocations dropped, many friaries were abandoned, until by degrees they were bought back by laymen and re-inhabited by the sons of St Francis.

Fortunately the Friars Minor Observants had a Minister General who was capable of dealing with the situation—Padre Bernardino da Portugruaro, one of the Reformati.[1] It was he who managed to save his Order from complete dissolution. He gathered those who were left into countries where they might be safe from further molestation—Holland, Austria and the United States of America. Gradually he succeeded in bringing back the Friars Minor to Italy. He founded international colleges for the promotion of Franciscan studies and historical research. The second half of the century produced many famous preachers, such as Padre Agostino da Montefeltro, and great social reformers, of whom Padre

[1] By founding the official organ, *Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, this general contributed much toward a more perfect union of the reformed branches within the ranks of the Observants. This led to Pope Leo XIII's Bull *Felicitate quadam* of October 4, 1897, by which every distinction between the reform branches of the Observants, even the difference of name, was removed.

Ludovico da Cassoria must be mentioned. In Naples and elsewhere, the latter put new life into moribund fraternities of the Third Order. He founded a new congregation of secular tertiaries who lived in community, devoting their time to visiting prisons, orphanages and hospitals, and who, from their grey habit, are known as the *Frati Bigi*. The Friars Minor resumed their apostolate in England in about 1860. The first of several provinces in the United States was set up in 1844.

The Conventuals also revived, and their first North American Province was established in 1852. The Capuchins, who had been persecuted just as much as the other two branches of the First Order, gradually regained their position, and increased in numbers. They returned to England in 1850, and seven years later erected the first of their provinces in the United States.

Franciscan foreign missionaries spread themselves into new countries. By 1850, and earlier in some places, there were friars of all three branches of the First Order at work in Asia, Africa, North, South and Central America. An enormous number of Third Order Regular congregations were founded, the majority of them for women—far too many to be mentioned by name. A few were enclosed and contemplative, but most of them were engaged in various forms of active work—the care of the sick, orphans, fallen women, and above all in teaching. In 1897 Pope Leo XIII absorbed four distinct branches of the Observant friars into one Order of Friars Minor, and names like Observants, Recollects, Cordeliers, Alcantarins, etc., became defunct. The Conventuals and Capuchins were left with their own Ministers General as before.

The two tertiary Popes—Pius IX and Leo XIII—did everything they could to foster and encourage the Third Order Secular. Their example was followed by prelates such as Cardinal Manning and Archbishop Ketteler of Mainz. Leo XIII stands out as the greatest tertiary Pope of modern times. When he was Archbishop of Perugia he spoke of the Third Order " as a means of re-establishing among the faithful, purity of morals and integrity of faith ". Soon after he was elected to the papacy he declared in his encyclical *Auspicato concessum* that the Third Order was " the great gift of St Francis to the world, and one which has contributed in no small measure to the preservation of the foundation stones of Christian morality". Meanwhile the Pope had appointed a commission of Cardinals to revise the tertiary Rule, so that it could be brought into closer touch with the needs of the age, while preserving its traditional spirit.

In some ways it was a drastic revision. Even the number of chapters was reduced from twenty to three, but the substance of the Rule remains unchanged. One of the most important amendments is that tertiaries are bound no longer to wear the full habit, but may content themselves with the cord and scapular, worn beneath their ordinary garments. The days of fasting and abstinence, apart from those observed by all Catholics, are reduced to two days in the year. The Divine Office, or the Little Office of Our Lady, can now be replaced by twelve Our Fathers, Hail Mary's, and Glory be to the Father. All the moral obligations, such as frugality in eating, dress, works of charity, etc., remain unchanged, but are expressed in a more simple form.

This revised Rule of the Third Order was promulgated in the Constitution *Misericors Dei Filius*, dated May 30, 1883. Since then congregations of the Third Order Secular have multiplied in almost every country in the world. Today there are reckoned to be over three million members of the Third Order Secular. In

almost every language of the Christian world there are periodicals published for the instruction of tertiaries and for the spread of the Franciscan spirit.

Subsequent Popes have done all they could to encourage the Third Order in various ways. In December 1950 an international congress of tertiary leaders took place in Rome, the chief result of which was to define the spirit of the Franciscan apostolate, and to draw up a scheme for closer relations between all four families of the Third Order, and with other Catholic organizations.

ST JOSEPH BENEDICT COTTOLENGO (1786-1842)

THERE is too much to tell about the life of this nineteenth-century saint to spend much time in the facts of his career as distinct from his great work, but what strikes us about almost every fact we know of him is its significance as expressing, even in his cradle, one or other of those traits of character that mark a true Franciscan —gay-heartedness, simplicity, and a passionate sympathy with the poor.

Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo was born on May 3, 1786, in the town of Bra, about twenty-five miles south of Turin. He was the eldest of six children. The first thing we know about him is that when he was put in his cradle, his mother would make the sign of the Cross on his forehead to keep him from harm, and he would smile as though to thank her. Yes: his courtesy began when he was a tiny baby. Simple and direct as he would be ever, his graciousness was invariable. He was to spend his whole life among the lowest of the low, the most wretched and abandoned of creatures—but ever to preserve a high distinction of manner.

At first ' Beppo ' was a delicate child and a nervous one, afraid of the dark and of being left alone. If he had not been, he would not have understood so well the fears of countless children whom he was to rescue from every kind of ' being left alone ' and of moral and spiritual as well as material darkness. Even as a little boy he seems to have had an acute sense of the difference between being safe in a home and being outside in the cold and dark, because he was found measuring a room, and when asked what he was doing it for, explained that when he was older he would take in as many sick people as it would hold. He had an equally sensitive conscience. He loved to have *soldi* in his little purse so that he could give something to any poor people he met, and one day he found a small coin on the floor, and thankfully appropriated it. But later he came to his mother and handed it over to her, saying gravely: " It seemed to me when I had this money the curse of God was on me, and I had no peace." It seems, however, that his understanding was not so quick in intellectual matters. When he went to school, try as he would, he could not learn. At last his mother told him to commend himself to no less a person than St Thomas Aquinas. The great Dominican genius bent down to the little future Franciscan dunce and continued the ancient friendship between the two families by giving his petitioner the ability to understand and remember what he was taught. In his gratitude, Beppo began to dream of being learned enough to be a priest.

There was never any difficulty about his understanding spiritual things. This is proved by the fact that Beppo was confirmed when he was eight and allowed to make his first Communion the following year—a most unusual thing in those days. Then began his tremendous—and truly Franciscan—devotion to the Blessed Sacrament which he was to pass on to his spiritual sons and daughters.

At sixteen he was wearing the black cassock of a seminarist. Owing to the Napoleonic invasion of Italy, which went on throughout the greater part of the year 1796, resulting in a complete collapse of normal life, especially in Piedmont and Lombardy, Beppo was not sent at once to a seminary, but studied under Don Emanuele Amerano, his parish priest. He taught the catechism, and his attitude of mind to learning is shown by his remark: "Who knows the catechism, knows everything: who knows it not, knows nothing"—another Franciscan attitude of mind, expressing a complete satisfaction with the plain simple truths of Christian Doctrine. It was about this time that he was received into the Third Order of St Francis at the Capuchin friary near Bra.

Having managed to escape the strict Napoleonic law of conscription, by a dispensation of Divine Providence who could not spare His servant for any soldiering—any more than that other saint and tertiary who had been born that same year—John Baptist Vianney, the future *Curé* of Ars—he went to the diocesan seminary at Asti, about twenty miles from his home-town. Napoleon had been crowned King of Italy in 1805. The previous year Pope Pius VII had been forced to go to Paris to take part in the coronation of Napoleon as Emperor of the French. In 1809 the French troops captured Rome, and for three years Pius VII remained a virtual prisoner at Savona on the Ligurian coast. While all this was going on, in the year 1811 Giuseppe Cottolengo was ordained priest, and at the age of twenty-six he was sent back to his own town as a curate. Not long afterwards the Bishop of Asti moved him to the village of Corneliano d'Alba, where his former *parroco*, Don Amerano, persuaded him to go to Turin, so that he could take his degree in theology. St Thomas was evidently still helping his former client, for Giuseppe passed his examinations brilliantly. But so far as he was concerned the securing of a degree in theology was merely an obedience fulfilled which God had blessed for His own reasons and purposes. As far as young Don Cottolengo was concerned, what was far more important was the outbreak of typhus fever in 1817, when he could give himself to the service of the sick without stint; by this time he was back again at Bra, working in the parish of Sant' Andrea. Here was a war in which he would not evade conscription! 'Volunteer' is too slow a word to express the spirit in which he went on duty then. And when his mother with natural anxiety begged her son to take some care of himself, all he said was: "I am a soldier, and where should soldiers be if not on the battlefield?"

Napoleon was now a prisoner on the island of St Helena, and once again there was peace in Italy. Don Cottolengo, like all other inhabitants of the state of Piedmont, found himself a subject of the King of Sardinia. He was free to fight any battles on behalf of the human race in all its diseases, physical, moral and spiritual. He was a born fighter. But his weapons were simply personal sanctification and faith.

In 1818 the Chapter of Turin elected Don Cottolengo a Canon of the Cathedral. "What will they do with a piece of furniture like me?" was his comment when the news of this great honour reached him: "What good am I—except for planting cabbages at Bra?" But he accepted the honour in the spirit of obedience to Divine Providence, moved to Turin, and settled down as a member of the community of priests who served the Church of Corpus Domini in this city. In his own rooms he fitted up an altar to Our Lady, before which he hung several cages of canaries, so that the little golden birds might sing her praises when he was out working among the poor. 'Praises' is a word one finds constantly in any account

of Don Cottolengo's doings or those of his spiritual children—as in the lives of St Francis and his followers.

The community of Corpus Domini lived under a rule similar to that of the Oratorians. The priests soon came to love the new member, for he was as gay as he was good. Like St Francis and St Philip Neri he talked cheerful nonsense of his own that had more sense in it than many a long sermon, and his own sermons were as spontaneous as the singing of his canaries, whom he called the *Musici della Madonna*. His effervescence was that of an utterly healthy soul, which cannot help bubbling over. What his physical health was like, nobody knew, for he would never speak of it. " Oh, I am always well ! " he would say with a smile, " I have just come from a tavern, and if you are wise, you will frequent it as I do." And his hearers knew he meant the church and Holy Communion. He encouraged frequent and even daily Communion at an age when this was regarded with suspicion. As for confession, he would range himself beside those to whom he recommended the sacrament of penance, saying : " I have just come from confession myself, but you know how it is, I am always confessing and I never do much better. I resolve and I remain just the same, always bad and always lazy. And yet how I do want to go to heaven ! It is a good thing for me that God is so merciful ! " When his Oratorian confessor, Padre Michele Fontana, refused to advise him to enter a religious order, saying that he was needed as a parish priest in Turin, he sighed and replied : " Ah, and I shall soon be old, an old bear of a creature, drunk as a cobbler from morning to night perhaps, and doing nothing ! " It was about this time that the rector of Corpus Domini lent him a life of St Vincent de Paul. In that book he read his own vocation. A lesser man would have tried to begin at once some work for the poor, whose needs clamoured for his attention, Cottolengo waited for God to set him to work.

And God put the grace of initiating the work for which this priest had been created in the hands of her in whom He began His greatest work of all. Cottolengo's devotion to the Mother of God began in his boyhood and had developed at the chapel of ' Our Lady of the Flowers ', a shrine near his home, around which white hawthorns flowered not once but twice a year, to commemorate Mary's hiding, in a hawthorn bush, a poor woman who had been set upon by robbers. So his own sense of the need to protect and to ' take in ' those who had nowhere to go was connected with this idea of Mary as the sheltering mother of those in danger.

On September 2, 1827, he was called to the assistance of a poor Frenchwoman passing through Turin who had fallen in the street. He arrived to find the distraught husband and three terrified children gathered round her, and he could only get her into the shelter of a nearby shed before she died, because none of the existing hospitals could come to the rescue. The woman was given the Last Sacraments, but nothing that Cottolengo could do was able to pacify the husband and the three children. He was a soldier once more, led into action. He returned very late to his rooms, and found the church shut for the night. He insisted on having the bell rung, and the few people who came in from the street, wondering what devotions were going on at this unusual hour, found Cottolengo reciting the Litanies of Our Lady before her altar. When he came to the words *Consolatrix Afflictorum*, he was overcome with emotion. What passed between him and the Consoler of the Afflicted is not known, but as he went back to the sacristy, he was heard to say : *La grazia è fatta*—" The grace is given ! Blessed be the Madonna ! "

Later that evening he told the other priests of his sick-call and of what he had wished to do for similar cases of the abandoned poor, and how Our Lady had given him permission to begin. One and all recognized the true vocation of their colleague, and promised to help him in every way they could.

It would take too long to relate, except very briefly, all that happened between this incident and the founding of the Little House of Divine Providence, which was the fulfilment of Canon Cottolengo's hopes and Our Lady's wishes. It can only be said that at first it seemed impossible to find even a few rooms, and then that four were found in a house called the ' Volta Rossa ', and someone promised to pay, and a poor workman offered his services to help with the plastering, painting and carpentering, and that four beds were given. On January 17, 1828, the house was opened by the arrival of a paralyzed woman who had nowhere to go and be looked after. The hospital grew like a living thing, frightening the prudent canons of the church of Corpus Domini who knew that there were no funds to support it. " What ? " exclaimed Don Giuseppe's brother, who was a prudent Dominican, " do you mean to say that, without capital, you are going to found a hospital ? " Like a pistol shot flashed back the answer : " Not for an instant ! You wait and see what capital Divine Providence will provide for us ! " As for nurses, there came forward a Franciscan tertiary, Marianna Nasi, a widow, and eleven of her friends. Don Giuseppe dedicated them to St Vincent de Paul, giving them as a badge a red rose on a green ribbon, in the centre of which was a little silver heart. At first these women were ordinary secular tertiaries who devoted all their time to charity, but in 1830, with Marianna's house for a convent, they became known as the *Vincenzine*—the Little Vincentians. In Italy and in other countries the members of this institute still wear that badge on the brown habit, with the blue apron, which many thousands have learned to love in more than a hundred years. Then came the cross with the falling off of help and with the doubts of good people, but after an inquiry into the running of the hospital by the Archbishop of Turin, the conviction began to grow that this thing was of God, and that the red rose-tree of charity must be encouraged. It would grow up, certainly, under the protection of the Mystical Rose, the Consoler of the Afflicted.

In 1830 a cholera epidemic, which had started in India about ten years before, reached Europe. By the summer of 1831 thousands were dying of it in France and Italy, and Turin was not spared. People began to get alarmed, and the inmates of the neighbouring houses prevailed upon the civic authorities to close the Volta Rossa hospital of the Little Vincentians, which their founder was cramming with the sick. The other canons tried to prevail upon Don Giuseppe to give up any idea of re-opening it. He merely replied in his inimitable manner : " It is clear that you never learnt market-gardening at Bra. If cabbages are to be any good, they must be transplanted. And you shall see how we will grow after our transplanting ! " Meanwhile he simply sent his " little cabbages ", as he called his nurses, to tend the worst cholera cases in their homes. He had already got his eye on a piece of waste land outside the city which had some tumble-down buildings on it. Somehow he secured possession of this unattractive site, known as Valdocco. With the help of a mason who gave his services, one of the cottages was put in order, and there the ' cabbages ' were transplanted !

A little girl begged of Don Giuseppe in the street : she had no home and could not find work. So he took her with him to the " Little House of Divine Providence"

under the protection of St Vincent de Paul as he named it. In April 1832, the first sick man was admitted—an appalling case of gangrene in the legs. From that moment the growth of the Little House was like something out of a fairy tale.

Opposition died down in a murmur of amazement. The former Camaldolese monk, Pope Gregory XVI, sent his blessing. Carlo Alberto, King of Sardinia, now resident at Turin, offered government support, but Don Giuseppe would accept nothing but private charity towards the work. The King tried to argue that there would come a day when the founder was dead, and there would be no one to continue his work on the same lines. Don Giuseppe looked out of the windows of the royal palace, and pointing to the sentries, said: "Your Majesty sees his sentinels changing guard. One goes and another comes. So it will be at the Piccola Casa. I am only a sentry, and another will take my place in the same way, to watch over what is God's work." [1]

The Little House opened its arms wide. Those who had nowhere else to go found that their misery entitled them to the warmest welcome from the Little Sisters and Don Giuseppe. The last found themselves first. As for those who had an influential person to recommend them, they had no chance at all. "I am sorry", said the good Canon, when the secretary of Count Saluzzo brought a poor person with the Count's request that he might be admitted, "I haven't a bed to spare, but if the time should come when this man can rely no longer on His Excellency for help, you may be quite sure that the Little House will be able to take him in, even though he came in the middle of the night. As it is, I know His Excellency will pay for a bed in one of the paying hospitals." In this instance, he had only two vacant beds, and he had preferred to give them to a totally paralyzed case which would require endless care, and a man whose foul disease was the result of his own evil life. Such were his 'pearls'. Abandoned babies, orphans, the sick poor, paralytics, epileptics, the aged, tubercular cases, even the hopelessly insane, were taken into the shelter of the Little House. The children were divided into classes under the care of a patron saint, and dressed distinctively in red, blue, brown—as gaily as birds. Not only did there come means to build on more and more wards; chapels were added, and then a great church. All the while vocations of every kind multiplied to fulfil the different duties in the Little House.

Not nurses only, but teachers. When the Canonico Giuseppe had first begun work with his tertiary Sisters, while the rest went out to nurse, two were left in the church to praise God and pray for the needy. Now in the Little House nothing would do but that he must found more communities, whose members, in different ways, would all delight in the Providence of God and offer Him the well-spring of love whose streams refreshed the sad hearts of the poor under the great roof.

There has never been anything in the history of the Catholic Church similar to the numerous communities of men and women founded by St Joseph Benedict Cottolengo to carry on the work of his Little House of Divine Providence, granted that the Abbé Pierre Noailles, who was his contemporary in France, deserves to be given the second place with the seven communities he established as branches of the Institute of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, some being active and others contemplative. As Miss Nesta de Robeck tells us, "from the original group of

[1] The King continued to be a generous indirect benefactor to the Little House, and insisted on decorating Cottolengo with the Order of San Maurizio.

Cottolengo's followers there arose many different religious families. There are the Vincentine, the Martane, Orsoline, Genoveffe, Daughters of Mary, the Brothers of St Vincent, the Rosarianti, these last being men vowed to silence and prayer. There are the Sisters of the Heart of Mary who are deaf and dumb, Sisters of St Teresa, Shepherdesses of Our Lady, Sisters of Good Counsel, Daughters of St Eliana, of St Taide, Sisters of Suffrage and of the Cross, and others still. The members of these orders are all Franciscan tertiaries like their founder, but they follow different rules and modes of life made to fill every spiritual need, and to give a home to every different vocation. There are the cloistered families, whose houses are regular convents, from whence the Divine Office rises day and night and the life is purely contemplative, with the *Laus Perennis* of Perpetual Adoration. Without this side to its spiritual life the Città della Providenza could not fulfil its mission. Indeed in this house there are many mansions." [1] We are also told that " each house has its own chapel, its own motto over the door, and in each we are given the same Franciscan greeting of Cottolengo: *Sia laudato Gesù Cristo, Sèmpre sia laudato*—' May Jesus Christ be praised. May he ever be praised.' " [2]

The purely contemplative branches of the great spiritual family of the Little House of Divine Providence deserve special notice. There is the Order of Suffrage, or *Suffragine*—a group of Sisters who spend their lives in ceaseless prayer for the souls in Purgatory, and adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Then there are the *Pietadine*, who also follow a quasi-Carmelite rule, and who are dedicated to the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady, likewise spending long hours in adoration. They were followed by the ' Daughters of St Taide ', who offered themselves in reparation and thanksgiving for having been saved from a life of sin. Not content with having established female contemplative communities, Cottolengo formed some for men, the first of which were the *Rosarianti*, whose members concentrated on the perpetual recitation of the Rosary. But it was realized that there were a few men with another type of vocation, and for these was founded the Hermits of St Romuald, who lived in solitude, recited the Divine Office in an isolated chapel and engaged in perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In 1841 came the community of secular priests, dedicated to the Holy Trinity, to act as chaplains to the female groups and attend to the multiform spiritual needs of the vast family of the Piccola Casa.

" All these different religious orders were consecrated to Our Lady like the whole Franciscan Order, and Cottolengo's devotion never lost its Franciscan character. Both materially and spiritually the Piccola Casa was a genuine flower of the Franciscan tree. His own single-mindedness and simplicity, his spontaneity and burning charity make him the direct descendant of the first companions, the disciple of Brother Giles and Brother Leo, and indeed of the Seraphic Father himself. His dislike of money was certainly as great as that of St Francis; if ever he had any, which was rare, he gave it away, or threw it out of the window, and if ever a man was in love with Lady Poverty it was he. What money was left to the Piccola Casa, it had to be used to buy more houses or beds, or other necessaries, or to be given away to other poor. On no account could it be kept and invested, and such is the rule today." [3]

The founder wished that the spirit of his Little House should be that of a great

[1] *Among the Franciscan Tertiaries* (London, 1930), pp. 231-2.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 230. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 251.

family, with no hard or fast line drawn between the old and young, layfolk and religious. He treated everybody as his children, but the poor were always called " the masters of the house ", and the most miserable and wretched were " the masters in chief ". When his creditors came to say their bills were long overdue for settlement, he could suggest that it might be his fault because he was so empty of holiness, and that " one Jonah is enough to make a storm ". Explaining frankly that he had but a few *lire*, he would tell them that Divine Providence would pay them, and would ask them to return in a few days. Often the money came before they did. When the father of this vast family heard that stores had almost run out he would exclaim : " Oh, that's good, a splendid state of affairs ! Give away quickly what's left, and so make room for what God will send. If we have no beds left, accept some sick person as soon as he presents himself, and then God will *have* to send you more beds ! " It was the logic of trust. Divine Providence has never stopped working in the Little House. As for the religious, none has any preoccupation with the morrow. All do ' in God ' what they can. The Little House has never indulged in any advertisement or publicity. It has never begged for money or gifts in kind. In the past hundred years the enormous establishment has been run on nothing more than a firm belief in God's Providence, and this has never failed.

By the Lent of 1842 the " Canonico Buono "—as he was universally called—began to be ill. But his work went on as regularly as ever. Then one day soon after Easter, he announced that he thought he would go away to the house of a priest-brother at Chieri, saying that he needed a rest. Nobody had ever heard him speak of a rest before, and they must have suspected what it meant. He made the round of his communities and visited every nook and corner of the Little House, which he loved better than his own life. Then he slipped away quietly so as not to give trouble to any of his communities. Just as he had foretold, many years before, the sentries would be changed, and Padre Anglesio took his place.

He admitted that he had never slept in his bed for four years, and having arrived at his brother's, consented to being put to bed, utterly exhausted. His only anxiety was not to be a nuisance, and his only wish was to be allowed to lie quiet and alone. " I will stay here till Saturday ", he said, " and then all will be as God wills." On Saturday he was dead.

His body was brought back from Chieri to Turin, and was buried beneath the statue of Our Lady in the church of the Piccola Casa, according to his wishes. Everybody in and around Turin looked upon the Canonico Buono as a saint, and his cause was introduced almost at once. But owing to the troubled state of Italy, threatened already with a revolution, which in the end would result in the overthrow of the Temporal Power of the Papacy, and for other reasons, there was a long delay. Not until Easter Sunday 1917 was the founder of the Little House beatified by Benedict XV. He was canonized by Pius XI on the feast of St Joseph, March 19, 1934. His feast is kept on April 30 as a double-major by the Franciscan Order.

The *Piccola Casa della Divina Providenza*, as that ' city of God ' is still called, continues as it started, *without a penny of capital.* God provides for it from day to day, and has done so for nearly a hundred and thirty years. No one knows how many are its inmates. According to the wish of the founder they are never counted. But there are fourteen communities of men and women working and praying, and twenty-four families of children, of the sick, and of the helpless. One of its

hospitals can hold two thousand patients. And—including the sick who are nursed in their own homes by the *Vincenzine* who take food to them—the kitchens prepare every day the meals for about ten thousand souls.

OTHER RECENT BEATIFIED AND CANONIZED TERTIARIES

OTHER members of the Third Order who lived and died during the nineteenth century, and who have been beatified or canonized, must be mentioned. They include the following.

ST MARY MAGDALEN POSTEL (1756-1846) was born at Barfleur in Normandy. She became a schoolmistress, and during the French Revolution played a heroic part in helping priests who were hiding or in prison. She received permission to keep the Blessed Sacrament in her house and, in cases of emergency, to give the Viaticum for persons in danger of death. When peace was restored she founded a community of teachers, who observed the Rule of the Third Order of St Francis, out of which grew the now widespread congregation known as the Sisters of the Christian Schools. Mary Magdalen died in 1846. She was beatified by Pius X, and canonized in 1925. Her feast is kept on July 22.[1]

ST VINCENTA GEROSA (1784-1847) and ST MARIA BARTOLOMEA CAPITANIO (1807-1833) were the co-founders of a community of teaching sisters which developed into the tertiary congregation of Sisters of Charity (*ab Maria Infantula*). Mary Catherine Gerosa was the daughter of a prosperous merchant in the Diocese of Brixen. On the death of her parents she became a servant to her uncle, then having found another woman who shared her ideals in Bartolomea Capitanio, she established a group of teachers, all of whom belonged to the Third Order. Bartolomea died of tuberculosis in 1833, at the age of twenty-six. She was beatified in 1926, and canonized in 1950. Pope Gregory XVI approved the new institute in 1840, and Mary Catherine Gerosa, who had taken the religious name of Vincenta, was chosen as the 'senior Sister'. Within ten years forty convents had been founded. Today the Congregation numbers over seven thousand Sisters. The General Mother-House is at Zanisa in the Tyrol. Sister Vincenta Gerosa died in 1847, was beatified by Pius XI in 1933, and canonized in 1950.[2]

ST MARY JOSEPH ROSSELLO (1811-1880) was the daughter of poor working-class parents in Albisola Marina, near Savona. In 1837 she formed a community, which was approved by the Bishop of Savona, and which became known as the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Mercy. The Sisters professed the Franciscan Third Order Rule. The chief objects were to nurse the sick and care for abandoned girls. Before her death in 1880, Mother Mary Joseph had founded about seventy hospitals and convents. Her congregation has spread to many countries, and is numerous in the United States of America, with its Mother-House at Savona, Italy. She was beatified by Pius XI on November 6, 1938, and canonized in 1949.[3]

ST JOSEPH CAFASSO (1811-1860) was born in Turin, spent all his life in this city, and died there in 1860. After his ordination to the priesthood, he acted as confessor to St John Bosco and to the members of the Little House of Divine Providence founded by St Joseph Benedict Cottolengo (see pp. 231-4). He devoted

[1] See Butler-Thurston, *Lives of the Saints*, July 16.
[2] See Butler-Thurston, *Lives of the Saints*, June 4 and July 26.
[3] See *Ibid.*, December 7.

himself especially to the welfare of boys and youths. Later on he was appointed rector of the seminary at Turin, also chaplain to the municipal prison. His whole priestly life was spent in caring for everybody who needed his help, regardless of class distinction—rich and poor, prisoners and orphans, chimney sweeps and seminarists. He laboured for the welfare of souls with heroic charity and endless patience. Don Joseph Cafasso was beatified by Pius XI in 1925, and canonized in 1947.[1]

Bd Contardo Ferrini (1859-1902), a modern lay apostle, was born in 1859.[2] His father was a distinguished scientist. Contardo studied at the universities of Milan and Pavia, and after further studies at the University of Berlin, followed by research work on legal history at Copenhagen, Paris, Rome, Florence and Turin, a special chair was created for him at Pavia University, for " the study and exegesis of Roman Law ". He achieved this high position at the age of twenty-five. Two years later the young professor was clothed with the habit of the Third Order, having been inspired to do so by the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII issued in on the seventh centenary of the birth of St Francis in 1882, in which the faithful were urged to become tertiaries. Not content with keeping the strict letter of the Rule, this now celebrated professor took a private vow of celibacy. Few people suspected that he managed to find time for daily meditation, much spiritual reading and other exercises of piety. Like the future Pope Pius XI, he chose mountain-climbing as his favourite means of relaxation. Before long Ferrini was one of the chief leaders of Catholic Action in Italy. He wrote many books dealing with controversial subjects, always pointing out the need of morality in law. He attacked Socialism, and addressed meetings of working men. His charities were unbounded, and he was an active member of the St Vincent de Paul Society. But there was never anything spectacular about the outward life of this tertiary, still less about his holiness and piety. " Early in life he recognized the fact that goodness does not consist in a series of isolated deeds, but rather in reaching and holding God by means of such deeds, of duty well performed, of the ordinary daily actions carried out in the spirit of faith. ' By a good life ', he wrote, ' we mean a life that gives goodness and greatness even to the simplest and most ordinary action.' "[3] Contardo Ferrini died at Suna on Lake Maggiore, on October 5, 1902. He was beatified by Pius XII in 1948. His feast is kept as a semi-double in the Roman-Seraphic Calendar on October 27.

St Frances Xavier Cabrini (1850-1917) was born in Italy, but became a citizen of the United States in later years. In 1880 she founded a small community which grew into the world-wide Congregation known as the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, to whom she gave the Rule of the Franciscan Third Order. Most of her intensive apostolate was carried on in the United States, but she founded other houses in her native Italy, South America, and in other continents and countries. They include about seventy hospitals, orphanages and schools. She died at Chicago. Her beatification took place in 1938, and she was canonized by Pius XII in 1946. Her feast is kept on December 22.[4]

For lack of space it is impossible to mention other tertiaries who were born in

[1] See Butler-Thurston, *Lives of the Saints*, December 23.

[2] Cf. Lives by Bede Jarrett, O.P. (1903) and Joseph Fanciculli (1931); and Butler-Thurston, *Lives of the Saints*, 1956 edn., Vol. IV, 210.

[3] Marion Habig, O.F.M., *Contardo Ferrini* (Paterson, N.J., 1942), p. 19.

[4] See Butler-Thurston, *Lives of the Saints*, December 22.

the nineteenth century and who have been beatified and canonized, but exception must be made of ST PIUS X (d. 1914), who was a faithful member of the Third Order.[1]

[1] The causes of other beatifications of foundresses of Franciscan sisterhoods are going ahead at Rome, including *Ven. Lily Mary of the Crucified* (d. 1773), foundress of a Third Order Congregation ; *Mother Anna Mary Lapini* (d. 1860), foundress of the Franciscan Sisters of the Stigmata ; *Mother Aloysia of the Blessed Sacrament* (d. 1886), foundress of the Franciscan Sisters Adorers of the Cross ; *Mother Catherine Magdalen Daemen* (d. 1856), foundress of the Sisters of St Francis of Penance and Christian Charity ; *Mother Francesca Schervier* (d. 1876), foundress of the Sisters of the Poor of St Francis ; *Mother Mary of the Passion de Chappotin* (d. 1904), foundress of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. This list is not inclusive, for there are another twenty or so tertiaries whose causes of beatification have been introduced, among them *Margaret Sinclair*, an extern Third Order sister of the Poor Clares in England. (Cf. Marion Habig, O.F.M., ' The Fruitful Ideal ', in *Franciscan Herald and Forum*, June 1940, pp. 485-7.)

APPENDIX I

OTHER members of the Third Order who have never been formally beatified, also those whose membership is not confirmed by documentary evidence. The year of death is given in brackets.

Bd Amadeus of Savoy, duke (1472).
Bd Andronicus of Pisa, confessor (1251).
Bd Anthony of Hungary, pilgrim (1398).
St Casimir of Poland, king (1484).
Bd Christina Bruso of Stomelin, mystic (1312).
St Germaine Cousin, virgin (1601).
Bd Gregory X, pope (1276).
Bd Gregory of Verucchio, hermit (1313).
Bd James Oldo di Lodi, priest (1404).
Bd Jane of the Cross, virgin (1534).
Bd Jane of St Mary, virgin (1360).
Bd Jeremias of Lamberthenghi, priest (1513).
Bd Jerome of Ancona, confessor (1506).
St Joan of Arc, virgin (1431).
St John Baptist Rossi, priest (1764).
Bd John of Massacio, hermit (1399).
Bd John Sarcander, priest, martyr (1620).
St Joseph Oriol, priest (1620).
Bd Julia of Certaldo, virgin (1367).
Bd Jutta of Germany, virgin (1264).
Bd Lidwina of Schiedam, virgin (1433).
St Michael Garicoïts, priest (1863).
Bd Mirus Paredi, confessor (1381).
St Nicholas von Flüe, hermit (1487).
Bd Paschalina, virgin (1313).

APPENDIX II

FOUNDERS of Religious Orders and Congregations believed to have been Tertiaries of St Francis:

St Alphonsus Liguori (Redemptorists).
Bd Anthony Maria Claret (Claretians).
St Cajetan (Theatines).
St Camillus of Lellis (Camillians).
Bd Caspar del Bufalo (Precious Blood Fathers).
St Francis of Paola (Minims).
St Ignatius Loyola (Jesuits).
St John Baptist de La Salle (Brothers of the Christian Schools).
St John Bosco (Salesians).
St John Colombini (Jesuati).
St John of God (Hospital Brothers of Mercy).
St John Eudes (Eudists).
St Joseph of Calasanza (Piarists).
St Paul of the Cross (Passionists).
Bd Peter Julian Eymard (Blessed Sacrament Fathers).
St Philip Neri (Oratorians).
St Vincent de Paul (Lazarists).
Bd Beatrice de Sylva (Conceptionist Sisters).
St Jane Frances de Chantal (Visitation Order).
St Louise de Marillac (Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul).

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