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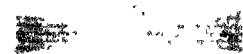
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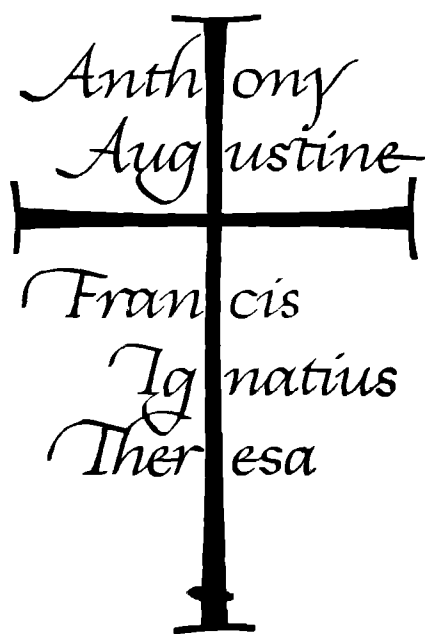
ANTHONY
THE RESA
IGNATIUS



THE SAINTS THAT MOVED THE WORLD



THE SAINTS THAT MOVED THE WORLD



RENÉ FÜLÖP-MILLER

A GATEWAY BOOK

THOMAS Y CROWELL COMPANY

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Translated by Alexander Gode
and Erika Fulop-Miller

Third Printing, November, 1946

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To my wife

ERIKA

IN GRATITUDE FOR
HER INVALUABLE COLLABORATION

C O N T E N T S

TO THE MODERN READER	I
SAINT ANTHONY, THE SAINT OF RENUNCIATION	19
SAINT AUGUSTINE, THE SAINT OF THE INTELLECT	94
SAINT FRANCIS, THE SAINT OF LOVE	153
SAINT IGNATIUS, THE SAINT OF WILL POWER	272
SAINT THERESA, THE SAINT OF ECSTASY	328
BIBLIOGRAPHY	423
INDEX	433

The paintings gathered in the frontispiece are

• Saint Augustine by El Greco,
Saint Francis by Cimabue,
Saint Anthony by David Teniers,
Saint Theresa by Peter Paul Rubens,
Saint Ignatius by Sanchez Coello

TO THE MODERN READER

"A LITTLE PHILOSOPHY inclineth a man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." Thus wrote Lord Bacon whose work marks a decisive turn in the history of Western thought, the turn from the Middle Ages with their acceptance of dogma and doctrine to the modern era of scientific probing and experimentation.

The great philosophical precursors of eighteenth-century rationalism were humble enough to acknowledge the limits of perceptual experience, they bowed in awe and reverence before the things which lay beyond the sphere of rational investigation.

Pierre Bayle supplied in his skeptic philosophy the foundation of enlightened rationalism, but he admitted frankly that reason sufficed at best to reveal errors but not to discover truths. John Locke, the first great British empiricist, the founder of a philosophy of "common sense," saw yet in reason merely a "function of revelation," and he reminded his readers "how restricted is the domain, barely a point, almost a nullity, which our thoughts can grasp in comparison with the vast expanse which transcends our thinking faculties."

Alexander Pope, the poet of this new philosophical trend, suggested with delightful sarcasm that we should—since it is reasonable to start out by doubting everything—reserve the main force of our doubt to doubt reason itself, that force which ventures to prove the things that we ought to doubt.

Meanwhile, however, the empirical sciences, in their search for natural laws, made one astounding discovery after another, thereby inducing reason to draw the fallacious conclusion that it alone held the key to true knowledge. With increasing freedom and boldness, the theory was proclaimed that for science there could be nothing supernatural and nothing incomprehensible, that on the contrary every phenomenon, every occurrence, could be explained through natural causes which lay entirely within the range of empirical investigation. Every time a new law of nature was dis-

covered and formulated, the humble modesty, which had still characterized the fathers of empiricism, grew weaker while the self-assured arrogance of human reason continued to increase

Even Kant, who was destined to become one of the most severe critics of reason, defined at one time "enlightenment as man's coming of age from the state of infancy," and Hegel, the apostle of absolute reason, hailed the intellectual stunt, "when man took his stand upon his head, that is to say upon thought, and molded reality in accordance therewith," as the beginning of an era of new glories.

But reason disappointed those who had faith in its sovereignty and regarded enlightenment as the "dawn of a new humanity" The age of enlightenment had begun as a revolt against the prejudices and the intolerance of the Church, but no sooner had it established its claim to intellectual freedom, had achieved its emancipation and acceded to power in its own right, than it assumed the same attitude of reactionary intolerance which it had fought in its erstwhile opponents It forgot that it had begun by rebelling against the tutelage of scholastic dogmatism and used its success merely to substitute its own prejudices for the prejudices of scholastic thought. A dogma of reason took the place of the dogma of faith. The so-called "dark Middle Ages" made way for a "darker Enlightenment"

It was a veritable dictatorship of empirical reason that usurped power in the course of the eighteenth century With arbitrary authoritarianism it declared that the results of sense perception were the only reliable form of truth Everything outside the realm of the five senses, everything exceeding man's powers of rational comprehension, was branded as heretical The universe—including man and all of man's intellectual and spiritual concerns—took on the appearance of a totalitarian realm governed by reason through an administration of weights and measures of mechanical laws of nature.

The scientists of the seventeenth century were made to supply the foundations of this arrogant rule of reason They themselves had still been able to visualize the laws of nature in harmony with a divine plan of creation, for them knowledge and faith had not been at odds Johannes Kepler, for instance, the discoverer of the three important laws of planetary motion, had felt aware of God's presence in the universe as in his own soul. Sir Isaac Newton was

not concerned lest the idea of universal gravitation which he conceived might be in conflict with his faith in God. René Descartes—the first to proclaim the universal supremacy of reason; the thinker who postulated doubt as the beginning of man's quest for truth and sought to explain in mechanical terms the movements of the stars and the heartbeat of man and animal—was yet prepared to recognize God as the firmest and most perfect reality, as the first and most general cause of every occurrence. Blaise Pascal, to whom mathematics and physics owe the discovery of principles and laws of fundamental importance, combined his knowledge of the laws of nature with his faith in the laws of God. The same holds true for Leibnitz, the man through whose work biology was advanced to the status of an exact science. And even Voltaire, the great freethinker of the eighteenth century, wrote as a last confession: "I die in adoration of God."

Then the French Revolution felt appointed to depose God as it had deposed the Bourbons. Pierre Gaspard Chaumette, attorney to the Commune of Paris, paid homage to the new "Goddess of Reason" in a speech he delivered on November 10, 1793, in the cathedral of Notre Dame. "Faith has had to yield place to reason," he said. "The people of Paris have assembled in this Gothic fane in which the voice of error has so long resounded, and where today for the first time the trumpets of truth are being blown. No more priests! No more gods than those which nature offers us!" And in the Convention Citizen Jacques Dupont exclaimed dramatically, "Nature and Reason—those are my gods!"

The rationalistic regimentation of all the phenomena of life and nature, which is characteristic of eighteenth-century enlightenment, was carried to an extreme by the materialistic and positivistic trends of the nineteenth century. Every new conquest of science was looked upon by the agents and propagandists of rationalism as merely another step toward the final establishment of a universal Third Reich of empirical truth. Man—his consciousness and his soul—was reduced to a complex of mechanical, physiological, biochemical, reflexological, psychoanalytical, or what have you reactions. Cultural values were regarded exclusively as the product of a mechanical interplay of cause and effect. Ethics, art, humanitarian ideals, in short, the course of all human history was conceived as subject to the laws of "social physics," of "social

biology," the "principle of selection," of the "survival of the fittest," and of "historical materialism." All supersensory phenomena, which would not fit in with this mechanistic conception of a world of matter, were rejected as contrary to common sense. Faith was sabotage against almighty reason, religion an "opiate for the people" or "regression to infantile primitivism", the idea of God was merely a symptom of "functional disorders in the brain."

The creative minds of this era, however, the poets and artists, those who owed little to reason and everything to grace, refused to submit to the dictatorship of reason. Just as their great ancestors, just as Dante, Petrarca, Michelangelo, Durer, El Greco, and Bach had done, they continued to profess their faith in God and the greater truth of supersensory certainties. "You alone can inspire me," wrote Beethoven in his diary, "you, my God, my salvation, my rock, my all, in you alone will I put my trust." Balzac and Baudelaire rejected with sweeping contempt the petty yardstick of reason and restated the supreme reality of faith. Fëdor Dostoevski, Nikolai Gogol, Francis Thompson, Gerard Manley Hopkins,—they all derived their power of poetic creation from their belief in God. Even the skeptic Heine wrote in a postscript to his *Romanzero* "Yes, I have returned to God. I am the prodigal son . . . I was overcome by heavenly nostalgia." He confessed "There is, after all, a divine spark in every human soul."

William Blake, the twofold genius of art and poetry, spoke of the physical sense of vision as of a means of reaching beyond the limits of the senses. "I question not my corporeal or vegetative eye any more," he wrote, "than I would question a window concerning a sight. I look through it and not with it." He believed in the reality of supersensory visions, because he had had them himself. To Blake "the treasures of heaven are but realities of the intellect, are real celestial entities! A vision is not a cloudy vapor or a nothing. It is organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. I assert that all my visions appear to me infinitely more perfect and more organized than anything seen by the mortal eye."

Van Gogh, after spending a lifetime painting peasants, apple trees, and sunflowers, confessed from the depth of his religious conviction that, if he had had the power to do so, he would have

painted the figures of saints. "They would have turned out as men and women like the earliest Christians"

"I am through with life," said Strindberg in a final accounting, "and the balance shows that the word of God is alone right" Paul Claudel, finally, spoke of poetry as a form of prayer, for in its purity it is divine creation and bears witness before God Poetry and prayer are but two expressions of a single urge in the human soul.

Meanwhile, even within the ranks of the army of reason there were to be noticed increasingly frequent symptoms of low morale and lack of discipline There were a good many lukewarm supporters, waverers, outsiders, defeatists The language of Schopenhauer was that of a traitor and deserter He spoke of reason as merely a "partial function of thought" and insisted that the "proper sphere of existence of the human spirit" lay outside the realm of the senses "The physical world is not the mother but merely the nurse of God's spirit living within us"

The most fateful blow against the dictatorship of reason, however, was prepared within the inner sanctum of rationalism itself, that is, in the laboratories and observatories where exact science, commissioned by reason, was busy in the endeavor to prove with scales and balances, tables and formulae that the mechanical laws of nature are universally valid As the methods of investigation grew more and more refined, the results they produced were more and more incomprehensible in purely rational terms The Austrian physicist Ernst Mach felt compelled to state that a more critical examination of the philosophical tenets of enlightenment cannot find in them anything but a new mythology conceived in mechanical terms. He expressed his doubts as to the applicability of reason in the domain of natural science and wrote "When we think we have succeeded in understanding a process, what has happened is that we have referred unfamiliar incomprehensibilities to familiar incomprehensibilities"

Similar conclusions were arrived at by workers in the most different branches of modern research. To the student of astrophysics the bodies in stellar space appeared no longer as a system of stars moving as if by clockwork, in paths that are perfectly calculable, and that remain unchangeable for all times On the contrary, it became apparent that the universe is undergoing a continuous

change, that it expands and contracts without our being able to say for what reasons and in accordance with what laws

But if reason failed man when he contemplated the stellar universe, the domain of the infinitely large, it failed him no less in the domain of the infinitely small, in the region of entities tinier than can be discerned by the most powerful microscope. In the world of molecules and atoms, reason's method of weighing and measuring and formulating natural laws, proved, in many respects, to be no longer applicable.

The scientists came to the conclusion that what had been interpreted as laws of nature were in reality nothing more than outcomes of the calculus of probabilities. This calculus of probabilities with its statistical averages applied only to very large numbers of instances, to almost innumerable repetitions of one and the same process. In the domain of the infinitely small, in the world of atoms and electrons, however, these great numbers could no longer be found. Here prevailed the power which we term chance—a microcosmic destiny which mocks at reasonable calculation. Thus it became quite questionable whether any laws at all could be rationally formulated regarding individual molecular processes, or whether human powers of cognition were not here faced by insuperable barriers.

The farther biology advanced, the more impossible did biologists find it to reduce to a rational formula the life even of the minutest plants. They were forced to realize that "the Newton of the blade of grass had not yet appeared and never would appear."

In sum it became more and more apparent that the expansion of the domain of science ran parallel to a contraction of the sphere of the phenomena for which reason and calculation could account. The materialistic prophecy that the end of the nineteenth century would see the end of religious beliefs had come to naught. The rule of purely causalistic thinking, which had been expected to last a thousand years, was forced—precisely by the expansion of scientific discoveries—to recognize its true status of nothing but a provisional government. Lord Bacon's prophecy that "depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion," proved to be true.

The new trend in the history of human thought is clearly apparent in the works of the great American philosopher and psychologist William James. His pragmatic doctrine accepted the

data of experience as criteria of all reality. On this basis he saw in religious experiences the pragmatic corroboration of the reality of a divine principle and in visionary phenomena the pragmatic demonstration of a supersensory realm of facts. James was also the first to arrive at the conclusion that the fundamentals of the spirit of religion are not incompatible with modern science and its methods of thought. As a true champion of unprejudiced criticism, he upheld man's right, and even his need, to believe. Thus his philosophy became the charter of a free and liberal trend of thought which took up the fight against the prejudices of dogmatic reason. For a century, faith had been pining away in the concentration camp of rationalistic materialism. It had gone underground and had continued to work in the realms of poetry and romantic thought, but now—thanks to James—it was released and re-established in all its rights and honors.

And then,—hardly a century and a quarter after the French Revolution which had set up the dictatorship of reason with its claim to world domination,—another French revolution broke out,—this time a revolution of thought. A new philosophical trend under the influence and leadership of Emile Boutroux and Henri Bergson began to undermine the absolute rule of rationalism and strove to re-establish the validity of metaphysical truths. With William James, metaphysical truths had enjoyed equal rights with the truths of reason and sense perception, but now they were restored to their old position of sovereign power. God, whom the National Convention had sent into exile, could return to France.

This new phase of French thought did not conceive of religion as a vestige of primitive thinking or a mere by-product of backward economic conditions, but rather as a category in man's spiritual life to which reason must be subordinated.

In the light of this new philosophy, God appeared as a *raison profonde*, the spirit which is the universe was the *action suprême*, faith in God meant awareness of the *acte de vivre*; mystic experiences constituted a participation in the *nature fondamentale*, and man's ethical endeavors signified a *restitution de Dieu dans la nature*.

The anti-religious doctrine of rationalism and enlightenment had started from France on its career of world conquest. So did the new trend of pro-religious philosophy.

It was supplied with a scientific basis when the results of modern research made it possible to recognize, beyond the limits of physical observation, a spiritual principle as the prime mover in all creation

Kant held that he must "abandon knowledge to make room for faith" But in contrast to him, who thus stipulated a radical separation of science and religion, increasing numbers of important physicists, astrophysicists, mathematicians, and biologists are now of the opinion that science and religion are not only not at all inimical to each other, but constitute only in their intimate interrelation a complete picture of the world

Here are men who have succeeded by means of the most modern methods of thought and research in penetrating to limitless distances of immaterial space, in measuring the immaterial speed of light, in fathoming the world of the infinitely small, of atoms and electrons, in applying mathematical principles to the problems of time, space, and relativity, in unveiling the most hidden secrets of living cells and organic growths And in the course of their work, an entirely new conception of the universe has unfolded before them leading them farther and farther away from the primitive, artificial, mechanistic hypotheses of materialism to the idea that the universe is patterned after a living order which was conceived by a divine Creator

These modern scientists think again—as did their great precursors Kepler, Newton, Pascal—of Creator and Creation, of physical law and divine immanence, of "sensory data" and "value data," as one harmonious entity Supported by their penetrating scientific investigations, they proclaim not only their factual findings but also the eternal validity of the truth of faith

"With astonishing rapidity within the past twenty years man has extended his vision," wrote the great American physicist Robert Andrews Millikan "He has looked inside the atom, a body one millionth the diameter of a pin head, and found an infinitely small nucleus He has then looked inside that nucleus, and has watched the interplay of radiation upon the electrons, both within the nucleus and out of it, and found everywhere amazing orderliness and system Again, man has turned his microscope upon the living cell and found it even more complex than the atom, with many parts, each performing its function necessary to the life of the

whole And again, he has turned his great telescope upon the spiral nebulae a million light years away and there also he found system and order."

Considering all this, Millikan exclaimed "Is there anyone who still talks about the materialism of science? Rather does the scientist join with the psalmist of thousands of years ago in reverently proclaiming, the Heavens declare the glory of God and the Firmament sheweth His handiwork The God of Science is the spirit of rational order and of orderly development, the integrating factor in the world of atoms and of ether and of ideas and of duties and of intelligence"

Millikan, who investigated the penetrating power of cosmic rays, who succeeded in isolating the electron and in measuring its charge, concluded on the basis of his scientific findings that "there is an interrelatedness, a unity, a oneness about the whole of nature, and yet still an amazing mystery Modern science of the real sort," Millikan wrote, "is slowly learning to walk humbly with its God, and in learning that lesson it is contributing something to religion"

Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington, one of the leading British astrophysicists of modern times, derived from his researches on the motion of stars, stellar evolution, and relativity, the conclusion that a purely physical investigation of nature is limited and needs to be complemented by observations from a religious viewpoint

"It is the aim of science," Eddington wrote, "so far as its scope extends, to lay bare the fundamental structure underlying the world, but science has also to explain if it can, or else humbly to accept, the fact that from this world have arisen minds capable of transmuting the bare structure into the richness of our experience If the spiritual world has been transmuted by a religious color beyond anything implied in its bare external qualities, it may be allowable to assert with equal conviction that this is not a misinterpretation but the achievement of a divine element in man's nature" In his famous Gifford lectures, Eddington reached the ultimate conclusion "*Donc Dieu existe!*"

Galileo's dictum that nature is a document written in the language of mathematics, was accepted throughout the past centuries as an axiom of the "classical" sciences of nature Modern mathematicians, after having studied all the syntactic and grammatical

niceties of this spiritual idiom of nature, speak of mathematics as "the language of divinity." Sir James Hopwood Jeans, the British astronomer and physicist, is of the opinion that all of nature is ruled by mathematical laws which were devised and are applied by God. The conception of the universe which Jeans derived from his research in cosmogony and stellar dynamics, reveals the petty inadequacy of the "enlightened" idea of a clockwork universe and assigns to it its proper place on the junk pile of worn-out thoughts.

"The universe," Jeans wrote, "begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine. Mind no longer appears as an accidental intruder into the realm of matter, we are beginning to suspect that we ought rather to hail it as the creator and governor of the realm of matter—not, of course, our individual minds, but the mind in which the atoms out of which our individual minds have grown, exist as thought."

God is the ultimate truth of modern science—be it concerned with the ultimate smallness of electrons or the ultimate greatness of the universe.

Looked at through the spiritual mousehole of the materialistic past, the world appears narrow and dark. No radiant heights are expanding above. The scientific materialists of yesteryear displayed in the face of all superior values an attitude of cynical indifference. Be it God, soul, faith, art, love, courage, or devotion,—the typical materialist must endeavor to "debunk" them or at best degrade them and demonstrate their functional dependence on some mechanism of cause and effect.

In their most modern phase the natural sciences have been able to rid themselves of the bankrupt philosophy of materialism and along with it, of its hollow cynicism in regard to the idea of "values." Thanks to the findings of modern science, God has returned to the universe and directs again the movements of the stars, the velocity of light, the whirls of atoms and electrons as well as the fate of individual souls and the destiny of peoples. And the laws in accordance with which He does so are eternal values—for all of creation as well as for individual men.

"In the universe," wrote Alfred North Whitehead, the eminent contemporary philosopher and teacher of applied mathematics, "there is a unity, enjoying value and, by its imminence, sharing

value We call this unmy God God is that by which there is importance, value, and ideal beyond the actual, He is that which sustains the aim at vivid experience . . . The universe exhibits a creativity with infinite freedom, and a realm of forms with infinite possibilities, but this creativity and these forms are together impotent to achieve actuality apart from the complete ideal harmony, which is God "

Such views stamp the mathematician Whitehead as a great philosopher of religious orientation "It is the teleological intuition of religion," he wrote, "which gives our view of nature the necessary completeness. The peculiar character of religious truth is that it explicitly deals with values. It brings into our consciousness that permanent side of the universe which we can care for

"But values have a passion for realization in the world of action and when, through the creative process, they enter this world, they endow the fleeting moment with the significance of the permanent. Apart from the religious vision, human life is but a flash of occasional enjoyments lighting up a mass of pain and misery, a bagatelle of transient experience . . .

"When we consider what religion is for mankind, and what science is, it is no exaggeration to say that the future course of history depends upon the decision of this generation as to the relations between them We have here the two strongest general forces which influence man, the force of our religious intuitions, and the force of our impulse to accurate observation and logical deduction There are wider truths and finer perspectives within which a reconciliation of a deeper religion and a more subtle science will be found "

The loss of prestige which anti-metaphysical materialism had suffered in the realm of anorganic nature was bad enough, but the results of its endeavor to gain a foothold also in the domains of life and consciousness,—in biology, genetics, psychology, and sociology,—were downright grotesque in the completeness of their bungling failure For here materialism came face to face with the full-blooded reality of ever-changing forms and never-recurring events And the more boldly it tried to tackle the problems of life,—to deduce living phenomena from dead mechanical laws,—the more inadequate were the things which it had to show by way of result

On the worktables of their laboratories, in the filing cabinets of

their studies, the materialists had stacks and stacks of factual reports, of physico-chemical formulas, of psychological tests and statistical surveys, the mass was impressive, but the meaning was slight. The secrets of form, of spontaneous events, of character and personality, could not be laid bare by adding up sums and compiling facts. The busy beehive of materialistic science could not but disregard the most important thing—the divine spirit that alone can account for the ever-varying multiplicity of organic forms emerging from immutable molds.

Confronted with the miracles of living reality, the technique of rational materialism proved ultimately just “a fault which does but ‘monkey God,’ being merely able to imitate what has already been created, or to pick to pieces, what is already given in cognition.”

To Darwin, from whose theory of evolution the materialistic philosophy derived the courage to trespass farther and farther into the realm of living phenomena, it happened once at the sight of a tropical forest that he lost for a moment the thread of his mechanistic principles and exclaimed: “No man can stand here without feeling that these woods are temples filled with the various productions of the God of nature and that there is more in man than the breath of his body.”

Since Darwin's times our knowledge of things alive, and indeed our conception of all of nature, has undergone a fundamental change. The late physicist and plant physiologist Sir Jagadis Bose, —making use of especially constructed gauges which can be relied upon to give measurements of an accuracy of one millionth of an inch,—arrived at the startling discovery that trees and plants are sensitive creatures. “Plants have hearts and emotions, and even steel and other metals can feel.” Sir Jagadis did not have to go to a tropical forest to sense the spirit of God in nature.

At about the same time, but working in an entirely different field, the brain anatomist Konstantin von Monakoff investigated in his laboratory in Switzerland the cellular structure of the nerve tissue in brain and spinal cord and found that mental and spiritual phenomena cannot be accounted for by physico-chemical processes within the nervous system but force the student back to the supposition of a divine principle as their ultimate cause.

The farther the sciences progress in their investigation of bioge-

netic events,—the farther the crude beginnings of a purely quantitative approach to psychological problems are left behind making room for the qualitative approach of genetic and dynamic methods, the more it becomes apparent that it simply will not do to conceive of man as “that part of the mechanism of nature in which the functions of consciousness and sensitivity have been conditioned to a relatively high degree of efficiency” Quite on the contrary! We must have the courage to conceive again of man as the realization of a divine thought and to understand that growth and evolution signify the unfolding of a plan which was laid down by God

Darwin’s awareness of God was a momentary sensation In the ensuing decades a striking reorientation has led the science of man—in its psychological as well as its sociological branches—more and more clearly toward the acceptance of a divine principle Darwin’s disciple Herbert Spencer interpreted life, mind, and society still in terms of matter, motion, and force, but compared with the accounts which present-day scientists give of their researches, Spencer’s works are not much more than the painful efforts of a first-grader placed side by side with the manuscript of an accomplished penman who masters the art of expressing new thoughts by means of the same set of letters

The lesson which the eminent Oxonian biologist Sir John Scott Haldane derived from his investigations reads as follows

“The surrounding world of Nature is no mere physico-chemical or biological world, but a world in which personality is just as much embodied as in our own bodies For certain practical purposes we can regard it as a mere physico-chemical or biological world, but as the world of our experience it is not only a world of personality but also of divine personality . . . Not only is the personality of God manifested in our whole universe, but we ourselves, in so far as we strive after what is divine, are partakers, however imperfectly, in divine personality . . . The visible and tangible universe is much more than what can be interpreted in terms of traditional physical science The ultimate interpretation is the spiritual interpretation for which all that is clearly definable in the visible and tangible world is the manifestation of God . . . Apart from God’s existence as living and active, reality has no ultimate meaning . . . We must accept the results of physical science as a partial interpretation, and then religion is not only

compatible with the legitimate conclusions of natural science, but the faithful and fearless prosecution of natural science becomes a contribution to relative truth—a part of religion itself ”

For more than a century rational materialism has been litigating with faith Its advocates have produced a considerable number of witnesses,—physicists, mathematicians, and biologists, whose depositions were to demonstrate that materialism means progress, that it has outstanding qualifications of leadership, and that faith should be convicted of criminal backwardness.

At the present time things are taking a decidedly different turn The odds are clearly against reason More and more often the witnesses called in from the laboratories and studies of exact science turn evidence for the defense, and materialism is told a great many unpleasant things by its own experts and authorities

“Science,” says witness Millikan, “is sometimes charged with inducing a materialistic philosophy. But materialism is surely not a sin of modern science If there is anything which the growth of modern physics should have taught, it is that a dogmatic assertiveness about the whole of what there is or is not in the universe as it was represented by nineteenth-century materialism, is unscientific and unsound The physicist has had the bottom knocked out of his generalizations so completely that he has learned with Job the folly of multiplying words without knowledge, as did all who once asserted that the universe was to be interpreted in terms of hard, sound, soulless atoms and their motions The mechanistic philosophy is bankrupt.”

But witness Sir John Scott Haldane goes even farther when he declares that “materialism, once a scientific theory, now the fatalistic creed of thousands, is nothing better than a superstition . ”

The jury, composed of intelligent and liberal modern men and women, bases its verdict on the views expressed by the witnesses Millikan, Eddington, Jeans, Whitehead, Haldane The case against faith is dismissed Reason, the original plaintiff, is now suspected of being really the one that is guilty of reactionary backwardness, but the case is not pressed for it seems that the new defendant is honestly desirous of mending his ways

The modern reader who has opened this book on the saints and has found its first pages devoted to a survey of philosophical attitudes and the results of modern scientific research, will welcome the following explanation:

The survey just completed seemed indispensable to define the author's scientific and philosophical position and the basis on which he rests this new appraisal of the saints, the portrayal of their lives, the description of their deeds, and the analysis of their cultural and sociological importance in the past, the present, and consequently the future.

In writing this book on the saints, the author wished both to acknowledge his indebtedness to, and answer an obvious need of, the truly progressive trends of thought in modern times.

Most of the books of history at hand are mere rehearsals of their eighteenth and nineteenth-century predecessors whose errors and prejudiced conclusions they seem to have taken great pains to preserve. As a result they obstruct rather than clarify the reader's views. They exhaust themselves in a pedantic and confusing enumeration of dates, they endeavor to depict as ideals of heroism and as great leaders of mankind what were really political cranks and glorified murderers of peoples, or—worst of all—they put on scientific airs by recording, true to the style of historical materialism, data on production, prices, and indices of supply and demand. As a result, the stories of the saints, of their thoughts and actions, have remained the special domain of either the writers of pleasantly edifying tracts or of monomaniacs of psychoanalysis, who have not heard that the nineteenth century has come to a close and mix up the lives of the saints of past centuries with the case histories of their patients in Vienna, Berlin and New York.

Yet the most modern scientific creed has brought about a complete vindication of supersensory values in life and nature. A new epoch of human thought has begun. A new "reformation" is under way which strives to reform the orthodox faith in reason. We are witnessing a new "renaissance" which is about to bring back man's appreciation of the constructive wisdom and beauty of faith. A new "enlightenment" will lead to victory, will emancipate our thinking from the dogmatic intolerance of materialism, will restore our privilege of a truly unprejudiced evaluation of history.

and enable us to tap in full and fair appreciation the treasures of the past

We, men and women of the twentieth century, are proud of our adherence to the ideal of social justice, of our democratic creed, our humane principles, our contempt for all forms of race prejudice, our comprehension of economic problems, our global interests and world-wide organizations. But all these achievements are, in the last analysis, a heritage entrusted to us by a past that was steeped in divine faith, and if we acknowledge, that as guardians and curators of the past we are striving to preserve and develop the values handed down to us by an old tradition, we are also paying tribute to the saints of the past who created those values and bore witness to their worth in everything they did.

Among the saints are the first proclaimers of humanitarian ideals, the first fighters for social justice, the first champions of the poor. They deemed all nations and races equal, their horizon was truly global, they were the first liberators of the slaves. They established the sanctity of work and were the first to insist on its ethical status. They elevated woman to the rank of a partner of man and assigned new importance to her functions in the social structure. They were the spiritual counselors of humanity, the protagonists of intellectual freedom, the first educators and the founders of the first scientific institutes. Whether we study history from a political or economic point of view, whether we consider the realms of culture or of science and technology, everywhere we find that the saints have proclaimed and fought for the kind of culture which we are striving to preserve today.

Aside from this, the lives of the saints hold a message of beauty and hope. All our cultural treasures, the eternal values and ideals of ethical progress, charity, love, and justice, our appreciation of art and the feeling we have for the grandeur of nature, are expressions of a form of creative energy which is focused in, and emanates from, the lives of the saints.

But if we ask in turn what it was that gave the saints such creative powers, enabling them to exert a decisive influence on the cultural course of subsequent centuries down to the present and on and on into the future, the answer is simply that it was their faith in a supernatural reality which ranks above the reality of the

senses, their faith in a divine law which is stronger than the needs and necessities of life on earth, in an eternity which is truer than the moment, in an order and a beauty of which the unharnessed confusion of the order and beauty of earthly existence is but a bungling misconception. They believed that man is able to understand the orders of God, to harmonize with them the requirements of life on earth, to give the moment lasting value, and to pursue his ideals to their ultimate realization.

The saints believed in Christ in whom the kingdom which was "not of this world," did become a reality in this world.

Christ, whom the saints strove to imitate, undertook His divine mission on earth in the guise of a man among men. He suffered and died under the laws of this world, and still, in Him the ethical demands, the love and the beauty of the divine principle attained earthly fulfillment. It was this that encouraged the saints, who began their lives as average men and women, to follow Christ, that convinced them that they would be able to reach Him if they took care in all their wanderings never to lose sight of His footprints.

What raised them to the status of sainthood, was the fact that they succeeded in extricating themselves from their lowly beginnings and worldly entanglements, in mastering their innate weakness to attain the ultimate heights of human existence.

It is this endeavor on the part of the saints that constitutes the great message which the lives they lived and the examples they set will continue to have for all times. Their struggles and problems, their thoughts and deeds, disprove the cultural pessimism which is a natural corollary of all forms of materialistic disbelief. Their message of optimism is the simple truth that man is not a toy in the hands of blind forces, that he is not condemned for all times to wage "a fratricidal war of all against all," that he is not the product of material conditions of production and the victim of unmendable economic ills, that he is God's creature, a free being, the master and not the slave of his race, his time, and his environment,—that he is destined to live on earth so that the germ of divine perfection which rests in him may grow and become strong.

The message of the human beginnings and divine achievements of the saints is a message of consolation and confidence.

The French writer Maurice Bagrès was once asked, "What is the good of the saints?" He replied, "They delight the soul!"

From among the twenty-five thousand saints recognized by the Church, five have been chosen for inclusion in this book. They are the five whom renunciation, intellect, love, will, and ecstasy enabled to pursue their imitation of Christ and to serve as guides on the way to human perfection.

*Croton-on-Hudson,
September, 1945*

R F -M

The author wishes to thank Mrs. Steffi Kiesler of the New York Public Library and Mrs. Catherine Clark for all they have done to help him with his task.

SAINT ANTHONY

ANTHONY *The Saint of Renunciation*

FOR FIFTEEN HUNDRED YEARS the "temptations of St. Anthony" have captivated the imagination of artists and writers. The impression they have left can be traced from the masters of the oldest Byzantine school to Cézanne and Félicien Rops, from the earliest chroniclers down to Flaubert and Anatole France. St. Athanasius, the famous bishop of Alexandria, personally knew Anthony, the man whose life and character were to display such unfailing powers of renunciation. In his *Vita St. Antonii* the bishop left a firsthand description of Anthony's personality and of his strange life, which spanned more than a hundred years. Besides being the first account of the life of any saint, this *Vita* is also the first biography that is not limited to a mere rehearsal of outer events but gives an insight into the inner conflicts of its subject. It might be called the first psychological biography in world literature. The author was a pious bishop of the fourth century, not troubled by any sort of religious doubt. Legends and miracles, holy visions and apparitions of the devil were for him data as real as names of persons and places or dates. His hero was the first hermit, whose environment and mode of life are unfamiliar and at times incomprehensible to modern readers. Yet the basic conflict in this man's life was an eternally human one that cannot be evaded by anyone striving to obey the call of his higher nature: the conflict between carnal temptation and spiritual self-restraint.

Anthony was born around 251 in the little village of Coma, to-day called Queman el Aroune, in the upper Egyptian province of **Benisouf**. He was the son of wealthy Copts whose farm holdings, of about 130 acres were located on the Nile in the province of Fayum in upper Egypt. Then, as today, Egypt was a country without rain. The sky above was eternally blue and serene. There was but one source of water, the Nile. The farmers' weal or woe depended on the mysterious moods of the "great river." In winter, spring, and summer, the Nile was a drab and dreary expanse of water lazily moving along its arid and dusty banks. Only the most **unflagging effort and an immense expenditure of hard work** could wrest from it that minimum of water which man and beast and soil required.

Day after day young Anthony, with a team of buffaloes, was busy with the task of keeping his father's water wheel turning. He was a typical young fellah of strong build and bronze skin, with high cheek bones, big dark eyes, and heavy lashes—in face and stature a striking summary and repetition of his ancestors. There he was, perched high on a queer sort of seat, watching the endless procession, down through the water and up to the land, of empty and full earthen pots attached to the projecting spokes of a vertical wheel geared to the cogs of a horizontal one that the buffaloes pulled, slowly and steadily, around and around and around.

Until autumn came, this toil could not be stopped. Then, all at a sudden, the placid, lazy river swelled and flowed along with great rapidity. Its gray changed to red and green. It continued to rise, it flooded its banks, it transformed the countryside, as far as the hills on the edge of the desert, into one vast lake.

Finally the waters receded. And the time of year arrived when Anthony must follow his father, hands overflowing with seeds, sowing their grain in the fertile mud which the river had left behind. Before long the banks of the Nile changed into a lustrous field of waving grain. One or two crops, sometimes, by the grace of the river's abundant wealth, as many as six crops, followed one another in quick succession. That was the time of fullness and plenty when Anthony's father could add new sums to his savings from previous years.

From his earliest childhood, Anthony knew the Nile as the same great central experience it had been for his ancestors. It taught him

That all man's labors are as nothing in themselves, that what man needs, his daily bread and earthly possessions, is given him through grace. To Anthony and his kin it was given through the grace of the Nile, but in the Nile it was God who ruled and expressed His will.

At that time nobody knew where the "great river" came from and where its source lay. There was no explanation for its mysterious rise and fall except that God Himself came rushing down in its rising waters, year upon year, to bless the fields of men.

In the Nile God manifested Himself in His omnipotence, the omnipotence of Nature, and in the little village church at Coma the priest proclaimed His divine commands. Anthony's father lived his life in strict adherence to those commands and imparted the spirit of his own unqualified and innate piety to his son. The simplicity and naturalness of his faith, which were characteristic of all the fellahin, were deeply rooted in the peculiar nature of Coptic Christianity.

This religion was not really a young or new one. All its features had been prefigured in the faith of the old Egyptians. The god Amon of upper Egypt had already been a god of three persons, and Seth, the murderer of Osiris, was an earlier incarnation of the Christian devil. The introduction of Christianity here had rather been a smooth transition without friction or conflict, and in the Christian Copts, as in Anthony's father, a pious tradition of thousands of years lived on with unbroken vigor.

For Anthony the doctrine of Christ was a law that could not be questioned. His father was always on guard to keep away from him any outside influence that might trouble the purity of his faith. While other boys romped and played and had a good time, Anthony stayed at home and spent his free hours in pious prayer.

To the mind of the old farmer the worst threat to his son's salvation was worldly learning as it was cultivated in the Greek schools. The Greeks were alien intruders in Egypt. They were the owners or managers of big estates and exploited the native fellahin. Racial hatred intensified by social resentment had produced in Anthony's father a keen distrust of everything the Greeks taught in their schools. A mere acquaintance with the letters of their alphabet was, to his way of thinking, an initial false step away from the right faith. Once you gave in to the spell of those magic symbols,

you were bound to fall prey to the skepticism of Greek thought as well as to exploitation by Greek landlords. Thus young Anthony was not sent to school and grew up an illiterate. His mental and spiritual fare remained limited to what the priest of the local church had to offer in his readings from the Coptic Bible and in the pious lessons which he based on them.

As the boy grew up and approached manhood, the beautiful fellow girls of the neighborhood began to attract his attention. Often these girls passed by, walking through the fields, proud in the grace of their elastic gait, skillfully balancing their earthen water jugs on their heads, their loose, blouselike bodices revealing casually the firm shape of their bronze-colored breasts. Anthony would stop and stare after them as if entranced at their loveliness. The other boys could follow the girls, could speak to them and enjoy their company, but Anthony, the obedient son, following the strict commands of his father, went home and prayed until he could free his mind from thinking of the seductive maidens and concentrate again on God alone.

Anthony was about twenty years old when, in quick succession, his father and mother died. He was now alone except for a younger sister who had not yet come of age. He had fallen heir to fields and pastures and herds, and he did his best in managing the wealth of his father's which had now become his. Thriftily and honestly he added drachma to drachma, eager to increase the sums his father had left him. He passed his days in piety and righteousness just as before the death of his father, for he was a good son and lived up to the lessons of his early training. And when this young man, bereft of parental guidance, listened in church to the lessons read from the Bible, he took them as the commands of a father whose authority was even greater than that of the one who had died. As an obedient son he strove ever more zealously, ever more exactly, to live faithfully in accordance with the commands of his Heavenly Father. In his earlier years it had been his endeavor to please his earthly father, but now he saw more and more clearly that it was his duty to become worthy of the grace of God by striving for the highest degree of inner perfection.

One Sunday morning, about six months after the death of his parents, Anthony was sitting in the family pew of the little village church. There he sat, a handsome, slender youth, a dutiful son.

listening intently to the orders of his Father. His eyes clung to the face of the priest. His ears were strained so that not a single word could escape him. The priest read from the Gospel according to Matthew. "And behold, one came and said unto him 'Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?'" And He said unto him 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' The young man saith unto Him 'All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?' Jesus said unto him 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven, and come and follow me.'"

And Anthony rose, left the church, and went and sold his land and his herds, and gave the money to the poor in the village. For he felt the words which Christ had spoken to a rich youth of Galilee were spoken to him, the rich youth of Coma.

We do not know what became of the rich youth of Galilee and whether he heeded the words which the Lord spoke to him 250 years before Anthony's time. But this we do know. Anthony, the rich youth from Coma who lived in the third century after Christ, heeded the exhortation addressed so long before to the youth of Galilee. He decided to live his life according to Christ's precept and is for us the earliest known example of what happens to a man who follows out the demand of the Gospel in its full implications.

Overnight the rich youth had become poor. His daily bread was no longer assured. He was faced with all the hardships of poverty.

On the next Sunday it was a troubled youth, dressed in the rags of poverty, who sat in the village church at Coma and listened to the priest read from the Sermon on the Mount. "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

And once more Anthony felt that the words were spoken to him. He took his sister to an asylum for virgins and started on his way to reach the perfect solitude where there is no need to take thought for the things of the morrow.

Anthony's decision meant a complete break with his former life. To carry it through he needed the advice of a man of wisdom and experience. The village priest could not be of help to him. He was a pious man and lived his life according to the letter of the law,

but at the same time, as was the custom in the Coptic Church, was the owner of land and other earthly possessions and had a wife and children. His voice recited the commandment of the Lord but he did not know how the advice it contained might be translated into practical deeds. There were, however, at this time a number of pious Christians living in Egypt, real "men of righteousness," who had been forced to flee by the persecutions of the Roman emperor, Decius, and who now lived for their faith in unmolested seclusion. One of these men had a little hut not far from the outskirts of Coma, and it was to him that Anthony went for guidance in his dilemma.

He found an ancient man, wrapped in a cloak of camel's hair which served him instead of the shirt that Coptic farmers usually wore. He had only a coarse mat on which to sleep and earned a miserable livelihood by weaving mats and baskets. From him Anthony learned how to oppose worldly temptations with the force of prayer and work, how to tame sensual appetites by fasting and mortification, he learned how important it was that his meals should give him only bare sustenance, that they should consist of nothing but bread and water and a few dates. Before leaving the old hermit, Anthony learned from him how to weave mats and baskets from palm leaves.

All these things, however, were only concerned, as it were, with the paraphernalia of asceticism. The inner road to his goal was pointed out to Anthony by nature, the nature peculiar to Egypt. When he was still a child, it had already spoken to him of God's omnipotence, and now, at the beginning of his ascetic novitiate, it showed him the way out of the world of men into the world of absolute solitude.

In simple grandeur the landscape of Egypt laid before Anthony a striking simile of the sudden break which he was contemplating. Along the banks of the Nile spread the fertile province of the Fayum, a deep green expanse of pasture land and fields, a symbol of life and abundance. Then suddenly, not farther away than the boundaries of the village of Coma, all this luxuriance gave way to uninhabitable barrenness, where nature itself seemed to have turned ascetic. Was this not precisely the sort of abrupt change which the commandment of the Gospel called for?

Wrapped in a cloak of camel's hair, unhampered by even

smallest bundle of earthly belongings, Anthony went out into the wilderness. He came to a bramble bush and chose it as his future abode, although it might seem to have been better suited as a shelter for roaming beasts of the desert than as the habitation of a human being. Then at last he thought that far away from all worldly temptations, freed from all cares concerning the things of the world, he could begin his life of undisturbed devotion. But this abrupt shift from abundance and life to barrenness and solitude proved to be more of a problem for the Egyptian boy than for the Egyptian landscape. In nature, luxuriant vegetation turned abruptly into forsaken barrenness, yet they were separate things and one bore no knowledge of the other. Anthony, however, had to go from one to the other, from abundance to barrenness, from life to solitude, and, though he carried with him no earthly possessions of any kind, yet he was carrying, unwittingly, invisibly, the baggage of memories of all he had left behind.

He had hardly begun to get settled in his new life when, with horrid malice, his invisible pack began to unpack all by itself the worthless plunder which it contained. Item by item, his entire life, the life he had abandoned, the world he had renounced. He saw again his tilled acres and his grazing cattle, and he missed them and felt how much they had meant to him. He saw the firm shape of the bronze-colored breasts of the beautiful fellah girls. He was haunted by thoughts of the money he had received in payment for his land, the money which he had given away to the poor. And again and again the figures, which he recalled to the last farthing, came marching through his mind, adding themselves up to a widdy total. He did what the old "man of righteousness" had advised ~~him~~ to do: he bent every effort on concentration in prayer and also took refuge in the physical labor of weaving mats. But every new day of his solitary life increased the power of his memory. As though its perverse purpose were to disturb him in his work and devotion, it began to employ all sorts of fanciful tricks. It showed him his lost acres bearing fruit a hundredfold, and his lost cattle increased to a great herd.

But Anthony replied by praying still more fervently, by working still harder. He grew more rigorous in his fasting, more pitiless in his self-chastisement. The enemy thoughts had to be prayed away, worked away, fasted away, chastised away. And then one

night, when he was almost certain that he had succeeded at last, he looked up from prayer and saw a girl before him. She carried a water jug on her head, and her blouselike shirt was open, revealing her neck and bosom. She was one of the fellah girls whom he had often watched passing through the fields. The girl slipped off her clothes and lay down underneath the bramble bush. Anthony tried not to see her, he tried to take refuge in prayer. But the girl did not relent, all night long she kept on tempting him with all sorts of lewd gestures, but he kept his eyes turned up to God, imploring Him to come to his rescue. Through the most ardent prayer he withstood the temptation. When morning finally came, the girl, like an apparition, had disappeared in the twilight of dawn.

But immediately another figure appeared in her stead, equally real and equally true, as if what had tempted him during the night by its beauty were changed now to its loathsome counterpart. A blubber-lipped Negro boy stood there before him, totally naked and devoid of even the most primitive sense of shame, staring at him from brutishly degenerate eyes. He looked like a member of one of those savage tribes which lived in the forest along the Nubian border, tribes deeply despised by the Egyptians for their unbridled sensuality. His head was adorned by two horns, a sign among the black men in the forests of the attainment of full virile powers. At first Anthony was frightened by this strange figure, but then he suddenly realized that this must be the devil and that none other than the devil had been tempting him all night in the guise of the beautiful fellah girl.

When the apparition saw that its disguise had been penetrated, it revealed its identity, saying "I am the advocate of uncleanness, and I am called the spirit of fornication. How many have I lured from the paths of chastity with my temptations! I have deceived many, and I have overthrown many, yet now, when I attacked you, as I have attacked the others, I was not strong enough."

Encouraged by this admission of weakness on the part of the attacker and full of disdain, Anthony exclaimed proudly "You are much to be despised, for your mind is black, and your strength is that of a child!" So the black spirit was put to shame and fled instantly.

By his steadfast resolve Anthony had won out against the temptations of this night. But at the same time he had been brought to

realize a power which, in his piety and chasteness, he had not known before the prime power of the evil opponent! Even in this first attack the great opponent had given Anthony a taste of his real demonic might. Anthony had renounced the world, yet the devil knew how to gain access to his solitude. He had descended upon him with worldly temptations just when all Anthony's endeavor was preoccupied with God and had seized his memories and confused him with deceptive fancies and visions.

Anthony was a devout Christian. For him God was a reality, an active cause, a living experience. God's commandments were orders which had to be executed. They determined all Anthony's actions. And God's adversary, the devil, was for him also a concrete reality. What confronted him as the great temptor was the devil incarnate, an actual, tangible being.

Anthony was neither the first nor the last man to believe in the devil. The old Egyptians had seen him in the shape of Seth and Typhon, the Zoroastrians, participating in the unceasing war of light against darkness, had encountered him under the name of Ahriman, in the guise of Mara he tempted Buddha, the Enlightened, and both Job and Christ in the desert knew him as Satan, as did many a devoted adherent of the Christian faith. Luther was so angered by his appearance that he threw an inkwell at him. The unqualified belief in the devil lived on into the Renaissance and the time of the humanists, and such painters as Bosch, Breughel, Schongauer, Durer, Grunewald painted him not just as a symbolic figure but as a physical person in whom they believed from the depth of their hearts.

It remained for the rationalistic thought of the Age of Enlightenment to rob the devil of his actual reality and thus to rob man's struggles against satanic temptation of their dramatic poignancy. All that was left were abstract concepts and a moral problem.

In our time the science of psychology, with its conception of the conflict of good and evil as simply a psychomechanical problem in man's binomial organization, has seen fit to reinterpret the devil's temptations as disturbing complexes of our animal instincts. These are repressed by the morally conscious ego into the subconscious, where they keep up an underground struggle against the dictatorship of the conscious mind above. In order to gain access to the sphere of consciousness, the repressed instincts are apt to make use

of cunning stratagems. They don symbolic costumes and masks. From this point of view the devil appears to be merely a mask, now obsolete, of man's desires, a pathological hallucination of his fancy. According to such an interpretation, Anthony's visions of the devil were merely imaginative symbols of the outlawed instincts which his ascetic ego, intent upon disclaiming all connection with them, visualized with naive self-deception as external phenomena. The tempting fellah girl was a projection of Anthony's own rebellious craving, under the mask of the Negro boy from the Nubian forests lay nothing but Anthony's own abhorred cupidity, and his initial fright at the appearance of that boy was merely the fear of his own subconscious.

Yet whether man invests the temptations of his lower nature with the shape and form of the devil, whether he thinks of them in terms of ethical abstractions or views them as the eruption of repressed desires—the fact remains that there *is* a power that interferes with all man's loftiest aspirations, a power with which all human life must reckon. Belief in the devil or ethical and psychological interpretations are merely different ways of accounting for one and the same phenomenon.

"In former centuries," said Goethe, "the great views on life were conceived in concrete forms, today we conceive of them as abstract ideas. In those times man's creative power was greater, today it is his analytical skill and power of destruction."

The anchorite of the fourth century, endowed with greater "creative power" and conceiving of the temptor in concrete form, could not, logically, in combating the devil, be expected to use the same means that men do today when they believe in the power of analysis and take their psychological troubles to a licensed specialist. Exorcising the "devil" these days is done by the technique of releasing troublesome but repressed elements from the subconscious and raising them to the level of consciousness.

Anthony conceived of the devil as incarnate and real, and as such he fought him. His struggle against temptation could not be merely a process of intellectual self-analysis, opening up the recesses of the subconscious to the light of consciousness, it became a powerful drama of grand scope. The hero of this drama is a valiant fighter against the Enemy, the eternal opponent of man,

and at the end of this superhuman struggle the world sees not a cured patient but a victorious saint

Anthony's fight with the devil was full of elements which defy rational comprehension, but all of them find their explanation through the "visual logic" of a man who was able to see what he believed. Goethe, who possessed in a unique degree the ability to observe and to decipher the meaning of the things around him, and who, just because of that, had come to know about the limits of observation and understanding, wrote once "Why should we search for the meaning of phenomena, when the phenomena themselves teach us the lesson"

For Anthony, the ascetic, the material things of the world held all evil, and the devil was truly "the prince of this world." To escape the devil's grip, he first of all had to attempt to move beyond the range of the devil's power. He must move from the realm of the living to the realm of the dead. To attain this, he decided to exchange his abode under the bramble for a tomb, the abode of death, totally isolated from the world and the living.

In Egypt the tomb was of much greater significance than it is in our civilization. Man's temporal life was for the Egyptians merely a pilgrimage on the way to life eternal. An earthly abode was merely a traveler's rest, but a tomb was a "mansion of eternity." This explains why tombs were designed to play such a prominent role in the Egyptian scene. A real city of the dead, they were carved from the rock of the mountain ranges along the Lybian Desert. They had the strength and permanence of granite, and from their majestic height they looked down upon the ephemeral wretchedness of the adobe dwellings of the living.

For the Coptic Christians, who upheld the old Egyptian concept of life on earth as ephemeral, and of life after death as the attainment of the true essence of all being, the tomb retained its outstanding importance. This was especially true in the eyes of an ascetic, whose every thought and deed was concerned with mortifying the flesh and for whom the grave was the portal to life eternal. And yet, the idea that a living person should decide to make his home in a tomb is hard to understand not merely from a modern point of view, it was equally baffling for Anthony's contemporaries.

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The ancient Egyptian sepulchral cult forms an interesting historical background for this extraordinary project. The ridge of tombs along the Lybian Desert became the stage setting for an unequalled spiritual drama.

Heavy blocks of granite isolated the "mansions of eternity" from the world below, and for centuries nobody had dared to penetrate these tombs. Anthony started on his way to his new abode, taking with him a pious friend from the village. This friend was to close the entrance to the tomb behind Anthony, leaving only a narrow gap through which from time to time he would pass the bare essentials of bread and water without which even Anthony could not live.

Anthony entered and found himself in a domed anteroom, dimly illumined by a shaft of light from the entrance way. The walls were covered with reliefs depicting hunting scenes and cultic animals of great antiquity, the kind of decoration the old Egyptians used to adorn the resting places of their dead.

From here a dark passage led down to the tomb proper. Anthony felt his way carefully through the darkness. But no sooner had he reached the end of the passage and entered the subterranean room to which it led, than an angry voice arose from the darkness saying "What are you doing here in the kingdom of the dead? How dare you do what none alive has ever dared?" They were human words that the voice uttered, but the sounds were at once tenuous and penetrating and seemed to come from the realm of the spirits.

Anthony shrank back, but he had learned the lesson of his earlier experiences and knew immediately that all this was once more the devil's doing. It certainly must have been the devil who had summoned the spirit of a dead man back to the resting place of his body, in order to keep Anthony from finding any peace in the lonely tomb. But Anthony would not be deterred from his decision to live with the dead. He began to pray. He raised his voice and prayed aloud, the words of devotion ringing into the darkness around him. But an echo of hundreds and thousands of voices answered from the black, trying to drown his prayer in howling blasphemy. He knew it was the devil whose bidding had brought this spectral chorus up from the realm of the dead! It was the devil, from whose worldly domain he had withdrawn, who was

now attempting to interfere with his pious pursuits through these demon voices

God does not grant an easy life to the ones He has chosen. He tests them by handing them to the trials of evil. He delivered Job, the most pious of men, and even Jesus, His only-begotten son, into the hands of the tempter. Even so did He now give the devil a free hand to try the steadfastness of His pious son from Coma.

Anthony had a good deal of trouble with the devil. Whenever he started to pray, his pious words were drowned in a din of ghostly shouting. But the devil had a good deal of trouble with Anthony too. For Anthony would not be intimidated by the demonic racket and simply went on in the performance of his devotional exercises. And thus the struggle continued, for days and weeks, for months perhaps, or even years. There is no telling how long it was, for in the grave there is no clock to strike the hour. There is no sun or moon to rise or set. There is no time in the grave.

From the depth of his need Anthony called out "Oh my Lord, help me and enlighten me!" But no sooner had he uttered these words than he saw all around him a host of hundreds and thousands of sulphur-yellow lights, and for every light he also heard a separate voice. And suddenly it seemed the phantom voices and the sulphurous lights were interfused. The voices flickered like will-o'-the-wisps, and the lights struck up a spectral chant "Lo' Anthony! We have come to enlighten you!" And this was followed by an outburst of fiendish laughter and a bedlam of wild applause. But there were no mouths there that could laugh and no hands that could clap. Laughter and applause came up from nowhere, that same dark nowhere which had sent up the voices and the lights, the realm of ghosts, with which the devil had filled the tomb.

Anthony redoubled his ascetic rigor, for days he neither ate nor drank, for long stretches of time he denied himself all sleep, for he knew that only a sharper concentration of his soul could help him to triumph over the devil's machinations. But the attacks increased in fury. It seemed as if the devil fed on Anthony's empty stomach, quenched his thirst on Anthony's parched throat, and found a strange repose in Anthony's sleepless nights.

When it became clear that the ghosts and their mockery had

failed, the devil resorted to more drastic methods of attack. He ordered his cohorts to close in on Anthony's weakened body, to torture him, to knock and kick and beat him until his passion for prayer would be vanquished. The spirits obeyed and lashed out at Anthony with such fury that his senses left him and he fell unconscious to the ground.

About this time Anthony's friend came up to the tomb, bringing a new supply of bread and water, but when he gave the signal at the entrance, he received no answer. He moved the heavy rock to one side and went in. He called again, and when silence answered him again, he conquered his fear and went slowly down the dark passage to the lower chamber. After a long time of feeling his way around, at last he found Anthony's prostrate body. He dragged the inert figure from the tomb and carried him on his shoulders down to the village church of Coma.

The news that Coma's most God-fearing son had been found dead excited the entire village, and soon the little church was filled with a crowd of mournful, weeping villagers who wanted to help the priest to lay out the body of Anthony or merely to see his venerated face for the last time. A group of them, led by Anthony's friend, were entrusted with keeping the deathwatch by the body throughout the night. But in the middle of the night, when all these good people, with the exception of Anthony's friend, were fast asleep, he for whom they were to have kept the watch, he whom all thought dead, arose from his lethargic slumber. He sat up, and, seeing his friend, he beckoned to him and made him understand that he wished to leave. Without a word the two stepped cautiously over the sleeping watchers and left the church. Presently the sleepers awoke and found the bier empty. By then Anthony, leaning on his friend's arm, was on his way back to the tomb where he meant to take up his fight with the devil again.

Entering the tomb he shouted defiantly, "Here I am! Look! Do your worst! Nothing will ever separate me from Christ my Lord!" And then he began to sing the words from the psalm, "Though a host should encamp against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid."

Angered by the defiant firmness of the obstinate man of God, the devil in his demonic power ordered the granite animals from the friezes along the walls to come to life. At once the tomb was filled

with a fury of howling and hissing and roaring creatures. Wherever Anthony turned, everywhere around him, were packs of wolves, wild lions, leopards, bears, and bulls. Venomous serpents crawled around his legs. Ravenous eyes gleamed through the darkness. Greedy mouths threatened to devour him. Pointed horns were ready to gore him. Giant spiders spread their nets to trap him.

But Anthony steadfastly refused to be intimidated by this newest trial of his adversary, for he saw clearly that these savage beasts were begotten of a hellish whim. Therefore he exclaimed boldly, "If you had any sort of power in you, it would have been enough if one of you had come. But the Lord has deprived you of your strength, and so you try to frighten me by your numbers." And then he turned to the devil himself and defied him. "It is a sign of your helplessness that you have taken on the shape of wild beasts. Look at me here, safe within the rampart of my faith! If you really think you can wield your power over me, do not tarry, but strike!"

Then the devil in his impotent rage ordered his beasts to tear down the granite walls of the tomb. Immediately they obeyed. The lions and leopards with their mighty paws, the bears with their clumsy strength, the bulls with their horns, the wolves with their pointed teeth, all began to shake and push, to bite and gnaw, to dig and burrow, and the serpents helped too, and the scorpions and all the creeping and crawling creatures of hell which the devil had summoned.

The walls of the tomb began to shake. In a moment they would collapse, and with them the vaulted roof would come crashing down. But then, all of a sudden, instead of caving in, it opened up! And a glorious splendor of radiant light descended through the darkness of the grave. And wherever this brightness reached darkness had to recede, and with it vanished the devil's monstrous brood.

Anthony understood that the light signified the presence of the Saviour, and he asked, "Where were you, my Lord Jesus? Why did you not come sooner to assist me?"

A voice that came out of the light answered and said, "Anthony, I was near you all the time. I was at your side and saw your fight,

and because you have manfully withstood your enemy, I will always protect you."

When Anthony looked around, the walls again stood firmly in place and the savage beasts had returned to the friezes carved in the rock.

Viewed from behind the desk of a modern psychoanalyst, Anthony's affair with the devil, including his vision of light, shrivels away, leaving nothing but a complex of pathological delusions. The psychiatrist, who is willing to apply to religious phenomena what he has learned by analyzing dreams in individual case histories, might interpret the ravenous beasts of the devil as phallic symbols, a typical representation of repressed erotic impulses. In the light of this sort of psychological interpretation, the radiant vision of Christ turns out to be merely the delusive imagery which is the characteristic expression of a process of sublimation.

Nevertheless, in Anthony's life the events in the tomb constitute a most important phase in the genesis of his sainthood. When he finally left the tomb, Anthony was thirty-six years of age, and behind him lay sixteen years which he had spent exclusively in his fight with the devil.

On the day when Christ appeared before him in a vision of light assuring him of His support, Anthony left the tomb and went out into the desert. He went the way which many great saints and prophets before and after him had to go before their mission could be fulfilled. Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, Christ Himself, St. Paul, and many, many others.

Anthony's goal was the lonely Mount Pispir in the desert. He crossed the Nile, leaving the Libyan desert behind, and entered the desert of Arabia. The landscape in its utter desolation was like a vast grave of Nature. A barren expanse of sand stretched before him, sparsely dotted with brown cones of naked rock. There were petrified valleys like river beds that had died, and the few vestiges of life and growth in this desert, the sycamores, tamarisks and doom palms looked like ghosts, with their outstretched branches clutching at the parched air. A deathlike silence lay heavily over this land, rarely broken by the whirling breath of the torrid khamsin which blew in from the Sahara. The light of the scorch-

ing sun was so intense that the landscape looked glassy and unreal. And then suddenly the zobaa, the lofty whirlwind of sand, would churn pillars of dust up to the sky, and the sun would lose its might and the day turn into night.

With the greatest difficulty Anthony had covered about half the distance through the desert, when he was brought to an abrupt stop. Before him, right in the middle of the sandy waste, there lay a huge silver disk. It was of course the black magic of the devil which had put that glittering thing out there in the sand of the desert. He had failed to seduce Anthony by voluptuous temptations, he had not succeeded in frightening him with ghosts and demons and spirits, so now he tried to arouse in him a lust for worldly wealth, hoping thus to achieve his goal of leading him away from the straight road to God.

Anthony could not be deceived this easily. "Oh Satan!" he exclaimed. "I recognize your handiwork in this. But you must know that your will cannot prevail against mine!" After he had spoken these words, the silver disappeared as though absorbed by the sand of the desert.

A few miles further on, Anthony was traversing a ravine when a huge lump of gold suddenly blocked his way. Its brilliance was so intense that even the dazzling sun of the desert could not equal it. For just one moment Anthony stopped as though blinded by the golden splendor, and his hand, over which he seemed to have lost control, reached out for the precious metal. But just in the nick of time he caught himself, realizing that it was the devil again, trying to tempt him and to instil in him a covetous desire for worldly possessions. He crossed himself and concentrated in prayer, hoping to rid himself thus of the golden vision. But the lump of gold, just as though it were a lump of real stuff, did not move. Then Anthony countered with a trick of his own. With prompt resolve he jumped over the lump of gold, as one might jump over a flaming fire, and without looking back he ran on farther and farther into the desert as fast as he could.

After many days Anthony finally reached the oasis of Meia-moun, the modern Der el Memum, the last settlement in this part of the desert. It was here he had to turn off the main route on his way toward Mount Pispir. Before leaving the oasis, Anthony made an arrangement with one of the people living there. Twice

a year this man would deliver a supply of bread to him at his place in the desert. Anthony promised to pay with his output of palmetto mats for this service.

Mount Pispir, with its reddish-brown, conic rock formations, might be taken as the archetype of this vast and desolate wasteland. After a strenuous ascent Anthony finally reached the plateau, which was crowned by the weather-beaten ruins of an abandoned fort. Its battered walls provided shelter for desert jackals and hosts of light-shunning reptiles. Before he could move in, Anthony had to clear the subterranean vault under the ruins of the old fort, which he had chosen for his new home. He chased away or killed the whole persistent crowd of jackals, snakes, and scorpions.

But even then he was to find neither peace nor rest. He looked around in his new abode and immediately discovered that he was surrounded by demons that came and went and moved about busily in the old room under the ruins as though this had always been their home. As conscientious hirelings of hell they were always on the job, but of course, being humble subordinates, they did not have at their disposal the art and skill of their master. The devil himself, after sixteen years of unsuccessful efforts to seduce Anthony, had moved on to more promising victims and had left to his slaveys the task of keeping Anthony busy and of keeping an eye on him lest he should manage in an unguarded moment to make good his escape to the side of God. This explains why the methods now employed by Anthony's opponents to lure him away from God were on the whole quite silly and picayunish.

When Anthony, emaciated and exhausted after a severe fast, sat squatting in a corner of his room, a paunch-bellied devilkin came up to him smacking his lips, patting his full tummy and promising the starving hermit every imaginable kind of Lucullan treat. When his vigils had extended half through the night, he suddenly saw himself surrounded by a hell-sent mob of imps, yawning drowsily and offering to rig up a cozy bed of down for him where he could stretch out and be comfortable for a while. When he was thirsty, they brought in trayfuls of the choicest drinks and settled down to merry carousing. When he tried to concentrate in prayer, they struck up a hellish racket, and when he was busy weaving mats, they snatched away the half-finished work from his hands. Some tried to flatter him and promised him glory and power, others

threatened him, still others ridiculed him, and all the devil's slaveys tried, each in his own way, to lure him away from his life of piety and devotion

They were a nuisance for Anthony They were a constant pest, and every time he chased them away, they came back with a new and different set of silly tricks. But Anthony, whom the great Fiend, with his dangerous weapons of sensuousness and lust for earthly riches, had not been able to conquer, could certainly not be shaken by the miniature temptations of all this small fry of hell He did not let them keep him from any of his pious observances And always, when the time came for the man from the oasis to deliver a new supply of bread, the finished mats were ready waiting for him in the cistern

For twenty years Anthony spent his days in the company of these troublesome demons, rejecting their advances time and again, praying and fasting and weaving mats And perhaps he would have stayed on in the ruins of Mount Pispir to the end of his days, fighting the small devils day in and day out, if it had not been for a chance happening out in the world which suddenly brought about a change in his life

The man who had been engaged to supply Anthony with bread fell ill, and for one occasion he sent a young boy to go up in his stead This was a wide-awake sort of lad, and the strangeness of his mission aroused his curiosity When he had put the bread in the cistern, he began to look around the desert fort All of a sudden he heard a noise coming from somewhere underneath the ruins, and when he walked over in that direction, there followed an outburst of abusive vociferation in which he could clearly distinguish several voices This worried him, for he could not help thinking that the hermit might have been attacked by bandits So he went on looking and finally discovered an opening through which he could peep inside the room underneath the ruins. To his amazement the hermit was there all by himself

Excited by this strange experience, the boy hurried back to the oasis and reported everything that had happened The next day a group of men walked over to the ruins They too heard the scolding voices, they too looked through the opening and saw that the hermit was all alone The tale they brought back aroused all

Meiamoun, and soon thereafter the entire population started out on a pilgrimage to Mount Pispir to solve the riddle

They called and knocked at the walls, but when no reply came, they decided to force their way in. At that moment the hermit came out to meet them, calm and unperturbed, and to their impetuous questions he replied, still deeply involved in his affair with the devils, "Do not worry! If a man has knowledge of their ways, the devils can do him no harm." Hearing this calm mention of the devils, the men and women around him were seized by a surge of emotion. When Anthony observed that many shrank back in fear, he comforted them by saying, "Those devils are only bluffing with their stupid tricks. They talk and threaten. But they are only minor demons, and one real prayer can easily corner them."

Having said this, Anthony turned around and went back into his room under the ruins. But the crowd, deeply stirred by the knowledge that the hermit of Mount Pispir had succeeded in vanquishing man's eternal enemy, the devil, went down to the oasis and sent out a caravan to spread the great news all through the desert. Before long it was known in all the oases everywhere in the desert, all along the Nile and throughout the Fayum, that there was a man living on Mount Pispir who had triumphed over the devil. A saint! And there came moving through the desert from all directions unnumbered caravans whose goal was the saint on Mount Pispir. The desert slopes and the valley of Meiamoun were soon converted into one vast camping ground for a milling multitude. There were many who had come merely to satisfy their curiosity, desirous of seeing with their own eyes the saint who had conquered the devil. But there were also some, worn out with worry and care, who had come to receive comfort and advice from a man whom sainthood endowed with a wisdom more than human. There were the lame and the blind who hoped to be rid of their ills by the touch of the hand of a saint. And finally there were the hosts of those who sought God and had come to stay and to learn from Anthony how the devil can be overcome.

They all came to the ruins and called for the saint, that he might hear them and answer their requests. And as the Lord Himself had at one time accomplished His work among men, so likewise was Anthony, His disciple and saint, to do now.

The devils in the ruins sensed that their time was up, that An-

thony would escape them forever through the good work that was waiting for him outside. They redoubled their efforts, they invented new tricks and temptations, they blocked the way out. But the forty years which the Lord had granted them to try and test His saint were over. He sent His angels in radiant splendor down to the ruins, and they received Anthony and lifted him up on high. When the devils saw this, they tried to hinder it. But the angels said, "If you know of one wicked deed this man has done, speak, and we shall abandon him to you."

Thus the devils were confounded. They could not answer, and the angels took Anthony and ascended with him high above the ruins and set him down again gently outside the walls.

At the age of twenty, young Anthony had obeyed the command of God, had left the world of men and withdrawn into solitude. Now, at the age of fifty-four, he found himself back among men. But this too was in accordance with God's will, for God had chosen Anthony to guide those who longed for guidance, and there were many of them in the crowd at Mount Pispir.

For decades this man had dealt only with supernatural beings, and now all of a sudden he found himself confronted again with mortal humans. How different were these two worlds! The ghosts and beasts of the tomb, the devils under the ruins, and in contrast with them these pious people seeking helplessly after God! How different were the confusing and scornful and scolding voices of demons from the childlike and trusting voices of pious men! For forty years Anthony had had to defend his own soul against the devil, but now it had become his task to liberate the souls of others from the devil's grip. The man who had mastered the devil was to prove himself master again when called upon to do God's work among men. From his own solitary life in the desert he drew the power to be a leader of men. He taught them what solitude had taught him. His example showed them how prayer, fasting and work can overcome the temptations of the senses and open up the way which leads to God. The Biblical parable of the withered tree that bore fruit became a reality, and the human tree of desert and solitude yielded the fruit of an ascetic community of men.

The desert fort became the home of life. The ravines and caves, the abandoned tombs and dried-out cisterns were turned into shelters for men who prayed fervently to their God, sang psalms, and

fasted and mortified their bodies Under Anthony's guidance the paradox of a community of hermits, of a society of men who had forsaken the world of men, began to take shape A world grew up over which the Prince of this World had no power Only thus could Anthony's triumph over the devil be consummated, for now it was no longer a mere individual facing the archfiend with firm resolve, but a complete and independent new world of men

Anthony remained among his disciples until solitude had become for them what it was for him, the mainstay in life Then he left them He left Mount Pispir and penetrated farther into the desert There he lived in a cave on a mountain that was still higher, still more inaccessible, still more desolate The power which the devil had tried to wield over him was broken, and for the first time he could live unmolested in the contemplation of God

But only two years of his earthly life did God permit him to devote to the selfless vision of heavenly things The news that in the middle of the desert a new world had arisen—a world of heavenly glory on earth—had spread beyond the desert and the Fayum It had been carried through upper and lower Egypt and had reached Syria and all the neighboring lands And everywhere in the towns and villages men abandoned their homes, renounced their earthly possessions and went out into the desert, hiding in caves and living a life of solitude and self-denial So it came about that one day Anthony's second refuge in the desert was again surrounded by a crowd of clamoring men His work, which he had begun on Mount Pispir, had continued to grow and spread and now it had reached him again high up in his mountainous seclusion The slopes and ridges of Mount Pispir had long since become too narrow, and already the desert as far as the Thebaid and Nitria was covered with settlements of anchorites who had followed in Anthony's footsteps, desirous of emulating his way of life.

Again Anthony had to take up his work among men His work, which had followed him and which now demanded that he should complete it

While Anthony lived among men, he dedicated himself wholeheartedly to the needs of men But when, his task accomplished, he retired again to a lonely cave—and every time it was farther away in the desert, higher up in the mountains, and more completely isolated—he was again the most lonely of the lonely, the

saint of loneliness As a mediator between God and men, he had to live at times in complete solitude that he might hear the voice of God in all its purity and clearness, and then again he had to return among men in order to translate to them the words of God and to let His commandments assume earthly reality among them

Like the fortress of a king of solitude Anthony's mountain retreat looked down upon this vast realm of renunciation which his example had caused to grow up in the desert Five thousand men, creatures of Anthony's piety, mute in his silence, devout in his prayers, bound in the cycle of his godly acts, led here a life of absolute devotion to things eternal The force of the example he set had made Anthony the sovereign ruler over five thousand free men, subjects by voluntary discipleship

Then, one day in the year 311, the outside world broke into Anthony's realm of timeless unworldliness A scream of anguish broke through from below to Anthony's towering height A man from Alexandria came up to his cave and with all the excitement with which worldly suffering likes to express its complaints, he said "At Alexandria hundreds and hundreds of those who profess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are flogged in public, are sent to the mines or thrown into prison, are tortured and burned or, to amuse the crowd in the circus, are fed to wild beasts in the arena" The man went on to explain that the emperor Maximinus Daia had ordered the persecution, and that Roman officials and gladiators carried it out. He spoke as one to whom the persecution by worldly tormentors means pain and whom pain can inspire with fear But Anthony listened to his words as one who has been face to face with evil incarnate This story about imperial edicts and the fact that Roman officials tried to induce the Christians in Alexandria to abandon their pious way of life could not blind him to the fact that the same opponent of God who had tempted him in his solitude was using the wickedness of men down there in the city to forward his devilish plots. Resolved to face his old adversary out in the world with the same undaunted trust in God as in the solitude of the desert, Anthony gave the man this message "Go and tell them, I shall come!"

Anthony left the desert now for the first time He was sixty-one years old He started out on his road back into the world, a tall

man, haggard and emaciated from fasting, his beard and hair disheveled. His only garment was a white sheepskin which reached down to his feet, and he carried in his right hand a heavy stick

He climbed down the steep hillside, waded through the brown sand of the desert and, following the green banks of the Nile, went on and on until at last he reached the walls of Alexandria. He entered the city through the Gate of the Sun.

So far, all Anthony had seen of the world was Coma, the village of his childhood which consisted of a few mud-built huts, and the desert with its shrubs and tombs, its dilapidated ruins and caves. Now for the first time he set foot on a great city, the second-largest of the Roman Empire and the most populous and most beautiful of the Orient.

A colorful new world spread itself before him in all the noisy bustle of an Oriental city. He saw Greeks in short cloaks, Romans in togas, bearded Jews in linen caftans, Arabs in their burnouses, Egyptians wearing striped garments of many colors, Negroes, Carthaginians, and all of them talking at once in their various native tongues. Anthony's eyes, accustomed to the dull brown tint, to the stagnant calm of the rocks of the desert, were dazzled by this orgy of colors and movement, and his ears, tuned to unbroken silence, were scarcely able to take in this drowning tide of noise.

A few steps beyond the Gate of the Sun Anthony found himself surrounded by a gesticulating and yelling mob proffering baskets of fruit, jugs filled with water, sweets, food, rugs, cloth, all the wares they had for sale. At the same time jugglers and jesters, magicians and dancers were trying to attract his attention. The devils of Mount Pispir had not been more persistent and annoying. This was the market place of Rhacotis, the Egyptian quarter of Alexandria.

Escaping this confusing turmoil, Anthony came to the foot of an imposing flight of stairs, which was flanked by two obelisks and vaulted over by a gigantic arch. It led up to a sumptuous building which was adorned with the same strange animals that Anthony had seen in the tombs of the desert. These were the reliefs of Apis, the sacred bull, and the building, a temple of the Egyptian god Serapis, was the center of pagan learning in this part of the world.

Now Anthony walked down a broad avenue which was lined

on both sides by marble colonnades. Here he saw long rows of stone pillars. Crowning each one there was a sculptured head, also made of stone and without a body. These were the busts of famous Greek philosophers standing along the street which led to the center of the city. Sumptuous, many-storied buildings attracted his attention. He had reached the most elegant part of town, the Brucheion, where the mansions of the rich, the administrative buildings and municipal theaters were located. The farther he went, the more deeply he felt involved in a foreign and unfamiliar world. It was harder for him to make his way through the turbulent crowd than through the endless masses of sand in the desert. Every few steps he had to stop.

Men passed by, clad in colorful cloaks with embroidered flowers and animals, bulging purses fastened to their belts as proof of their wealth, their red breeches adorned with stars of gold that glittered more brightly than the lump of gold in the desert ravine. Women with scarlet headdresses brushed against him, and in their transparent gowns they exhibited their charms more shamelessly than the naked fellah girl under the bramble.

When he finally reached a park where maples, firs, and larches afforded shade and relief, he felt much more exhausted than under the scorching sun of the desert.

Dusk found him near the harbor with its long granite wharves. Night fell, but it brought no rest for eye and ear. The noise of the port mingled with the roar of the sea, and a light flashed through the darkness, more eerie than the will-o'-the-wisp light of the evil spirits in the tomb. This was the light of the famous beacon, the symbol of the great port, rising to a height of four hundred feet on the little island of Pharos.

At dawn the next morning the colorful turmoil of metropolitan life was again in full swing. Anthony, however, was not impressed by it. As little as he had been impressed by the lump of gold in the desert! For him the pomp of the city was merely a devilish delusion. And so he moved on until he got behind the glamorous façade of Alexandria where the devil pursued his work openly, where his obedient servants tortured the pious disciples of Christ.

The "obedient servants of the devil" were imperial officials, judges, legionnaires, prison guards, executioners, who carried out the Christian persecutions which Maximinus Daia, the East Roman

emperor, had ordered Daia was a superstitious heathen and thought that the cause for the decline of the empire was the displeasure of the old gods, who were angered by the toleration of the God of the Christians. To win back the favor of the gods and to save the empire, Daia ordered that the Christians should abjure their faith and sacrifice to the official gods. Those who refused should be killed in sacrifice to the great gods of Rome. The declining empire, its military prowess lost, face to face at last with economic collapse, was the prey of superstitious fears, saw in every disaster the work of demonic powers, and reacted to all this with fanatical cruelty.

In the courts of Alexandria verdict upon verdict was handed down against the Christians, the prisons were crowded with them, they were herded together in narrow cells and were treated as guilty of high treason. They were put on the rack, they were whipped and tortured, and when they still refused to abjure their faith, they were sent to the Thebaid for hard labor in the porphyrite quarries.

In the anteroom of the hippodrome there were always groups of Christians, wrapped only in animal skins, awaiting their fate—to be thrown to the wild beasts in the arena. Outside the city walls, pyres were built on which others were to suffer the death of martyrs.

The tall white figure of the saint from the desert, like a visitor from a better world, appeared suddenly in the prison of Alexandria, in the midst of the crowd of shackled Christians. He had come to comfort the suffering, to strengthen them in their faith. He brought them the word of God which had been denied them for so long, for their priests were in prison, their churches were closed and their sacred writings had been burned in public. "Be strong in the faith," he said. "Victory is yours, for soon your chains will be taken away and you will enjoy the bliss of Heaven."

And with one voice the prisoners replied:

"If we die with Him, we shall live with Him.

If we endure with Him, we shall reign with Him.

If we deny Him, He shall deny us."

Strict guards were posted at the prison gates. No one was allowed to enter. But when the strange figure of the haggard saint

approached, the guards were filled with awe, and instead of stopping him they stepped aside and let him pass

Hardened jailers kept watch over the prisoners, but they did not prevent the stranger from greeting the faithful with the forbidden sign of the cross. They did not put him in chains but let him come and go as he chose. This man, who dared to enter here by his free choice, did not do so by his own strength alone. Such boldness could not be imagined. It must be that the strange Being, the God ~~(of the Christians)~~ assisted him and inspired him with strength.

In the camp where those condemned to hard labor were waiting to be sent away, the voice of the saint from the desert was suddenly heard. "Remain strong in the faith! Your march into exile will lead you to triumph and victory." The eyes of the victims grew bright. With songs on their lips they started out as though on a journey of pleasure and joy. The guards beat the convicts to urge them on. But no guard dared to touch the saint who stood in their midst. His intrepid courage could only be the gift of a mighty demon.

In the chambers of torture the prisoners were lined up to be flogged. The saint appeared among them. "Be strong in the faith!" he said. "The Lord will heal your wounds!" And the screams of pain turned into hymns of praise. No whip was raised against the stranger for fear of the staff in his hand, which could only be the instrument of a magic power.

In the anteroom of the hippodrome, in the midst of the Christians wrapped in animal skins, the saint from the desert appeared and called out. "Be strong in the faith! He who suffers shall conquer!" And not one of the unbelievers dared throw an animal skin over the saint's shoulders. If he beat the ground with his stick, the earth would open and swallow up any who had dared to insult him.

Outside the walls of the city Christians were being burned at the stake. With breaking eyes they saw the saint, who suddenly appeared in their midst. They heard the voice of the messenger of God who comforted them and admonished them to remain strong. They died with a smile on their lips and their last word was "Credo!" Then while fuel was being piled up for new pyres, the saint stood nearby, crying out in the same loud tone of voice

the same challenge "Credo!" Yet no one dared raise a finger against him

The judge of the highest court issued no summons to have the stranger appear before him even though he was guiltier than the other Christians, even though his offenses against the official gods had been more flagrant. For it was he who had incited the others to remain steadfast in their adherence to the alien God.

Yet even though he had not been summoned, one day the saint was in the midst of the accused sitting in the prisoners' dock. He had come of his own accord. "Be strong in the faith!" he said and comforted the prisoners. "If you are condemned here, you will be acquitted in Heaven!" And then, every single one of them, as their turn came, affirmed their belief "Credo!" And they were led away. At last no one was left in the prisoners' dock but the saint. But the prosecutor had prepared no case against him, and the judge left the court in great haste.

The governor was responsible to the ruler for the meticulous enforcement of the imperial edicts. It should have been his duty to stop this man whose activities in Alexandria could not be interpreted otherwise than as dangerous to the safety of the state. Yet the governor did nothing to have the stranger brought before him. He feared the displeasure of the emperor and of the gods, but he feared even more the wrath of this stranger, reputed to be a sorcerer and magician.

One morning the governor was sitting in his office when a man came rushing in with the news that the dreaded stranger was approaching the palace. "Stop him!" the governor ordered. "Do not allow him to enter my palace!" But none of the guards at the gate and none of the servants within had the courage to block his passage. Unmolested he found his way to the governor's room, and entered. The governor was too overcome to utter a word, and could only listen meekly to the thundering harangue which the stranger delivered in his Coptic dialect. All the while he stared fearfully at the knotty staff, for any movement of it might indicate that the stranger was about to call on its magic power to have the earth open up and swallow both the governor and his palace. When the white figure had finally gone, and the governor found himself still unharmed in his office, he heaved a deep sigh of relief.

And all of heathen Alexandria heaved a deep sigh of relief when

the "demon of Christianity," with his knotty sorcerer's staff had finally left. The "demon" had gone, but his message remained. It lived on and proved its vital strength in helping the persecuted Christians to maintain their heroic resistance.

When Anthony left Alexandria it was the year 312. The last persecution, the last organized attempt to uproot the Christian religion, had come to an end.

Back in the desert, Anthony again took up his life of solitude. But during the years that followed, years which he spent away from world and time in the contemplation of God, a decisive historical turn took place in the world outside his desert domain. "Our numbers shall grow even as your sword tries to reduce us, for the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity!" These prophetic words, uttered at the beginning of the era of Christian persecutions, were finally fulfilled. More and more Romans, from all walks of life, from all classes of society, were converted to the faith of the Cross. High officials, dignitaries, soldiers, men and women, even courtiers in the entourage of the pagan emperor, greeted each other openly with the sign of the cross.

The new emperor, Constantine the Great, was preparing for a decisive battle against his rival Maxentius. He came down from the Alps into Northern Italy, and there he implored his god Apollo to favor him with a sign. But Apollo kept silent. His time of signs and miracles was up.

Then suddenly, in the cloudless blue of the sky above, Constantine saw what he knew to be the symbol of faith adopted by the Christians. And underneath this flaming vision he read these words, written in fire: "By this conquer!"

He understood the prophecy and adopted the cross as his device. The monogram of the first two letters of the name of Christ was inscribed in Greek on the imperial standard and was written on the shields of the soldiers. Thus the army moved up for the decisive battle against Maxentius. At the Milvian Bridge outside Rome Constantine defeated his opponent, and concluded that the God of the Christians had won this victory for him. Convinced of the invincibility of the Cross, he issued at Milan the famous edict of toleration in which the Christians were granted full pro-

tection and the right of free public worship. Within a few years the persecuted faith had become the official religion of the empire.

One day the little oasis of Meiamoun was filled with excitement. A caravan had arrived such as the desert had never seen before. Noblemen, sumptuously dressed, bestrode their camels, followed by slaves, interpreters and guides. Then came a train of pack camels heavily laden with all sorts of travel equipment, water and food, clothing and tents. The travelers had come from very far away. They had started out from the capital of the empire, they had crossed the sea and the desert, and Meiamoun was their goal. Their story was hard for the simple inhabitants of the oasis to believe. They came by order of Constantine, the "divine emperor," and they carried a message to the saint of the desert. The entire village vied to be of service to the noble visitors, who paid lavishly for every hint or help they received. A few of the villagers who from time to time carried water and food to Mount Pispir in exchange for finished palmetto mats offered to escort the strangers to the edge of the "realm of caves." A dried-out cistern at the foot of the mountain, where they used to deposit provisions, marked the spot beyond which they were not allowed to go. There was no guard, no sign of warning, but the law had its roots in the reverence of their hearts, which forbade them in their unworthiness to trespass on the sacred domain of those who had renounced the world.

The villagers passed the watchword. After a while an emaciated, uncouth-looking man emerged from one of the caves, visibly frightened by the extraordinary spectacle at the cistern. It took him quite a while to detach himself sufficiently from his world of solitude, prayer and mortification to understand the worldly concerns which the strangers were discussing. Finally he understood that they were here by order of the "emperor of the Christians" and carried a letter from the supreme ruler to the saint in the desert. He explained that he could not be their guide because he did not know where the saint was. Only two men in the entire settlement knew the way, but their retreat was about two hundred caves higher up, somewhere in the midst of the chaos of rocks and ravines. It would take him a day, he concluded, to go and return to the cistern with one of the men who might serve them as guide.

The emperor's emissaries had to wait patiently at the cistern. The next day Macarius, the man who knew the way, appeared. He suspiciously scrutinized the strangers, in their sumptuous clothes, from head to toe, for he wanted to be quite sure that they were not just another one of those tricky visitations of the devil. He was told time and again that they were here by order of the "emperor of the Christians," and finally he agreed to guide them to Father Anthony. But they had to leave behind at the cistern all their camels and slaves, their luggage, their water bags, their food and clothing.

They marched through a land of silence. The men who lived there remained invisible, hiding in their caves. Plowing through the sand, climbing the rocky slopes and descending again through valleys and ravines, it was strenuous going for the spoiled people from the city. For two days and two nights they marched on, and when they finally reached the place where the saint was in retreat, they were wayworn and tired and suffered greatly from hunger and thirst.

Macarius went up to the cave to announce the arrival of the emperor's mission. But when he reached the opening he stopped reverently and then came back. The saint was busy at his devotions and could not be disturbed. His prayers lasted for hours. Almost a full day passed until he finished and Macarius could announce the arrival of the strangers.

"Father," said the disciple, "the emperor of the Christians has sent a legate to bring you a letter." But Anthony was not impressed. "It should not surprise you," he said, "that the emperor is writing to me as one man to another. But it may surprise you to learn that God just now has spoken to me!"

With solemn ceremonies the legate handed Anthony the imperial scroll. He broke the seal and unrolled the papyrus. But he was not skilled in the art of reading and handed the document to Macarius that he might interpret its contents. "The emperor," said Macarius, "has heard about your holy life and asks you to advise him on how he might live and rule in the true spirit of our Lord. He asks that you send him your reply and that you give him your blessing." Anthony, who was unfamiliar with the art of writing, entrusted to Macarius the task of tracing out his reply on the back of the papyrus. As for the answer itself, he knew no

hesitation. Aware as few others have been of what life in the spirit of the Lord must be, he dictated without a pause "Practice humility and contempt of the world, and remember that on the day of judgment you will have to account for all your deeds"

While the emissaries of the emperor bowed deeply and engaged in the prescribed ceremonies for leaving, Anthony made the sign of the cross over them and withdrew again into his cave. The legate left and took back to the ruler of the world the exacting counsel which the saint of renunciation had given him.

Before long the humble oasis of Meiamoun became a flourishing tourist center. The simple mud huts were transformed into hostels, and the villagers became water bearers, merchants and guides through the labyrinth of rocks to Mount Pispir and its anchorite settlement. For since the emperor of the Christians had sent his emissaries to ask the saint of the desert for his counsel and blessing, the nature of the travelers stopping at Meiamoun to inquire about the settlement of the hermits had changed. They were no longer exclusively pilgrims in sackcloth, but more and more often noble and wealthy Christians who came to imitate the example set by the emperor and to ask Father Anthony to bestow his blessing on their secular ventures. In the beginning these men came mostly from Alexandria and nearby Egyptian towns, but after a while there appeared among them others who had come from Syria and even from faraway Italy. At times whole delegations, such as those from the municipalities of Ravenna and Milan, stopped in Meiamoun on their way to see the famous saint in the desert.

Up at the cistern every new arrival was questioned closely by Anthony's disciple Macarius. "Why did you come here? What do you want?" If the newcomer was a pilgrim clad in sackcloth, eager to stay and find refuge in this realm of renunciation of the world and worldliness, Macarius escorted him up the steep path to the cave of the Father who would teach him the way of life which is pleasing to God. And the watchword was "Jerusalem!"

But if the man was a mere tourist, one of those who presented themselves at the cistern in rich clothes and with bulging purses fastened to their belts, wishing to obtain the saint's blessing and counsel for their worldly concerns, Macarius would take him first to his own cave. There he would instruct him in the doctrine which Father Anthony had summed up for the emperor of the

world "Practice humility and contempt of the world, and remember that on the day of judgment you will have to account for all your deeds" Only then would he take him to the cave of the saint And the watchword was "Egyptian" Anthony would come out, raise his hand in benediction, and withdraw again to his cave

Despite this careful sifting of which Macarius had taken charge, the number of "Egyptians" kept increasing They disturbed Anthony in his divine contemplation One day Macarius went up with a pilgrim, and the watchword by which he announced his coming was "Jerusalem!" There was no answer He entered the cave. It was empty

At that very moment the old hermit was far away, resting on a rock from which he could survey the entire Thebaid He had walked a whole day, looking for a retreat where he might resume his life of solitude unknown and undisturbed But wherever he went, he found the desert inhabited by world-weary anchorites His realm had spread far out into the Thebaid, and nowhere was there a place where he could hide from those who would look for him

The night came and went. A new dawn arose and still he could not decide which way to turn Then he saw in the distance a huge cloud of sand moving swiftly in his direction When it came nearer, he saw men armed with lances and sabres, riding on camels and horses, and herds of goats and tame gazelles in the cloud of sand. Spring had come, and in spring the Bedouins were on the move from the desert to the distant lands along the coast in search of new pastures for their herds

Anthony decided to join these nomads of the desert They did not know or care who the old man might be But their goal and his converged in the distance After the first day's journey they came to a part of the desert which was still entirely uninhabited There were long stretches of nothing but sand, and after that there were rocks and ravines For three days they rode on together through the desolate wilds

Anthony's companions were pagans whom the desert had taught to go thirsty and to go hungry. Anthony was an ascetic who went thirsty and hungry for the sake of his faith They understood one another in their power of renunciation The Bedouins were silent

because the desert had taught them to be silent. Anthony was silent because he obeyed an inner law. They understood one another in being silent. The pagan nomads, eternal migrants, were closer to him than the rich Christians living in the mansions of the world.

Together they crossed the central waste of the Arabian desert. Then Anthony and his companions traversed the plain of Bakarah. Off in the distance, to their right, they passed Mount Colzin, at whose foot many centuries in the future would lie Suez. They came to rest on a plateau where they had found a spring and a few doom palms bearing ripe fruit. From here they could make out the coastline, and beyond the sea the peaks of Mount Sinai. The Bedouins still had another day's ride down to the green pastures on the Red Sea. But Anthony had reached his goal. Near the spring there was a cave, and in it he could live his life of absolute seclusion.

He stayed here for twenty years. Twenty years of undisturbed worship which were to him an eternal moment of blissful absorption in Christ and God. But for his fellow-Christians out in the world these same twenty years were a vexatious succession of theological quarrels about the correct definition of the concept of God and the divinity of Christ.

Since Constantine's conversion, Christianity was no longer a persecuted sect. It was now a powerful religion, and the Christians were confronted with very different problems. Foremost among the tasks of fortifying their church was the formulation of a definitive dogma, this alone could guarantee the worldwide diffusion and permanence of their faith. The result was a bitter controversy regarding the nature of Christ. Basically the question was this: should one consider the Lord, whose initials now adorned the shields of the emperor's legions and whose Cross of martyrdom appeared in symbolic grandeur on the market squares of towns and cities, as a God who had assumed human shape, or merely as a man who had attained almost godlike perfection? The conflict was one of fateful implications, and its decision formed the dogma which has remained the foundation of the established church ever since.

For the pagan Greeks, with their rational clarity, the Christian doctrine of the identity of God the Father and God the Son had always been "sheer foolishness." Even in Greek Christianity some

of this doubt survived. Then Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, tried to make the Christian faith more readily accessible for the skeptical, speculative spirit of the Greeks. He replaced the unfathomable mystery with rational constructions. Giving as his authority passages from Scripture, he insisted that God alone was uncreated and eternal and concluded from this that Christ had to be a creature of God and as such subject to the laws of instability and transition. With this dogma, which met human reason halfway, Arius won over the philosophically trained Greeks of Alexandria and later on, by means of skillful popularization in his sermons, great masses of the common people as well.

Alexander, the orthodox archbishop of Alexandria, regarded the Arian innovation as a dangerous heresy. He ordered the presbyter to stop spreading his doctrine, and when Arius refused to obey, Alexander excommunicated him.

Arius reacted by open rebellion. He asked several of the most influential bishops of the Eastern Church—among them Eusebius, the bishop of the imperial residence of Nicodemia—to examine his teachings and succeeded in securing their endorsement and support. Thus the excommunicated priest came to be the head of a considerable faction, a dangerous opponent of orthodox Christianity.

In this crisis the traditional doctrine was forcefully upheld by the young deacon Athanasius. His eloquence had the same power of fascination as that of Arius, and through it he succeeded in imparting new vigor and vitality to the doctrine of the identity of God and Christ. In support of his contention that God the Father and God the Son were one he cited Christ's own words "I and my Father are one."

Soon the passionate controversy between Arius and Athanasius spread beyond the limits of the diocese of Alexandria. Bishops and priests from Syria to Italy, from Spain to the shores of the Black Sea, were vehement partisans for or against one or the other cause. Yet not theologians alone, but the masses and the classes, the entire population, took part in the dispute. High imperial dignitaries as well as lowly sailors, working men as well as idle parasites were involved. So great was the excitement that actual rioting broke out in the city of Alexandria itself. Soon all of Christendom was divided in two opposing camps, and the problem of the identity

of God and Christ had come to be a political problem affecting the whole empire. The emperor himself had to take a hand in trying to mediate between the warring factions.

At heart Constantine was really still a pagan, and at first the whole conflict struck him as a pedantic squabble of theologians. His power as a ruler, however, was largely dependent on his Christian following, and so he was decided to preserve the unity of the church at any cost. His attempt to mediate by sending a delegate to Alexandria failed, and in 325 he called a general council to be held at Nicaea, near the imperial residence of Nicodemia, where a comprehensive and binding creed was to be formulated.

Three hundred bishops from all parts of the world convened at the emperor's behest. They came from Egypt and Asia Minor, from Africa, Spain and Italy, from the Caucasian mountains, from Armenia and Persia. They came by ship across the Ascanian Sea, or by land on horses, donkeys, mules, accompanied by priests and slaves.

The emperor used all the pomp of his sovereignty to provide a dignified setting for this first great council of the Church. Officers of the court—only recently deadly persecutors of the Christians—were in festive attendance, and the arms of the legionaries—used but a short time ago in cruel attempts to suppress the Christian faith—were raised to salute the incoming guests. In solemn procession the imperial guard escorted the bishops to the palace.

The council itself with its sharp contrasts was an event the like of which the world had never seen. In the assembly hall a magnificent altar had been erected, and before it the emperor was seated on a golden throne. From there he presided in his purple robe of heavy silk, strewn with precious stones. The dignity of his demeanor, the restraint of his expression, were majesty incarnate. But at his feet, down in the hall, the bishops in their passionate disputes offered a spectacle of turbulent discord. Most of them still bore marks of the martyrdom they had suffered. With mutilated bodies, scalded, burnt or blinded by their oppressors, they were now engaged in a struggle for the truth of their doctrine. "Christ is a man!" "Christ is God!" "Truth is reason!" "Truth is mystery!" "Scripture proves that there is but one God!" "Scripture proves that Christ is God!"

The bishops fought in Greek. The emperor spoke only Latin,

but he saw the excited contestants and the import of their words was summarized for him by an interpreter. It was hard for him to grasp the cause of so much ado. The problem as such left him cold. He wanted a settlement and said so in an appeal which he addressed in Latin to the assembled bishops.

To comply with the emperor's wish the bishops tried to establish a definition of Christ which might prove acceptable to all. "Homo-ousion," suggested one of the orthodox leaders, "equal in essence." "Homoi-ousion," corrected one of the Arian bishops, "similar in essence." The difference was only an *iota*, the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet. With fresh fury the strife flared up again about the correct definition of Christ and about the *iota* which should or should not be in it.

"What are they fighting about now?" asked the emperor whose patience was sorely taxed. "About a letter!" said the interpreter. But the contestants knew that the *iota* which separated them was also a separation of heaven and earth, of God and man.

Constantine grew tired of the endless debate and insisted on a decision.

When the votes were cast, "homo-ousion" triumphed over "homoi-ousion," Athanasius over Arius, Christ God over Christ Man, mystery over reason. Two hundred and twenty bishops signed the creed of identity of essence. Those who refused were branded as heretics and the anathema of the church was denounced against them. By imperial decree the decision of the council became law and was binding throughout the realm.

Outwardly the unity of the church had been restored. But the decision of the council and the anathema of the church were not enough in themselves to eradicate the heresy of reason. It was banned from the market place, but it lived on behind closed doors, in secret conversation and confidential letters.

The Nicene defeat spurred Arius to fight on with greater determination. He was a born organizer and knew how to get in touch with his secret sympathizers in both West and East, in boudoirs as well as galleys, in episcopal mansions as well as in barracks. He knew how to make use both of the moods of the populace and of the intrigues at court. He understood the impact of simplified slogans and the publicity value of popular melodies, and

managed to catch his doctrine in a song with all the earmarks of a hit.

From the pulpits the Nicene Creed was proclaimed, the mystery of the divinity of Christ, but the crowds in the street hummed the tune of the Arian heresy "Christ was only a man!" And more and more often, and more and more casually, the rebel tune of the crowds in the street was heard in the homes, in private gatherings or at banquets in Nicodemia. An imperial law made adherence to the Arian doctrine a punishable offense. But the emperor's sister Constantia, courtiers at Nicodemia and even Eusebius, the bishop of the imperial residence, were Arian sympathizers. And before long the exiled Arian bishops were back in their sees and the Athanasian bishops fell into disgrace. Thus it came to pass that the heresy "was protected and maintained within the fold that had condemned it."

The pressure which the Arians could bring to bear was on the increase, and the emperor, at whose behest Arius had been sent into exile, insisted now that he be reinstated by the church. Athanasius, who had been made archbishop of Alexandria in compliance with the death-bed wishes of his predecessor Alexander, rejected the emperor's recommendation. Then came his turn to be sent into exile. After Constantine's death he returned to the episcopal see, and the city gave him an enthusiastic welcome. All Alexandria was ablaze with light, and the road from the port to his mansion was covered with precious carpets.

But when the carpets had been removed from the streets and the lights were put out, the homecoming bishop looked at his city by the light of ordinary day. He observed to his great dismay that the heretical doctrine had profited by his absence, it had gained access to the very heart of his domain, stealthily here, in rueful confession there, and finally even in open rebellion. When he preached from his pulpit, he was no longer addressing a flock united in faith. The congregation was interspersed with Arian hecklers who did their best to disrupt the sermon. Divine revelation was contested by the force of doctrines of reason, and the house of the Lord resembled a forum for public debates.

Throughout the West and also in large portions of the East the Arians had seized power. Now Egypt, the last remaining fortress of the orthodox faith, threatened to fall victim to the heretical

doctrine. But if Egypt should fall, Christ would lose his last and strongest bastion

With all the fervor of his faith Athanasius tried to win back the deserters, but in their cold reason the heretics remained unmoved. He could quote Scripture or refer to the Fathers, but every proof was countered by another, every Bible passage was met by one that proved the opposite and every argument of his elicited a counter-argument of theirs. By virtue of his episcopal power Athanasius excommunicated the heretics, but they bore his anathemas proudly, convinced that it was they who were fighting and suffering for the true faith.

At this time the Pope was not yet recognized as the infallible authority in matters of the dogma. The Christian emperors claimed the right to decide religious disputes within their realm. And the new emperor, Constantius, the son of Constantine, was an adherent of Arianism. It seemed as if there were a devilish conspiracy of the entire world against the divinity of Christ.

But if the world could not help—the desert could. In the desert there was a saint who had seen the divinity of Christ. Christ had spoken to him from a vision of supernatural light. Christ had received him into His divine grace, had sent His angels and freed him from the demons of darkness.

He was living testimony to the divinity of Christ. And it was to him that Athanasius appealed in this hour of need.

He chose his emissaries from among his most faithful adherents. On camels and mules they left on their mission. But the task before them, to find the saint and bring him to Alexandria, was not an easy one. At last they came to the cistern at Mount Pispir and asked where the saint was, but they received no answer. Since the day when Macarius had gone to see Anthony and had found his cave empty, he had not tried to follow the Father. He knew and understood that Anthony wanted to be alone with God. But now the Church was looking for him because the Lord Christ Himself was in danger, and Macarius and his fellow-disciple Amanas were ready to comply with the request of the bishop's delegates to assist them in their difficult search.

They traveled from Mount Pispir to the Thebaid. The men who lived there were hermits in their caves, and one cave knew nothing of the next. Now and then they passed through the oasis,

but all their inquiries about a man who had gone out into the desert some twenty years ago were in vain. There were no roads leading through this ocean of sand, and the marks which caravans left behind were quickly covered by drifting sand. The mountains in the deserts were a maze of rocks and cliffs and gorges. And here the delegates were looking for a man who had chosen to be alone. It was a hopeless venture. But they refused to lose hope. They had traveled for days on end. Their water bags were empty. The wind of the desert drove clouds of dust and pillars of sand across their path. Mirages deceived them. Their strength was near its end. But they did not turn back. They traveled on and on into the desert. They had to find him. And they did.

The story goes that a Bedouin whom they finally met gave them the right clue. He remembered that long ago, when he was still a boy and had traveled with his father through the desert to find new pastures for their herds along the shores of the Red Sea, they took along a silent old man who had stayed behind on a plateau in the mountains. He took them to the place where they had left him.

"Jerusalem!" Macarius exclaimed. And the ninety-year old saint came out of the cave, his beard of snowy white reaching down to his feet. "The church of the Lord wishes to speak to you, Father Anthony."

When Anthony saw himself face to face with the emissaries of the Church, he was filled with reverence and went down on his knees. The pious farm boy of Coma was still alive in the old man. Shamed by so much humility, the visitors lifted him up and told him about their mission. With all the diffuseness of theological pedantry they explained the unfortunate dispute that had broken out with regard to the divinity of Christ. Macarius translated everything the delegates said in Greek word for word into Coptic.

For Anthony, however, it remained Greek. He found it hard to understand what it was all about. "The Church calls you," Macarius interpreted, "that you may bear witness to the divinity of Christ."

Anthony had remained an obedient son of the Church. The demands of the Church were for him like commands of God. Just as once upon a time he had answered the call to distribute his possessions and go out into the desert, he was ready to obey now. But the language of the Church had changed since he had last

heard it from the mouth of the village priest of Coma, and at first he could not quite grasp what was expected of him. Bear witness to the divinity of Christ? Was not that as though he were asked to bear witness that the sun was shining in the sky above? "Why!" he exclaimed "Don't they see it?"

"The true Christians do, but the Arians . . ." And they explained to him the heresy of Arius, how the dispute had begun and that many bishops and members of the clergy and even the Christian emperor had sided with Arius.

He could not understand it. But suddenly he remembered a vision that he had once seen above the spring. There was an altar there in the bright light of day, and donkeys surrounded it and tried to upset it. And when the delegates made another attempt to explain to him the difference between "homo-ousion" and homoi-ousion," he interrupted them and said "You need not go on. I understand. The donkeys are trying to upset the altar. I am coming."

They helped the old man onto a camel and took the short route through the desert by way of Suez to Alexandria. One morning in spring, in the year 338, they arrived at the gates of the city. Supported by his disciples Anthony entered Alexandria. The turbulent crowd was filled with reverence at the sight of his majestic appearance and made way for him and his followers. No messenger had announced Anthony's coming, no solemn reception had been prepared, but his mere presence commanded respect and forced the crowd to step aside, lining his route in the silent solemnity of a spontaneous welcome. It was a saint who walked through the streets of Alexandria.

The marketers took down their stalls, the beams of the scales were locked, the goldsmiths, potters and money-lenders closed their booths, the bakers did not bake, the butchers cut no meat, in the harbor both catches of fish and costly cargoes were left in the hulls of the ships, the taverns were deserted, the fires in the kitchens went out, the women forgot powder and rouge, the rich did not think of their purses, and from all the houses people streamed out into the street, for nobody wanted to miss the sight of the saint. The sumptuous pomp of Alexandria was forgotten. The city gave an appearance of being a place of fasting and penitence.

Before the gates of the basilica, hundreds of Christians as well

as of heathens, Jews and heretics, had gathered early in the afternoon, all waiting to hear the words which the saint was to speak. The archbishop had planned to celebrate the holy office the following morning, but the impatient crowd persuaded him to do so on the evening of the same day. There was no time to decorate the basilica. It was sparsely lit by a few candles. The archbishop's throne, reserved for the saintly guest, stood in the semicircle of the apse next to the altar. There Anthony was seated in his robe of white sackcloth, the clergy at his left in churchly pomp.

The archbishop, wearing the white pallium as token of his pontifical power, mounted the pulpit. After a brief prayer he read from the Apostles and Prophets. Then came the sermon. "We believe," he said, "in one God, the Almighty Father, creator of all things visible and invisible.

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the son of God, who alone was begotten of the Father, that is of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all was made that is in heaven and on earth, who for us men and for our salvation came down and became flesh, became man, suffered and rose on the third day . . ."

A voice in the crowd protested. Anthony was amazed at this unseemly interruption of the service and turned to Macarius to learn what the voice had said.

"The Lord," Macarius translated, "was only a man, created by God and subject to death and transition."

Anthony arose. His tall figure stood erect beside the altar. The columns along the thoroughfares of Alexandria were not straighter than the nonagenarian saint. The ears of the crowd listened as one ear, the eyes looked as one eye, electrified by the imposing figure of the saint.

"I have seen Him!" he exclaimed.

This was the voice of a man for whom the supernatural truth of Christ had been made real by direct experience and vision. There was a decisive ring in this voice that could not be shaken by any speculation or counterarguments. No reasoning, no contradiction could touch the words of the saint. A shiver went down the aisles. "He saw Him! He saw the Lord Himself!"

And without waiting for the archbishop's sign, the crowd went

down on its knees and intoned a fervent prayer. The spirit had possessed them as in the times of the first apostolic communities. And while the crowd persisted in the ecstasy of this worship, the bishop went to the altar and performed the holy rite at the table of the Lord. From high above, the choir sang, and the people responded "For His mercy endureth forever."

At the altar the curtains of the canopy were opened, and the people pressed forward to partake of the holy communion. And the heretics came in large numbers as well, repentent and ready to abjure their false doctrine in order to be deemed worthy of participation in the sacrament again.

Times had changed since Anthony's last visit to Alexandria. The following morning the governor appeared before him and asked "Father, we need you! Stay with us and continue your ministrations among men!"

But Anthony's task was fulfilled and he replied "Fish, if they tarry on dry land, die—even so monks that abide with men of the world fall away from their vow of quiet. Wherefore, as fish must hurry to the sea, so must we hasten back to the mountain."

When Anthony left to go back to the desert, the sick in their beds and the infants in their cribs were carried to him in the street that he might give them his blessing. Athanasius accompanied Anthony to the gates of the city. There he took off his episcopal mantle and gave it to the saint who was to carry it back with him to the desert as a token of gratitude of the Church.

The faith in Christ Eternal as professed by Anthony in Alexandria was destined to become the ruling creed of Christianity. For the moment, however, formidable obstacles remained in the way of a final orthodox victory. Arian emperors persecuted the right faith with all their might and main, and Athanasius himself was sent three times into exile. The youthful peoples in the North, among them the Vandals and Goths, who invaded the empire with untamed force, embraced Christianity in its Arian form. But in the end no worldly interference, no brutal persecution, could break the faith in Christ the God. The great Fathers of the ensuing ages, including Ambrose and Augustine, professed it, and finally, under the emperor Theodosius, so did the whole Christian empire.

"Christianity itself had then been at stake," said Carlyle about the

era of the Arian dispute "If the Arians had won it would have dwindled away into a legend"

And indeed, if at that time the Arian Christ had won out over the Son of God, His sublime teachings might have wound up as merely one of those ethical doctrines which pass so quickly with changing standards of morality Only a God could hold His place in the hearts of men for almost two thousand years and exert His power of redemption which today as of old gives solace and bliss to the faithful And it is not only the Catholic Church that rests on the dogma of the divinity of Christ The same assurance that God appeared in human form gave the Lutheran message its virile force

If Christ had been merely a man, the jubilant joy of the Christian faith could not have been born There would be no resurrection, no miracle of the Holy Ghost, no grace, no sacrament, no redemption. There would be no merciful Mother of God, there would be no Christmas, no Easter

The arid concepts of Arian rationalism could never have engendered the immortal masterworks of Christian art It was the ascension of Christ that inspired the heavenward motion of heavy masses of stone surging up in the pillars and piers, the buttresses, arches and vaults of Gothic churches and cathedrals The earthly suffering of a god shines forth from the burning colors of the mosaics at Ravenna The power of redemption of the son of God is praised in the panels of the altar of the van Eycks at Ghent The blissful knowledge that a god had lived on earth guided Fra Angelico's seraphic brush And all his angels, just as the lovely Madonnas of Memling, Raphael, Murillo, the crucifixions, pietas, ascensions of Durer, Grunewald and all the great painters and sculptors, the whole miracle of color, line and form of Christian art in the occident, sprang exclusively from the most fervent absorption in knowledge through faith El Greco, the saintly visionary, has used his genius to show the supernatural light in which the Lord appeared to St Anthony and other great saints. And finally, faith in the Redeemer inspired the works of Dante, of Dostoevski and many others enabling them to occupy the exalted rank which they hold for us today in the realm of letters

The little jingle which Arius invented is forgotten But the great music of Christ the Redeemer will sound on through eternity If

the time comes when His Church is no more, the music to which faith in Him has given birth, will continue to proclaim His Truth, to spread joy on earth till the day of the Last Judgment breaks. In all the hundreds and hundreds of works of Johann Sebastian Bach, in all his cantatas, masses, passions, hymns, is voiced the prayer of one whose faith is deeply rooted in confident trust in God the Redeemer. It is He whom Bach praises in his fugues, in the recitatives, the arias and choruses of the Passion according to St Matthew and in the Mass in B minor. In Handel's Oratorio a solo voice jubilates "I know that my Redeemer liveth!" and choir and orchestra respond in a rejoicing hymn of "Hallelujah!" In Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* there is the mighty motive of "Et incarnatus est!"—"God incarnate" has become an eternal truth. Sixteen hundred years ago St. Anthony bore witness to it in the basilica of Alexandria.

After Anthony had returned from Alexandria to the desert, he was to interrupt his solitary life only once more. This happened when he went to see St. Paul of Thebes. As a pious youth of noble lineage Paul had fled to the desert in the year 250, planning to hide there for the period of the Decian persecutions. But when the persecutions were over, he could not bring himself to return to the world. Since his twenty-first year he had not set eye upon either man or woman. No news of him had reached the world outside. His life was spent in silent isolation.

When Anthony went to see him in 342, Paul had spent ninety years in the desert and was one hundred and thirteen years old. At that time Anthony himself was more than ninety. Since his departure from Mount Pispir, this was the fourth time that he had left his solitude. Three times he had descended from his height in answer to a call for help from men. This time, however, he left his cave at the behest of God, to meet a holy man, one of his own kind, and his elder in pious renunciation.

The chronicles describe his descent among men, his ascent to Paul, the oldest saint in the desert, is described in a legend. Saint Jerome, for whom the legend was a higher form of truth in which to relate this great meeting, has handed it down to posterity.

Anthony's path took him along a mountain ridge through the desert, from one desolate cave to another still more desolate. But

the legend raises Anthony's journey into a sphere where supernatural things occur, where reality steps humbly aside, and where reason is silent

Monsters, half man and half beast, served him as guides through the uncharted wilds. On the third morning he saw by the light of dawn a she-wolf, half dead with thirst, vanish into a cave. Anthony followed her trail, for he was certain that he had reached his goal. When he came to the mouth of the cave he called out: "You who admit the beasts of the desert, do not deny entry to a son of men! I have sought. I have found! Now I ask that I be received."

At these words St. Paul came out with the she-wolf. The two men greeted each other by their names, which had been made known to them by God. The Lord had promised Paul to send Anthony before calling him away so that once again he might speak, human being to human being, after nine decades of silence and solitude. The two aged saints spoke about the things of eternity.

Only once were they interrupted. A raven came flying toward them. It carried in its beak a loaf of bread, and placed it before them. "Lo," said Paul, "God has sent us our meal. For sixty years I have received each day a half loaf of bread, but at your coming Christ has doubled his soldier's rations."

After the meal was finished, they both spent the night in prayer. Paul knew that it was his last prayer on earth, for he knew Anthony's visit heralded his departure from this world. The time of his return to God had come. To spare his visitor the sight of his death, he asked Anthony to return to his cave and to bring him the mantle of the Church which he had received from Athanasius. Anthony complied with this wish and hastened back to his cave. Three days separated his cave from Paul's. A long journey for an old man! But Anthony covered the distance with the speed of a bird.

When Anthony arrived again at the cave, he found Paul kneeling in prayer. He too knelt down to pray. But then he saw, by the rigidity of Paul's body, that it was a dead man who was kneeling there in the attitude of prayer.

Deeply grieved, Anthony took up the body of the saint to prepare the place of final rest for him. He had no tools to dig a grave.

But when he looked around, at a loss what to do, he saw two lions coming toward him. A few steps away they stopped, and with their claws they began to dig a grave. Anthony deposited the body in it and covered it with the mantle of the Church. Then he knelt beside the grave to mourn the death of St. Paul. And he heard the echo of his voice multiplied in a great chorus of lamentation, and when he looked up he saw all the animals of the desert assembled around the grave. They had come to mourn the loss of their friend.

Anthony himself was granted fourteen more years of life on earth.

The youth of Coma, who a long time ago had followed the counsel of the gospel and had exchanged earthly possessions and worldly delights for the deprivations and seclusion of life in a cave, had completed his hundredth year. The pilgrims who came now to the cave of the stern ascetic, found a kindly old man radiant with joy and serenity. His visitors often arrived with sadness in their hearts, perhaps they suffered from illness or were entangled in the cares of the world. But just the sight of him could change sadness to joy, could heal the sick and put at rest the minds of men weighed down with cares. As for the many who came to ask his advice—he greeted them, and his one word of kindness was enough. The clouds broke, and all their darkness and confusion was gone.

A man from Alexandria reported after returning from a visit to the saint in the desert that, when he was waiting in front of the dark entrance to the cave, he had suddenly noticed that the darkness of the cave was really radiant brightness and that the cave was a vault of supernatural light. When the saint came out, it was as though a body of light was emerging from a mass of unshaped brilliance.

The man whose very being shone with such comfort and solace had spent eighty years in the desert. His radiance was the fruit of bitter renunciation, his wisdom had matured in quiet seclusion far away from the world, the treasures of his soul had been won through dire deprivation. He who had left the life of the world had attained life's abundance. In him is revealed the eternal truth of one of the secrets of human existence: the fullest, the most profound strengths can only be released by solitude and renunciation.

Fear of the Lord had prompted Anthony to leave the world, and fear of the Lord had made him the strict taskmaster of his body and soul. But upon reaching his hundredth year, fear of the Lord had turned into love, and negation became a triumphant yes! Now Anthony could say "I do not fear God I love Him And love does away with fear" What up to now he had attained through fear of the Lord, love gave him now in abundance As a message of joy he handed it on to his disciples He who had fasted throughout his life now taught that love is more than fasting He who had mortified his body for eighty years counseled his followers "Be of good cheer, for when the bow is drawn too taut it snaps!"

Obedying his Lord in fear and awe Anthony had left his retreat on Mount Pispir to go among men, he had followed their call to Alexandria But each time he had fulfilled this duty, he had hastened back to the solitude of his cave It was far away from his fellow-men that he sought to serve his Lord But now, in his love of God, he saw in every created thing a revelation of the Lord, and his work among men came to be for him as deep a devotion as his prayers in a solitary cave In the love of God he had learned to love men. He did not fear that for the sake of men he might neglect the Lord, and he listened to them patiently. Nothing and no one was too insignificant, and even the frailest vessels and those who had fallen from grace could still be certain of his love

Down in the desert, groups of hermits had meanwhile formed monastic communities One day one of them went to see Anthony His brethren had expelled him because he had fallen victim to all sorts of temptations Anthony helped him and sent him back that he might be reinstated But he appeared once more before Anthony and complained "They refuse to accept me, Father!" And again Anthony sent him back and had him deliver this message "A ship was wrecked at sea and lost all the cargo that it carried, and with hard toil the empty ship was at last brought to land Is it your wish to sink the ship that has returned safe from sea?" And the brethren took him back and again gave him the place he had held among them.

While he had lived in fear of the Lord, Anthony had seen the desert filled with demons Now he loved God, and the desert became a revelation of the Creator, for he saw it through the eyes of one who loves. For hours, for days on end, he sat in front of his

cave, deeply absorbed in the desert panorama below. Nature became the first book which the illiterate saint could read. Great thoughts, the thoughts of God, were inscribed in rock and sand, in cloud and palm tree. And while he sat there watching, the same deep devotion filled his soul as when he knelt in prayer inside his cave, for God's grandeur was the same within and without, and the same piety pervaded his prayer and his contemplation of nature.

A learned man from Alexandria, who spent his days in loneliness, absorbed in books hoping to grasp the ultimate meaning of things, heard about the wise hermit and came to see him. "I understand," said the philosopher to Anthony, "that a man should prefer to live without men, but I cannot see how it is possible to live in seclusion without the solace of books." But Anthony replied, "My book is the world of all created things, and whenever I wish to read the words of God in it, it lies open before me."

While he lived in the fear of God, Anthony had spent his time, as far as it was not taken up by prayer, in weaving mats, for he had learned from the righteous old man at Coma that work can serve to dispel temptation. But now that fear had become love, everything, including his work, became an expression of love.

One morning when he was more than a hundred years old, Anthony went over to the spring to refresh his parched lips, suddenly he understood that the very water he drank was a message from God of blessing and fertility. The water was the living water of God. A draft of it changed him. And as he went back to his cave, the message it held pervaded all his thoughts. He did not walk through barren wastes of rocks and sand. He walked over God's earth. And as he looked down, he saw that the arid soil had changed through the magic of live water into fertile acres. He walked on, and the soil was covered with budding green, sprouting blades pressed upward, and with every step he advanced, the stalks grew and ripened and bore ears of heavy grain. As he had done long ago as a young farmer, Anthony stopped and felt the ears with his hands as though appraising the coming harvest. And when he came back to his cave, he entered its darkness leaving behind him the brilliance of a ripening field of grain. It was an ancient anchorite who knelt down to pray, but in him beat the heart of a young farmer who offered thanks for the blessing of the earth.

The grainfield in front of the cave was only a vision. Rock-

strewn wastes of sand greeted Anthony when he stepped out again. But in that vision the Lord had expressed his will in smile and metaphor "Till my earth!" He said. And Anthony acted in accordance with his vision. His hands were eager to obey when they were ordered now to sow and to reap.

From some of the pilgrims Anthony obtained the most essential tools and a few handfuls of seed. He dug a hole near the spring. The spring filled it. With his spade he drew furrows, lengthwise and across through the desert soil. The water followed. He threw up dams all around, and the water flooded the plot he had marked off as his field and drenched its sun-baked crust. The arid soil of the desert was changed into moist and fertile loam. Anthony took his seeds and sowed them broadcast. And after a while the blades came sprouting forth, and the stalks grew up and bore grain. What had been a vision had come to be fact. The desert was in bloom. When the time came, Anthony gathered his crop, separated the grain from the chaff, ground it between two rocks, formed it into a dough, struck sparks from flint, fanned up a fire—and on the heated rock he baked his first loaf of bread.

Two lonely hands had brought about this miracle, had made over the desert plateau into fertile acres. Hands accustomed to prayer thrust the spade into the soil, dug, sowed, and gathered in the harvest. A man trained in prayer had transformed the barren wastes into a field of grain, for the prayer of him who had lived in the fear of the Lord had become, through love, the creative prayer of work.

With this experience of the miracle of growth and fertility, a new form of piety grew up in Anthony, the piety of participation in God's grandeur. And at harvest time it was as though the earth were uttering a grateful Amen!

With his fertile acres, Anthony wrote his name into the book of creation. It was the signature of a saintly farmer. The farmer of Coma had attained perfection as the farmer of God.

As such his last visitors found him—as a farmer of God, a saint who sowed and watered, gathered the harvest and baked his bread. And this hermit-farmer, although an ancient man, had still the unbroken vigor and freshness of youth, his body was erect, his gait elastic, his eye clear and penetrating and his voice forceful and resonant. He had completed his one hundred and third year and

had retained such youthful virility after a life of deprivation and mortification of the flesh, exposed to the parching sun and the pitiless winds of the desert and to all manner and kinds of weather.

His visitors regarded his youthful strength as proof of God's miraculous intervention. It was, however, a miracle that tallies perfectly with the results of modern investigations. The statistical surveys of the American scientist T. S. Young, for instance, demonstrate that people who have enjoyed exceptionally long lives were on the whole accustomed to a frugal form of existence. And Professor Raymund Pearl of John Hopkins Hospital, one of the best-known experts on the question of longevity, has summarized his findings in the statement that "the pace of our life is the pace-maker of its duration!"

In full possession of his strength, at the age of one hundred and five years, Anthony was finally taken away by death. No illness, no decline of vitality announced the coming of the end, but one day when he was working in his field, sickle in hand, ready to bring in the harvest, God's voice informed him that this was to be the last crop he should gather.

Thus a strange and wonderful life had come to a close, a life of which eighty years had been spent in absolute solitude. Considered from the viewpoint of our time—which knows only of hectic haste and yawning emptiness—it is almost inconceivable that a man should have spent so long a span of time in utter seclusion and yet be satisfied with it. But for Anthony a hundred years of life in God were but a day of eternity. There is something akin to this in the most modern scientific conception of the phenomenon of time. Since Bergson it is no longer obvious that time must be measured with mathematical exactness as though it were only an external and absolute event, it has become necessary to consider it also as an internal and psychological factor. Thus considered its progress is not dependent on clocks and almanacs, for it attains permanence in accordance with the intensity of man's inner life. Its units are "years of the soul."

When Anthony felt that his last hour was coming near, he sent his favorite disciples Macarius and Amanas to his sons in the desert with the message that those who wanted to see him once again should hasten and come. When they arrived, there were more

than he had expected. For all the inhabitants of the desert had come: the hermits from their distant rocks; the cenobites from the Nile who already had congregated in groups under the leadership of an abbot, the anchorites from the Nitrian desert, and those from the desert of Sketis who lived in uncharted wastes and had no guide but the stars. Bearded old men and youths in their teens, palm branches in their hands, the sign of the cross on their chests, came up the hill on their pilgrimage to the saint of the desert. An army of pilgrims it was, but they had not come to march past a general reviewing his troops, they had come because a loving father wanted to take leave of his devoted sons. He walked along their rows, gave them his blessing and asked them to persevere in their ways of devotion to God, and when he came to one who had a question or a last request, he listened patiently and gave freely of sympathy and advice.

In weight and number the bread which Anthony had prepared was enough for only a few of the callers. But it satisfied them all as at the time of the miracle of the Lord's seven loaves. When the love feast in the desert was over, the host withdrew to his cave, for his last hour had arrived. Once again he prayed fervently, and turning to his disciples Macarius and Amanas he said "The Lord is calling me." He asked to be buried in a place unmarked by sign or symbol, for he wanted his body to belong to the earth and not to men.

And Anthony died on the seventeenth of January in the year of our Lord 356. He had found his final resting place, nobody knew where, when the following spring the earth around his cave began to turn green again, when the grain grew up and soon was ready again to be reaped.

But also the seed which Anthony had sowed through the example of his ascetic life was soon to sprout and bear fruit. The desert was its native habitat, but it spread and was broadcast, it grew and ripened all over the world and down through the centuries. For the time was to come when the settlements of the hermits in caves and tombs and ruins would be transformed into the fortresslike convents and monasteries of the Middle Ages.

Anthony's withdrawal from the world inspired the monastic movement of later centuries. It took its start in the negative idea of

renunciation and grew up to become a creative factor in the cultural life of subsequent times. Thus the name of Anthony, the illiterate, was inscribed, through the work which his example produced, in the cultural history of all mankind.

The earliest beginnings of the monastic form of life had developed in the Egyptian desert while Anthony was still among the living. One of his disciples, Pachomius by name, had gathered a group of hermits on the lonely island of Tabennisi in the Nile, organizing them under his leadership into a devotional community. At the time of Anthony's death there were no less than nine or ten such groups, each one consisting of about a thousand hermits. Another disciple of Anthony's, Hilarion, transplanted the desert seed of asceticism from Egypt to Palestine where he founded a number of colonies of anchorites living together under the leadership of a superior in aggregations of separate cells which came to be known as *lauras*. Thus Hilarion became the apostle of Eastern monasticism, for the *lauras* spread quickly from Palestine to Syria, to Persia, Babylonia and elsewhere throughout the East.

For these first communities a set of specific rules, the rules of chastity, poverty and obedience, which in course of time assumed the importance of basic vows for all forms of monasticism, was formulated by St. Basil the Great, who had begun his career as a pagan orator, and having dedicated himself to a life of Christian asceticism, came to occupy in the end the episcopal see of Caesarea.

The spread of monasticism in the West, where it was to be of such lasting cultural significance, came about through the effects of a book, the *Vita St. Antonii* by Athanasius, one of those written documents whose impact has changed the face of the earth. Athanasius was an admirer of Anthony. Of the twenty years of his life in exile he had spent six as a hermit among hermits in the Egyptian desert, and when he came to write his account of Anthony's life, he produced an account of the miracle of a life wholly devoted to Christ.

The first city that was stirred by the message contained in this book was precisely the most un-Christian city of the new empire of Christianity—the city of Rome.

In Rome the old pagan faith had held its own in spite of the fact that Christianity had been declared the official religion of the em-

pire In the Senate a powerful faction of heathens fought to protect its traditional rights In the Christian basilicas the Christians prayed to Christ, but in pagan temples pagans continued to sacrifice to their pagan gods While women and children were predominantly adherents of the new faith in the Christian Redeemer, their husbands and fathers remained true to the gods of the past The social structure of Rome had not really been affected by the Christian doctrine The nobility, the patricians and the wealthy continued their life of abundance and plenty made possible for them by slaves and the poor whom they exploited and despised And even the Christians, whose gospel taught them a different form of life, could not escape the spell of social conventions All of Rome, heathens and Christians alike, lived in a frenzy of luxury and worldly pleasure It was the escape of a civilization haunted by a sense of its impending doom.

The men, inflated with pride, always in search of better positions and higher ranks, thought of nothing but money and power The women wasted their time on laces and frills Dressed in sumptuous clothes, golden wigs on their heads, these powdered and painted dolls were carried in ivory litters from banquet to banquet, from dance to dance, until, exhausted by the weight of their jewels, they sought the support of their slaves to find home to their beds of leisure Even the Christian priests, who interpreted the gospel in church, had succumbed to the temptations of this life In elegant robes, scented with exquisite perfumes, their hair carefully curled, their fingers laden with rings, they went tripping along on tip-toes to visit the mansions of their parishioners, greatly concerned lest the soft leather of their shoes might get soiled A religion had triumphed but not its spirit, and the victors, now mighty and rich themselves, had forgotten the doctrine of their Master, the Galilean who had called no earthly possession his own

This was the world into which the book of Athanasius thrust its account of the life of St Anthony It told of the life of an Egyptian farmer who had renounced the world and all its possessions and pleasures, who had lived in poverty his life of devotion and deprivation to be able to follow the real doctrine of Christ It was because of the striking contrast between this ascetic form of life and the dissipated revelries of the Romans of the time that the

Athanasian *Vita* made such a deeply stirring impression on the conscience of Roman society

A man in far-away Egypt had set the example. And women in Rome, pagan as well as Christian, were the first to embark upon an attempt to emulate the ascetic life of the desert saint. Among them were descendants of the noblest families, the Julians and Marcellians, the Gracchi and Scipios. One by one they freed their slaves, gave away their inherited fortunes, rejected splendid suitors, dressed like the poor and vied with each other in leading a life of deprivation and chastity as virgins and widows, whose love belonged to the Lord. One after another the palaces were converted into convents and monasteries. Before long the men too were swept away by their enthusiastic example. Senators and consuls gave up their ranks and honors, exchanged their purple togas and costly robes of state for humble cowls and lived the life of monks in poverty and devotion.

When St. Jerome as a young student arrived from his Dalmatian home in the city of Rome, where he wanted to complete his studies in law and theology, he found that life in this center of worldly gaieties was already deeply affected by the ideals of Christian asceticism, and before long he too fell completely under the spell of the new movement. At a later period he himself was to spend a considerable span of time as a hermit in the wastelands of Chalcis, but now, at the behest of the Roman noblewoman Marcella, whose palace on the Aventine served as headquarters of the monastic movement, he became the leader and chief adviser of the ascetic circle in Rome.

The movement of monasticism spread from Rome to Northern Africa. It spread to Gaul and all through the Western world. And as the sphere of its influence extended, it gained in strength until it could impress its characteristic mark on the following centuries.

The same fear of God which had led Anthony, the father of the monastic movement, into the solitude of the desert, inspired now the many who repudiated their natural human cravings and refused to fulfill their elementary duties as members of a worldly society, who exchanged their homes for caves in the desert or for cells in convents and monasteries, who gave away their fortunes to live a life of destitution, who abandoned their friends and families to live in solitude under conditions contrary to the instincts and

customs of human nature, who relinquished every claim to participation in social and civic activities in order to spend their days in prayer and devout observance

The fear of God—which is a first call of the voice of conscience—induced these multitudes of men and women to turn their backs on a decadent society which lay prostrate in its worldly wickedness. The fear of God emboldened them to withdraw their support from a state which was built on a system of exploitation of the poor and of injustices perpetrated by the rich. And that same fear of God produced those nightmarish excesses of chastisement and fasting, accounts of which fill pages and pages of the history of early monasticism.

But in the development of the monastic movement there came a time, exactly as in the life of Anthony, when the fear of God was transformed into love of God, and then the most glorious chapters of the monastic history of the following centuries were written. What had begun as an antisocial movement turned out to be now an important social factor. Repudiation of worldliness engendered a new form of affirmation of life, and the men and women who abandoned their work in the world, became the creators of a new culture and a new form of society.

The importance of the cultural force, which radiated from convents and monasteries and had its ultimate origin in the caves of the desert, is attested by the history of the early Middle Ages.

The intricate distinctions of rank and dignity which engender the pitiless egotism of worldly societies lost all their significance in the humble caves and cells of anchorites, monks, and nuns, who regarded the poorest of the poor as their equals, as children of the same father, as united with them by a bond of universal brotherliness. Through this ascetic self-denial, which had sprung from the love of God, half-smothered sympathies with the suffering of others were inspired to ardent impetuosity, and passive commiseration grew active in practical help.

In caves and cells, where there were neither proud masters nor contemptible slaves, a community of free workers came into being. Here, where everyone lived by the work of his hands, work held again the noble rank which had been consecrated by the tilling and laboring prophets, by the carpenter's son of Nazareth, and the tentmaker of Tarsus. What pity demanded, working hands were

ready to perform The power of a will, which had been steeled in ascetic discipline, made it possible for anchorites, monks and nuns to conceive their plans of support for the needy on so comprehensive a scale that they may well be termed the first great social workers In the fourth century hermits in the Egyptian desert cultivated the arid soil of the desert in the sweat of their brows, they sowed and harvested and reduced their own scanty allowance while sending whole shiploads of grain to Libya and Alexandria to feed the needy there

Our age is justly proud of its achievements in social welfare, of its hospitals, its homes for the aged and the poor, but it should be remembered that all these institutions owe their existence in the final analysis to ascetic men and women working in the fourth century of the Christian era At that time Fabiola, a Roman noblewoman, who belonged to the ascetic circle of St Jerome, founded the first asylum for the poor in the city of Rome. And Basil, the monastic bishop of Caesaria, built outside the gates of his city another Caesaria for the sick and the poor and erected in it the first hospitals

St Athanasius, St Ambrose and St Augustine spoke of charity and work as "counsels of perfection" in true monastic life The spontaneous gesture of giving away, in one fell swoop, all one's inherited wealth was no longer enough in itself, continuous charity was required, and work was regarded as its tool But it was only through Benedict of Nursia, the first founder of a religious order in the West, that work and charity were given the rank of binding principles For Benedict's monks it was a duty to feed the poor, to clothe the naked and to nurse the sick In his rule, "Pray and labor, for idleness is the enemy of the soul," he welded together spiritual absorption and manual work in one identical piety.

Benedict was to develop Anthony's monasticism into the most powerful cultural institution of the West, but he began his career entirely in the spirit of world-renouncing escape which had also animated the beginnings of his Egyptian precursor The son of rich patricians of Nursia, just like the son of wealthy farmers of Coma, severed all his worldly ties and fled into the wilderness. In the gorge of Subiaco he chose a cave on a steep cliff which was linked with the outer world by a single pass of extremely hazard-

ous access. There he spent several years, practicing the most austere self-castigation, until one day, attracted by his saintly life, other men arrived, eager to be his disciples and to accept his guidance in following the example he had set. Benedict founded his first monastery for a first group of twelve disciples, and in course of time, as his following increased, eleven other monasteries, of which the famous Monte Cassino was the last and most important. Thus the first religious order of the West, the order of the Benedictines, had come into being. It was to become of the most far-reaching significance for the entire development of European cultural life.

This magnificent institution had not been planned by the ascetic hermit in his cave of Subiaco. He developed it, as a chosen leader of his fellows, in accordance with the spontaneous growth and progress of his work. The order of the Benedictines, as Cardinal Newman put it, was "a growth rather than a structure." Benedict saw himself confronted with the task of establishing a rule for a community of disciples. All the little requirements of daily life yielded the general rules summarized in the famous Benedictine Rule, which became the foundation of Western monasticism for the following four centuries. The Benedictine Rule imparted to the relatively unstable monastic communities the solid structure of an organized institution. The loose ties, which had held together groups of pious individuals, were replaced by a permanent union which only death could dissolve. Those who abandoned their families in the world became members of a spiritual family of monks. Those who left their houses and homes in the world of change found in the monasteries a house without change, a home of the spirit that could never be lost. Those who renounced their self-centered work in the world were placed by the rules in an organized pattern of work the yield of which accrued to a group and never to a single individual. Self-castigation was replaced by self-discipline, mortification of the body by devotion to work. Thus, when Benedict heard at one time of a hermit whose exaggerated asceticism had induced him to have himself chained to a rock within his narrow cave, he gave him this message of the new life of piety: "Break the chains, for the true servant of God is chained not to rocks by iron, but to righteousness by Christ."

In the Benedictine monasteries work as well as contemplation

and worship was regulated by a strict schedule, and every monk had his specific assignments. Brother woodcutter cut wood, brother miller ground grain, brother farmer tilled the soil, brother cook prepared the meals, brother gardener worked in the garden, and the monks in the shops made utensils and tools and all sorts of supplies.

Benedict's sister Scholastica who had followed his example and had founded a number of convents which she placed under the same Benedictine Rule, enjoined her nuns to spin and weave and make clothes.

Through Benedict's rules of work the monasteries and convents became self-supporting institutions in no way dependent on the outside world. And only this emancipation from the necessity of requesting and accepting what others had to offer, could engender the capacity of giving and helping in the spirit of complete disinterestedness on which Christian charity is based. Only the planned cultivation of the fields, the planned production in the shops could produce the permanent surplus of food and supplies which guaranteed the effectiveness of Benedictine relief. The place of sporadic charity was taken by organized welfare work. For what was done by these Benedictine monks, in monasteries far apart in space, in ages separated by centuries, it all merged together, by virtue of the structure of the order, in one great total achievement. It surpassed the limits of individual monasteries, it outlasted the span of life of individual monks. To the individual Benedictine it did not matter whether he could complete the work he began, whether he might live to see the harvest of the seeds he had sowed. Those coming after him would continue the same kind of work and they would complete it. It was only the assurance that the order would last which made it possible for the Benedictines to conceive their vast plans, which gave them the courage to embark on a venture which no one monk, no generation of monks and no one monastery could ever have hoped to bring to completion.

The glory of the Benedictine achievements can be appreciated only against the dark background of the time. Benedict was born in 480, shortly after the downfall of the last Roman emperors. His life and work and the great attainments of his order coincide in time with the migration of peoples which marked the end of the civilization of Antiquity. The Mediterranean world lay devastated

in the wake of warring armies like those of the Eastern Roman general Belisarius and the invading Goths and Vandals and Lombards. The prevailing mood was one of impending doom. The cities were destroyed, Rome itself lay in ruins, the rural districts were depopulated. War, hunger, poverty were scourges of the land.

And then, in the midst of a decaying old world, there arose in the secluded monasteries of the Benedictine monks the new world of the Middle Ages. These monks, who had withdrawn from the chaos of the age to live in cloistered solitude their lives of calm serenity, had found the road which led to a new beginning. While out there in the world hordes obsessed with warring passions destroyed without reason or sense the lives of men and the product of their toil, the monks kept aloof from worldly passions and were quietly at work to build anew. Their charity was immune to partisan hatred and prejudice and welcomed every comer in readiness to help and to console. Where turbulent hordes of war had devastated the fields, quiet monks moved in to till the soil afresh. And in the midst of chaos and devastation they tended their blooming gardens and fruitful fields of grain. What Alaric and Attila had shattered and ruined, industrious monks set patiently out to rebuild. In a war-torn world they threw new bridges and opened up new roads.

In course of time their example inspired also men and women outside the cloister walls. Whenever tilling and plowing monks were seen, devoted to their work as a new form of worship, pious men and women from all classes of the lay world volunteered to take part in the great work of reconstruction. And as the spirit of this new piety of work pervaded whole districts of the land, the rehabilitated fields spread farther and farther over the countryside, and more and more men and women returned to their work in the shops and on the farms. They found their way back to a constructive life, and the rules of St. Benedict, which had been written for monks, had come to be a message of hope for the world at large.

Very soon the Benedictine monasteries were focal points in the labor of reconstruction. All those in whose hearts the desire to build and preserve was still glowing, all those who longed to be safe from doom and decay, withdrew to the monasteries and submitted to the rules of St. Benedict.

In the year 540 the patrician Cassiodorus, whom the king of the Goths, Theodoric the Great, had made his minister, decided to withdraw from the world to the quietude of a monastery. Through his office he was a dignitary in the state of the Ostrogoths, but in his heart he had remained a Roman and watched with the deepest grief how the culture of the past, which he cherished, was undermined by the actions of the new rulers. It seemed to him that the monasteries were the last sanctuaries where the remnants of the old cultural heritage might be kept in safety, where a systematic effort on the part of the monks might succeed in preserving and developing the learning of the Ancients for the benefit of coming generations. A philosopher and a monk, Cassiodorus collected the vestiges of ancient literature and acted as the great curator of these monuments of the past "so that the world might not be submerged completely in barbarism." He turned his country home at Bruttium into a monastery, which consisted not only of cells and a chapel but also of a library and a so-called scriptorium, for he prescribed to his monks, as a form of religious service, the work of preserving and copying ancient codices. Monks in black cowls sat bent over old papyri, patiently tracing letter upon letter, transcribing and translating one manuscript after another. Soon the other monasteries of the Benedictine Rule followed the example set by Cassiodorus, and in course of time whole libraries of copies and translations were brought together. To these labors of preservation later ages owe their acquaintance with the writings of the Church Fathers, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine, but also their knowledge of the poems of Vergil and Horace and the prose writings of the Roman classics.

Thus the Benedictine monasteries became already during the life time of their founder sanctuaries of ancient wisdom and centers of a new form of learning. The training in ancient thought, combined with monastic concentration, generated the intellectual force that built the new culture of the Middle Ages.

It is of symbolic importance that Monte Cassino, the starting point of the new development, was built in the same year which saw also the dissolution of the Academy, the last surviving stronghold of ancient learning. The Benedictine order is the link which connects Antiquity with Modern Times.

Their interest in learning enabled the Benedictine monks to be-

come the teachers of the younger peoples, to maintain the continuity of the educational tradition which otherwise might have been disrupted during the migration of peoples. Cassiodorus wrote several textbooks on the liberal arts and also a grammar, and soon a whole staff of monks of this mighty order applied themselves to the task of teaching. Wherever the Benedictines founded a new monastery they also organized a new school or academy. It is from these educational institutions that the universities of the later Middle Ages were developed.

With the Benedictine monk Gregory, monasticism, which long ago had started in the Egyptian desert, rose to the highest power in world politics. Gregory was crowned Pope, and history speaks of him as Gregory the Great. He belonged to the Anicians, a family of Roman patricians and had at first been one of the praetors. But he, as Cassiodorus before him, felt drawn away from his position of dignity to the quietude of a monastic cell by the ideals which were forming a new world behind the protecting walls of the monasteries. His ancestral estate on the Caelian Hill he turned into the monastery of St. Andrews. Besides he founded six Benedictine monasteries in Sicily.

Cassiodorus had enriched monasticism by Roman learning, Gregory added Roman organizational skill to the monastic character. His extraordinary talents extended their influence beyond his narrow cell into the outside world, and in 590, when the clergy, the Senate and the Roman people acclaimed him Pope, there was not one dissenting voice. At this time the Pope possessed already the power of an absolute ruler. When Gregory acceded to the papal throne, this power fell for the first time into the hands of a monk. He felt his position of worldly power to be a heavy burden, and some time after he had had to abandon the quietude of his cell to occupy the papal see, he wrote in a letter to one of his friends: "I reflect to what a dejected height of external advancement I have mounted in falling from the lofty height of my rest."

Under his pontifical robes he remained faithful to the black cowl of the Benedictine monks. He was vested with papal power, but as a simple monk of his order he continued to practice the rule of charity. When he learned one day that in spite of his most strenuous efforts to relieve the misery of the poor, a beggar in Rome had

died of hunger, he insisted that it was his fault. He chastised himself and redoubled his efforts to gain control over the suffering of the poor. It was then that he made it incumbent upon the entire church to set aside part of its revenues to help the needy.

The Pope planned to extend the power of the Church of Rome over the entire world and decided to conquer for Christianity the heathen countries of Britain and Gaul. But it was a Benedictine monk on the papal throne that was thinking out plans for this campaign of conquest. Since Julius Caesar this was the second attempt on the part of Rome to extend its rule over the British Isles. When Caesar wanted to conquer Britain, he sent out six of his legions, the papal monk, in thinking of conquest, sent forty Benedictine monks. Caesar's legions were armed to the teeth when they crossed the Channel to move inland from Dover. The rules of war which Gregory had for his forty monks were love and charity, and the weapons of conquest were the Book of Books and hymns of his own composition. With songs on their lips the monastic conquerors marched through the forests of Kent to Canterbury where King Engelbert held court. Instead of taking his land away from him, they brought into his land a new religion and a new culture. The doctrine of their faith was set forth in a book which they presented to their Anglo-Saxon hosts, and since the Anglo-Saxons could not read or write, these thoughtful monks, who had come to spread the gospel, carried with them grammar books and primers. Wherever they worked they founded schools. And before long, owing to the Benedictine monks, Christianity and primers and schools extended their rule also over Ireland, Gaul and the Teuton lands.

Yet this great monk on the papal throne, through whom the Christian faith had been carried to the northern peoples, through whom they had been brought into the orbit of Mediterranean civilization, who has come to be called the last of the Fathers of the Church because with his writings he completed the work of spiritual consolidation which his predecessors had begun, this great Benedictine monk had given to the Church and to all Western civilization another most wonderful gift, the gift of the art of music. St. Athanasius and St. Hilarion in the East and St. Ambrose in the West had led their congregations in singing praises of God, but it was only through Gregory the Great that song and

music were given the value of prayer, for he established them as integral parts of the Mass. He was endowed with the creative power of a musical genius and used it to develop, on the basis of Greek melodies, the solemn recitational forms of the ritual plain song known as Gregorian chant. Thus he saved the musical heritage of Antiquity, preserving it in the Church and handing it down to subsequent centuries.

As an old man, troubled with the gout, this Pope still spent hours and days in the singing school which he had founded, tirelessly at work imparting to his monks his own feeling for purity of sound and teaching them the art of singing to the greater glory of God. Through the exacting efforts of this music-inspired master, Christian worship became a worship of melody and song, and Christianity a singing faith. And those still outside the church were drawn into its fold, since it had come to be a church of songs, in greater numbers than dogma, school and sermon would have been able to attract. And from among them were recruited the first lay students of music who then went out to be the earliest teachers of song and music in Western Europe. These were the beginnings, and out of them grew the great occidental music, which in the fugues of Bach encompassed heaven and earth.

For many centuries after Gregory's death the order of the Benedictines held the stewardship of the cultural heritage of the Ancients and of the building materials of the rising civilization. Finally in the tenth century this great order succumbed like everything else that is exposed to the world to the same eternal tempter whom Anthony, the "father of monasticism," had seen in the form of the devil. The temptations which felled the Benedictine order, as they felled in course of time so many other orders too, were wealth and greed. But always and everywhere monasticism found back to its original ideal and destination only in so far as it found back to its old ascetic severity, to poverty, renunciation and quietude. Whenever this happened monasticism derived from it new creative strength enabling it to attain new heights of achievement. All the great figures in the history of monastic orders: St. Bernard, the mystic of Clairvaux, St. Anselm of Canterbury, the founder of scholasticism, Albertus Magnus, the Doctor Universalis, St. Thomas Aquinas, the Doctor Angelicus, St. Francis of Assisi, the Troubadour of God, St. Bonaventura, the Doctor Seraphicus,

all of them grew strong in solitude, were trained in renunciation and remained faithful to their vow of poverty. However much these occidental monks of the later Middle Ages may have differed from the hermit of the Egyptian desert who could neither read nor write, they all belong to his spiritual kin. In his austerity he is unmistakably the common ancestor of all of them

In the Christian monasteries, asceticism established itself as a powerful institution which persisted through more than fifteen centuries and became at the same time a force which helped to determine the course of history. Yet the essence of the ascetic idea is much more deep-rooted than any specific religious creed. Deeply inherent in the human soul is not only the yearning for a higher spiritual plane but also the conviction that such an ideal can only be attained through solitude, through renunciation of worldly goods, through training of body and soul, in sum, through an ascetic way of life.

The word "asceticism" goes back to a Greek base which signifies "to practice" and was applied to athletes living in seclusion and abstinence while training for a contest in the arena. Christianity applied this word to the spiritual training of the soul for its contest with the temptations of man's animal nature. Whenever individuals or groups of individuals tried to rise above the level of common nature, they chose solitude as their new home, made poverty their state, and abstinence their mode of life.

In India, the cradle of all spiritual worth, the Brahmans of early Vedic times withdrew into solitude and lived as hermits in order to attain insight into the ultimate mysteries of being. For the Hindus, the great god Shiva in whom are combined the principles of destruction and restoration, set the example of ascetic existence. They visualized him far away from the world in the solitude of the highest peak of the Himalayas, sitting on a tiger skin and absorbed in meditation, directing the course of the world solely by concentrated thought. In the doctrine of yoga the practice of asceticism was formulated in a definite system which is one of the oldest spiritual traditions of man. Buddha spent seven years of silent solitude under a fig tree, until he attained that all-embracing enlightenment which made him, the former prince Gautama, into a

Buddha, that is, an enlightened one. And Buddhist monks and nuns sang the "immortal songs of his serene wisdom."

The priests of the Egyptian god Serapis were ascetics. So were the members of the Grecianized Hebrew sects of the Essenes and Therapeutics. The prophet Mohammed withdrew to a cave near Mecca in preparation for his great work, and later on asceticism played an essential part in Mohammedan piety. The mystics of all ages and of all faiths assure us that the *unio mystica*, the true union with God, is attainable only in solitude and through an ascetic mode of life. And finally, Protestantism, the stalwart opponent of monkhood, produced the ascetic severity of Calvin and Cromwell, it produced the Puritans and Pietism.

Not only the religious instinct, also the spiritual experience of the great philosophers and molders of ethical thought confirm the value of ascetic living. They all agree that real understanding can only be attained by those who submit to severe discipline, to some form of asceticism, for nothing else makes possible that full concentration without which reason remains sterile. Heraclitus, the father of philosophy, lived in solitude. Plato's idealistic doctrine is based on an ascetic view of life. Aristotle called the life of pleasure-seekers barbaric. The Stoics, the Cynics, the Neoplatonists, Spinoza, Pascal, Schopenhauer, Tolstoi, they all taught that true life, true knowledge, and true serenity are attainable only through subjugation of the lower instincts. The great philosopher Kierkegaard published his first important work, *Either—Or*, under the pseudonym of "Victor Eremita," the victorious hermit. And even Nietzsche, who proclaimed his "joyful wisdom" as an anti-Christian gospel, developed his doctrine in ascetic solitude. From Dante and Petrarca to Keats and the Romanticists and down to the writers of the most recent past, the poets are singing the praises of solitude and renunciation. And even the German Classicists, whose sole concern was "living life," were in need of repose in the "inner cloister" to hold communion with their "calmer self."

Not only the Revelation of St. John was written in the solitude of a grotto on Patmos. Ernst Bertram asserts that all books of worldwide importance were conceived on some Patmos, in the desert, in captivity, in forced or self-imposed exile. "Do you not know," he wrote, "that the voice of the caller comes always out of the desert and that the things which are to be spoken for a people

and of a people, must mature in the fields of loneliness?" And indeed, even the great, whose works and achievements were destined to serve the needs and aims of the world of the day—the pioneers, explorers, inventors and social reformers—they all insist in their biographies and confessions that the prerequisite of all true greatness is solitude, poverty, self-denial—a monastic form of life different only in degree.

In St. Anthony asceticism attains the pathos of a great example. In his life, self-denial is carried to the intensity of a drama or epic. *The interior of the Egyptian desert* is a setting which seems to transfer the action into a sphere of unreality. Anthony's poverty becomes the symbol and prototype of all poverty, his power of renunciation has the dimensions of mythological heroism. In his temptations the supernatural mingles with natural events as is the case in all great literary works. Because of this, his person and his life joined other mythical subjects in becoming a perennially fascinating theme of art. There is no portrait of Anthony as he lived in the flesh, there is only the picture which the imagination of artists created under the impression of what is known about his character and his life. But this figure, precisely because nobody ever determined its exact contours, together with the unfamiliar and weird background and the supernatural apparitions which characterize all phases of his life, permitted the arts to develop such an abundance of variant representations that Anthony's pictures constitute a special chapter in the history of painting and sculpture.

Beginning with the idealizing art of early Christianity, down through Romanesque sculpture, Gothic painting in all its stages, early, high and late Renaissance, to modern and ultra-modern styles, there is no period, no movement or school of art which did not produce in its own specific spirit, with its own specific techniques, its own specific version of the Anthony theme. Most great artists, especially in modern times, have enriched the tradition of the Anthony theme with their personal interpretation. They carved their St. Anthony in stone, they painted him on canvass, etched him in copper, they drew him on a background of illuminated gold or placed him boldly into the landscape and environment of their own lives. Brush and needle, color and line, light and darkness, every device of art served to make his figure more impres-

sively true Italian and Spanish, Dutch and Flemish, French and German masters tried to recreate in artistic visions the unknown face, the unknown figure of the saint of asceticism, be it in the stylized linear idealization of medieval conventions or through the moving and mobile realism of modern times, be it with impressionistic or expressionistic techniques

The brothers Hubert and Jan van Eyck, the originators of oil painting in the fifteenth century, unfolded in the panels of their high altar at Gent, for the edification of the faithful, a big and colorful picture book, with one of the flanking compartments occupied by St. Anthony in the midst of a group of his monks, who follow their saintly master in his adoration of the Lamb of God. Lucas van Leyden, the great master of Dutch Renaissance art, painted St. Anthony in his visionary meeting with St. Paul of Thebes. Vittore Pisano, one of the pioneers of the early Renaissance in northern Italy, put him on one of his famous panels, Pinturicchio, the master of the Umbrian school of the fifteenth century, Paolo Veronese, next to Tintoretto the last great representative of the Venetian school, Giuseppe Ribera, the Spanish-Italian mystic and founder of the Neapolitan school, Guido Reni, the painter of the Eclectic school of the Italian Baroque, they all glorified him in the glowing colors of their rich palette. In Spain the chief painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who added their interpretation to the tradition of the Anthony theme, are Francisco de Zurbarán, the master of monastic-ascetic portraiture, and Diego Velázquez, the earliest precursor of modern art. Albrecht Dürer, in whom old German art achieved consummate perfection, the saint of the Egyptian desert as an eternally valid symbol of world-abnegation on the background of his native city of Nuremberg. And even Lucas Cranach, whose reactions and attitudes were those of a deeply convinced Protestant, who painted the only known portraits from life of Luther, the reformer and rebel against monasticism, contributed his representation of St. Anthony, which can only be interpreted as an expression of respect for the Father of monasticism.

The most impressive, the most forceful works in the Anthony tradition, however, are those which treat the theme of the temptations. One of them goes as far back as the eleventh century, to a time when Romanesque sculpture had reached its peak. In the

abbey of Vézelay in Burgundy, the same church in which St Bernard of Clairvaux preached his ascetic mysticism, there is, carved in stone on one of the capitals, a representation of Anthony's triumph over the devil. This work was produced by an age which had witnessed the progressive secularization of the order of the Benedictines and which, alarmed by this development, had rediscovered the original doctrine of asceticism and found the means of saving monasticism from final decay in the formation of new orders, as those of the Cluniacensians, Cistercians and Carthusians with their renewed emphasis on rigor and austerity. It was an age filled with the spirit of ascetic reform and well prepared to appreciate the significance of Anthony as a living symbol. On the capital at Vézelay he stands, flanked by charging demons, in stony imperturbability, on his face an expression of triumphant serenity, befitting the ascetic, whose steadfastness is rooted in God. In this early work the drama of the temptations remains static, for it is held down, as it were, not only by the rigidity of the medium but also by the artistic conventionalism of the time. It was only in the fifteenth century, when art was emancipated from the fetters of medieval formalism, that the theme could be treated with the freely moving accents of dramatic action. At that time the anonymous labors of tradition-bound workers gave way to the creations of the individual genius of artistic personalities. Conventions were replaced by observation, and the artists perceived and formed not only their visions of the world beyond but also the world of nature in its worldly realism.

Out of this generation of individualists, of masters of realism, arose for the first time a painter kindred in spirit with Anthony, the hardpressed defender of his soul against a host of aggressive devils. This was Hieronymus Bosch. A fifteenth century Dutchman, accustomed to the sight of the luxurious fertility of the plains of Flanders, used to live among lusty Flemings, whose lives were centered around the pleasures of food and drink, Bosch felt nevertheless attracted by the austere faster and desert-dweller Anthony, for he was linked with him in deep spiritual affinity. The life of Hieronymus Bosch was harassed by the same conflict between good and evil. To this Flemish painter, just as to Anthony, good and evil appeared in visionary personifications. He too saw the devil, now in the guise of horrible monsters and again in all sorts of allur-

ing forms Through this identity of experience, Bosch and Anthony, despite the gulf of centuries separating them, were brothers

The contributions of Bosch to the Anthony tradition are not just the works of a great realistic painter of the Flemish school, treating a certain theme, they are the creations of a man whose heart and soul had lived and suffered and fought their way through all the implications of the Anthony problem When the painter Bosch took up the traditional theme to produce his own version of the temptations of St Anthony, he actually pictured at the same time all the conflicts of his personal life For what Baudelaire stated somewhere, alluding to himself, holds true for Bosch as well "Not only the saint but the genius too has a devil whom he must fight" Fascinated by the theme which he knew so well, Bosch devoted ten of his most wonderful pictures to the temptations of St Anthony

The realistic representation of St Anthony's temptations by the devil, begun by Hieronymus Bosch, was enriched and expanded by his countryman Pieter Brueghel the Younger or "Hell Brueghel," who made of it a universal drama, the setting of which is simultaneously the soul of man and life outside, all of nature, the entire world In the school of his father, Pieter Brueghel the Elder, his eyes had been trained from childhood on to see people and sceneries exactly as they are He learned to reproduce the many things in his concrete environment with consummate precision But his artistic self, his independent genius, was able to perceive as well the invisible world which was hidden behind the visible world of bodies and shapes in nature Thus he recognized as a basic law of all existence and growth an eternal duality, a polar tension, of divine creation and satanic destruction

This principle pervades every detail of Brueghel's magnificent vision of earthly doings and happenings, which he put down in his paintings with all his technical skill and marvelous array of colors He saw the motley delights of the world but also its treacherous gulfs, beauty ridiculed by ugliness, the self-abandoned exuberance of feasters and merry-makers together with the tragic ruin lurking in the background, he saw the radiant light which the heavens pour over the earth but also the oppressive shadows of night, which hell sends up from below, he saw the straight line felled by crookedness and the peace of people and land haunted by hordes of demons.

In Anthony's craving for purity, for goodness, in his aspiration toward God, and in his involvements with impurity, with evil, in his fights with the devil, his temptation under the briar bush, in the tomb, under ruins and in his cave—all the elements which impart such elemental power to Brueghel's realistic conceptions had been condensed into ever-valid symbols of mythical significance. Thus Brueghel's representations of Anthony, composed of elements from the world he had seen and the hells he had visualized, became an impressive confession of an artist and human being. In his pictures of Anthony, nature does not simply supply the background, it takes an active part in the drama. The devils are not mere phantoms or visitors from a supernatural world. They are products of nature, half-breeds, in whom the traits of Dutchmen and devils are blended. While Durer was content with placing the detached figure of his Egyptian Anthony right in the middle of the Nuremberg countryside, Brueghel took the entire story of what occurred in the desert and had it happen at home in Holland.

But the Dutchmen Brueghel and Bosch were not alone in their time with their realistic representations of the temptations of St. Anthony. In Italy Parentino treated the same subject and in Germany the two great artists Schongauer and Grunewald. Martin Schongauer from Colmar in Alsace produced his famous etching of the temptations of St. Anthony, which delighted Michelangelo so much that he copied it in his own style. Schongauer emphasized the contrast between the hellish pack of demons and the man who triumphed over them by virtue of his ascetic will. In that aggressive nightmare of fangs and clutches, teeth and talons, beaks and paws, the saint maintains his steadfastness, and even his coat and mantle, his hair and beard are quite untouched.

Matthias Grunewald, in whom modern art sees next to Velázquez its earliest precursor, went beyond his contemporaries and approached his problem from an angle which comes closest to being familiar to modern thought and feeling. He did not limit himself to a rendering of the external events of the drama but painted also the inner, psychological action. His pictures of St. Anthony were created for the high altar at Isenheim, which a monastery of the order of Anthonins had installed in 1516 and which was dedicated on St. Anthony's Day, the 17th of January. It was for a pious purpose that this monument was erected, but a

modern painter, a master of psychological insight, produced it. On the panels of the altarpiece, Grunewald presents asceticism in its two important phases embattled and triumphant. Here for the first time an Anthony is seen, who is involved in the horror to the deepest depths of his soul. The helplessly searching expression in his eyes, the desperately defensive gesture of his hand, the entire posture of this man tells of the nameless terror of the temptation to which he is about to fall victim. The opposite panel shows in sharpest contrast the peaceful idyl of Anthony and St. Paul as guests of God, waiting in the mountainous desert for the legendary loaf of bread which the approaching raven has for them.

The element of whimsical realism which characterized already the earliest temptations was consciously carried to a grotesque climax by the Fleming David Teniers and the Frenchman Jacques Callot. Teniers painted the devils in the ruins as churlish brutes and gave all his demons an air of Dutch rusticity, while Callot impressed the mark of his personal genius upon his translations into the etcher's medium of Brueghel's phantastic creations.

In 1845 Gustave Flaubert, the author of *Madame Bovary* and founder and protagonist of the realistic novel, stopped one day in the gallery of the Palazzo Balbi in Genoa, completely spellbound, before Brueghel's Temptations of St. Anthony. The fascination that kept him there for hours, was not just the charm of a great work of art. It was the fascination that takes hold of a man who comes face to face with his fate. Shortly after his return from Genoa, Flaubert purchased an engraving which Callot had made after Brueghel's painting. He hung it in his study at Croisset, where it remained till he died. It gave him the inspiration for his next work. With ardent enthusiasm he began to work on the first version of his famous book, *la Tentation de Saint Antoine*. For eighteen months he worked on it day and night in one of the most creative periods of his life. "Where are you," he exclaimed later on, "o you happy days of St. Anthony when I wrote my entire self!"

The conception of *Madame Bovary* interrupted his work. But no sooner had Flaubert finished his great novel than he went back to the temptations to mold them into another and better frame. "I am working again on St. Anthony," he stated in a letter of that

time "I am writing! I am sweating! It is wonderful! There are moments when this work is even more than a delirium" He traveled to the Orient, he went to Egypt to visit the very spots where Anthony had fought the temptor, and after his return to Constantinople he wrote a new version of his dramatic story But he was not satisfied yet He studied hundreds of sources, the notes on his desk kept piling up, and finally he began the third and definitive version "It is the work of my life," he wrote "Since the first idea of it occurred to me in Genoa, I have been incessantly concerned with it in my thoughts"

Twenty years of his best creative forces were devoted to this work

It was a deep awareness of his kinship with St Anthony that fascinated this novelist of the nineteenth century "I myself am the Anthony of the *Tentation*," he wrote "I have spent my life denying myself the most innocent pleasures, I have spent my life working hard in strictly regulated discipline And why do I find such relief in solitude? Certainly because there is a monk living within me I have often admired those men who live their lonely lives in renunciation or mystic contemplation" Once he explained his ascetic mode of life by saying that a man who wants to be an artist has forfeited the right to live like other men And for a while he even toyed with the idea of withdrawing to a monastery where he thought he might find the utter seclusion which the artist in him demanded.

How deep-rooted Flaubert's ascetic tendencies were, is indicated by his mode and habits of work His artistic temperament was by nature unrestrained and boundless, but he spent years and years at his desk, fighting with self-imposed discipline the flood of imaginative conceits which threatened to overwhelm him as veritable temptations He repressed every trace of his inborn emotionalism and went on practicing his literary asceticism until his specifically personal style, the "Flaubert prose" with its impersonal dispassionateness had been perfected The motto which this fighter of literary demons placed at the head of his *Tentation de Saint Antoine* was "Messieurs les démons, laissez-moi donc!" Pray, leave me alone!

The inspiration, which the writer Flaubert had received from the painter of the sixteenth century, was passed on by him, through

his work, to the artists of modern times. And then art and literature entered upon a process of splendid cross-fertilization by means of this theme. In this way a great many French artists were deeply influenced by Flaubert's work, among them Félicien Rops, Paul Cézanne and particularly Henri Rivière, whose series of forty pictures devoted to the temptations of St. Anthony, inspired in turn writers and poets to attempt new interpretations of the Anthony theme. Rivière, who belonged to the *Chat Noir*, that group of Montmartre artists, whose appellation had been drawn from a story by Edgar Allan Poe, succeeded in re-creating the temptations of St. Anthony in the spirit of his own age so that the old theme was permeated with new meaning. Like Durer he sensed the eternal timeliness of the problem, but while Durer took merely the Egyptian ascetic and placed him, in his picture, into the familiar landscape of Nuremberg, with his back turned to the city and its life, Rivière took the entire dramatic story of the temptations and transferred it from Egypt to the Paris of his time.

Rivière, as Rops by the way too, introduced his devil in evening clothes. In transferring Anthony from his hermit's cave in the Thebaid to Paris he transformed him into a Parisian and tempted him with all the vices of the great city. In the *balles*, which Zola called the stomach of Paris, the devil shows him, in the purple light of dawn, mountains of fruits and vegetables and freshly slaughtered carcasses in order to seduce him to gluttony. At night he takes him to the boulevards and shows him there the tempting pleasures of the metropolis. To arouse his greed, the devil takes Anthony to a gambling resort and invites him, in the guise of the croupier, to stake just a franc or two. And so it goes on in a wild whirl all over Paris. Finally, as though emerging from a nightmare, Anthony is back again in the desert. He is kneeling again before his crucifix. Angels are approaching, ready to rescue the soul of the redeemed and to ascend with it to heaven.

Anatole France, the first of the great modern skeptics, was touched to the quick by Anthony, the fighter of the Lord, whom Rivière's pictures had brought to life again with all the perennial timeliness of his problem. For a long time he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the study of the psychology of asceticism. That he did so must not be taken as evidence of just another of the many interests of this artist who was founded by training in Epi-

cureanism and Voltairian irony Behind the mask of the skeptic there continued to be alive something of the "strange boy," as France himself referred to his earlier self, whose major ambition had been to become a saint This boy, who had not been satisfied with the idea that he might become a "member of the Institute" like his father, but who aimed at becoming a "member of the calendar of the saints," had at one time, in enthusiastic pursuit of his goal, cut open his father's armchair to extract from it the horse hair which he needed to make for himself a regular penitential garment

Later on this master of mockery and wit wrote his novel *Thaïs*, which is also known in the form of an opera In it he relates the story of a harlot whom the ascetic Paphnutius converts to sainthood, but France's secret admiration for the saints, which had stayed with him from his youth, made him choose St Anthony as the real hero of this work The Egyptian saint is also the theme of one of France's most brilliant essays In it he calls Anthony "the most fascinating character of history "

The church took Anthony into the community of its saints, but out in the world his immortality was glorified by the arts

SAINT AUGUSTINE

AUGUSTINE *The Saint of the Intellect*

AT THE TIME when St. Anthony died at the age of one hundred and five years on Mount Colzim in the desert, St. Augustine had hardly outgrown the state of his earliest infancy. Born in the year 354 in the small town of Tagaste in the eastern part of the African province of Numidia, this saint was destined to exert—through his theological and philosophical works—a decisive influence on the cultural development of the Western world.

The ultimate goal pursued by these two saints was the same. Both Anthony and Augustine were striving toward God. But the roads they followed to their common goal were basically different. All their problems, their struggles and experiences, all their endeavors and attitudes, their entire inner and outer lives were different as day and night.

Anthony passed through the years of his earliest childhood almost exactly a century before Augustine, almost exactly a hundred years closer to the time of Christ's life on earth. Anthony grew up in Egypt, a Christian country of ancient religious traditions, Augustine in Numidia, the modern Algeria, a Roman colony without tradition.

Anthony's native village of Coma was located on the Nile and depended in its entire existence on the blessings of the great river. The place of Augustine's birth, the provincial town of Tagaste, was located at the point of junction of several military highways.

and owed its prosperity to the money which soldiers and travelers spent in its bazaars and baths, in its circuses, theaters, and other places of amusement

The earliest impressions which Anthony, the child of the Nile, received from his environment were inspired by the presence of God in nature, for the city child Augustine the earliest impressions were linked up with the worldly pursuit of business and pleasure

"Have faith in things eternal and renounce the things that pass away," was the Nile's message to young Anthony, and the desert invited and called him, "Here where the bustle of human officiousness has no place, you will see the Lord face to face. Abandon yourself to prayer, and you shall be blessed"

"Have faith in the things of the moment and enjoy them to your heart's content," was the lesson which young Augustine learned in the streets of Tagaste. The bazaars and places of amusement enticed him, "Come in! Here is pleasure, here is joy! All you need is money if you wish to know the delights of life."

How different too was the atmosphere in the homes of their parents and the early education that molded the characters of these two saints.

Anthony's parents were orthodox Copts, and all their actions and reactions were determined by the implications of their creed

Augustine's parents did not share the same faith. His father, Patricius, was a pagan and his mother, Monica, a Christian. Dogmatic disputes were the first impression which Augustine received in matters of human religion.

Disputes and lack of harmony constituted quite generally the earliest and basic experience which Augustine had in the home of his parents. Patricius and Monica did not really live *with* one another but rather against and away from each other.

The example which Anthony's father set for his son was that of an industrious farmer. Augustine's father was a carefree and easy-going minor official in the provincial administration. Anthony's family stood under the rule of a man of austere and puritanical principles. In Augustine's case the head of the family was an unprincipled libertine who did not take his marital vows too seriously.

It was not only Patricius' relationship with Monica that made of him an extremely unsuitable model for his son. His uneven character, his unrestrained temperament disqualified him quite

generally for the role of educator. He was lenient when he happened to be in good humor, but when he was in the throes of one of his sudden fits of anger, he would mete out punishment without reason or discrimination. His irascible violence and his unreasonable arbitrariness made a more lasting impression on Augustine than his good-natured indulgence. For Anthony, the rule of his father meant guidance and training, for Augustine, an injustice and a misfortune. Anthony admired his father. He obeyed and loved him. Augustine's father earned only his son's contempt, his hatred and fear.

Monica's restraint, which formed such a striking contrast with the character of her husband, could only serve to intensify Augustine's lack of respect for his father. As a devout Christian, Monica taught her son that it is God, the all-just, the all-kind, whom we must consider as our real father and that it is to Him above all others that we owe obedience and respect.

When Anthony's father died, he merely had to transfer his love, respect and obedience from his procreator to the Creator.

In Augustine's youthful mind his twofold dependence on his father on earth and on the Father in heaven wrought at first nothing but confusion with the result that he rejected the paternal authority of both Patricius and God.

In Anthony's youth, formal education played no part whatsoever. For Augustine's development it was of decisive importance. The first years at school were not, it is true, of outstanding value for the inculcation of moral and ethical standards in the mind of young Augustine. The rod was the symbol of authority in the hands of the teachers, and progress in reading, writing, arithmetic, and good behavior was expedited by the application of periodic beatings. Thus Augustine came to consider education as synonymous with compulsion and punishment. His lessons and studies were painful torment.

Augustine's earliest recollections are characteristically childish sins of commission and omission. "I loved not study," he wrote in his *Confessions*. "Those first lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic, I thought as great a burden and penalty as later on, Greek I much preferred to play than to learn. And with innumerable lies I deceived my tutor, my masters, my parents, from love of play and eagerness to see vain shows, and restlessness to imitate them."

To satisfy his irresistible craving for play and entertainment, Augustine did not shrink back from trickery and falsehood. "In play," he admits, "I often sought unfair contest, and conquered, myself, meanwhile by vain desire of pre-eminence." And his desire to be the victor in all contests was so strong that he could not bear the idea of having to admit defeat and would rather cheat than yield. "I even committed thefts from my parents' cellar," he wrote, "that I might have things to give to the boys who sold me their play."

Monica tried everything to lead her son on the straight path. As a devout Christian she extolled to him the glory of God and admonished him to be steadfast in prayer. Augustine, however, would pray only when he had been up to mischief and wished to escape punishment. Then he prayed fervently, "breaking the fetters of his tongue," in the hope that God would save him from his elders' wrath. When his sins were discovered and the ardor of his prayer proved unable to shield him against punishment, he immediately abandoned his faith in God.

Although Augustine was brought up by his mother in the Christian faith, he was not baptized. It was the custom of the time to administer baptism not to infants but only to adults who were mature enough to appreciate the significance and responsibility of the baptismal sacrament.

At one time the boy Augustine asked himself that he be baptized. His motive, however, for wanting to confess his faith in God was no less selfish than the purpose of his early prayers. He had come down with a severe attack of gastric fever. When the pains grew very bad, he was overcome by the fear of death. Suddenly he remembered that his mother had praised the Lord as the only helper in peril and distress, and he asked to be baptized. His worried mother was about to grant his request, when he recovered unexpectedly from one day to the next. His fear of death was gone and with it—his thoughts of God.

What Augustine came to be later on, he achieved in opposition to what he was at first.

This is particularly true if one considers his development beyond the years of his childhood, down through his adolescence and early manhood to the time of his change and conversion. For the bad

little boy grew up to be a reckless youth and an unsteady and unreliable young man

With all their disagreements, both Augustine's easy-going father and his practical-minded mother were of the opinion that their son should take up a profitable career. To help him in this, no sacrifice was too great for them.

Patricius, whom Augustine described as a "poor freeman of Tagaste," lived on a modest income and had nothing to his name but a small house and a vineyard. He was never free from financial cares, yet every penny he could save he set aside for his son's education to assure him a successful and prosperous future.

At the age of thirteen Augustine was sent to the nearby city of Madaura. At school there he was to prepare himself to become a teacher of rhetoric, which, at the time, was financially a most promising occupation.

At Madaura the lazy pupil of Tagaste became suddenly an industrious young student. Yet this unexpected thirst for knowledge was entirely confined to the intellectual values of the pagan tradition. At home Augustine had spoken almost exclusively the Punic dialect of Numidia, but now he felt captivated by the brilliant charm of Latin, the language of polite society, and with it by the rich tradition of the pagan literature of Rome. He was particularly impressed by Vergil whose influence can be seen in the style of his later prose writings. Thus it happened that Augustine, who was to become one of the most important authors of the Christian church, received his first inspiration from pagan literature.

Augustine advanced quickly in his studies. But at the end of two years he had to return from Madaura to Tagaste because his father could no longer support him. The ensuing period of idleness, which coincided with all the confusion and restiveness of puberty, served only to emphasize his basest instincts.

A child and no longer a child, a man but not fully a man,—in this period of transition between two phases of his sexual development, the mischievousness of a boy merged turbulently with the unbridled excesses of a young man. The bad company which he frequented was not without influence either. As a child he had raided his parents' cellar and pantry to be able to bribe his playmates. Now he stole for sheer delight in wrong-doing.

A vivid account of this is found in Augustine's *Confessions*

"There was a pear tree near our vineyard, laden with fruit, tempting neither for color nor taste. To rob this, some lewd fellows of us went late one night, and took huge loads, not for our eating, but to fling to the very hogs. It was foul, and I loved it. And since my pleasure was not in those pears, it was in the offense itself, which the company of fellow-sinners occasioned."

This was the time when, like a violent storm, his father's heritage of African sensuality burst forth in him. Patricius looked on with joy and pride, Monica with horror and fear.

Augustine himself relates how he and his father went at one time to one of the Roman baths at Tagaste. These public baths were often visited for purely social reasons and not only by people who wanted to do physical exercises or take part in games and athletic contests. In certain sections men and women could bathe together. Here it was that Patricius gathered the first evidence of his son's coming of age. "The little fellow is going to be quite a man," he said to himself delightedly. And when he got home, he told his wife about it, half amused and half elated, for he enjoyed the idea of seeing himself surrounded by a whole flock of grandchildren. Monica, however, was deeply worried, for she recognized instinctively that now her influence on her son would be still further reduced. And indeed, the period of puberty marked the time when Augustine emancipated himself completely from the authority of his mother.

With pitiless self-criticism Augustine admits in his *Confessions* the erotic aberrations of his adolescence, he accuses himself of "carnal corruption," and complains that "the briars of unclean desires grew rank over my head, and there was no hand to root them out." He even had to blame himself for having "defiled the spring of friendship with the filth of concupiscence," and continued to say "I kept not the measure of love, of mind to mind, friendship's bright boundaries, but could not discern the crystal clearness of love from the fog of lustfulness. Both did confusedly boil in me, and hurried my unstayed youth over the precipice of unholy desires, and sunk me in a gulf of flagitiousness. In that sixteenth year of the age of my flesh, the madness of lust took the rule over me, and I resigned myself wholly to it."

When Monica admonished him to desist from his licentious conduct, he disposed of her words as "a woman's chatter." He wrote,

"I should have blushed to follow her advice, for I was ashamed not to be shameless. My depraved companions might have laughed at me." To equal or even outdo them in depravity was at the time his greatest ambition. Thus acted the man who was destined to become the most austere censor of himself and others, who was to trace evil to its very source in the original sin and sinfulness of the human race.

After a year of great thrift, and thanks to the assistance of a wealthy friend by the name of Romanianus, Patricius managed to get together the sums required to let his son go on with his studies. At the age of seventeen, Augustine was thus sent for an advanced course to the school of rhetoric at Carthage.

At that time Carthage was the metropolis of Africa and was located in the vicinity of modern Tunis. For a youth of Augustine's type, this great colonial city with its sensuous, pleasure-loving population was paradise and a dream come true. His stay there marked the zenith of his career of self-indulgence, the nadir of his morality, the most unholy station along his road to holiness.

Courtesans from Egypt and voluptuous Numidian girls walked invitingly through the streets. Places of amusement held out the prospect of wild revelries. And mimes of all sorts blared out the promise of the crudest sort of entertainment. The temptation of unbridled enjoyment of life, which had been held in check by the provincialism of Tagaste, grew rank with the unrestrained vulgarity of a big city. "To Carthage I came," wrote Augustine in the *Confessions*, "where there sang all around me in my ears a cauldron of unholy loves." And then he explained, "I loved not yet, yet I loved to love. I sought what I might love, in love with loving, and safety I hated. For I burned to be satiated in things below, and I dared to grow wild again, with these various and shadowy loves. And in spite of my shameless immorality, I would fain through exceeding vanity, to be fine and courtly."

It was in Carthage too that Augustine came under the spell of the theater. He was not just an enthusiastic theatergoer who never missed a performance. He was a playwright himself and was filled with the burning ambition to be successful as an actor.

Yet the thing that attracted him to the stage was not so much the art of the drama but rather the semi-sentimental, semi-cynical

representation of the immoral social life which he indulged in himself.

Courtesans, libertines, rakes, deceivers, dupes, and parasites, match-makers and procurers were the heroes and heroines, adultery, seduction of innocent girls, betrayal of brothers and friends, contempt for ethics and morals, and jeers and gibes at the gods were the contents of all these plays.

Later on St Augustine described with a penitent heart the effect which the theater had had on him in his youth "Stage plays carried me away, full of images to my miseries and fresh fuel to my fire . I rejoiced with lovers when they wickedly enjoyed one another, and I participated in their pernicious pleasures, although these were imaginary and only took place on the stage And when they lost one another, I sorrowed with them as if it had actually happened to me "

At times the pleasure-loving youth remembered the warning of his mother not to forget about God, and more for her sake than for the sake of the salvation of his soul, he attended an occasional service in church But during mass, the son of Patricius was quick to discover some beautiful woman, whose head, bowed down in prayer, and whose face, set in solemn reverence, would kindle his passionate desire Throughout the holy rites, Augustine kept thinking how he might manage to attract the attention of the beautiful worshiper, and while the congregation joined in prayer, he whispered seductive words into the ears of the girl kneeling at his side.

Finally he grew tired of the constant fluctuations of his "shadowy passions" and decided to form one of those engagements of concubinage which at the time were considered tolerable even among Christians Melania was a Christian girl of the lower classes, a fact which may explain why he never legalized his relationship with her His life with her, however, was unsatisfactory not only because it was not consecrated by the sacrament of matrimony No deeply human relationship could bind this man and this woman together, for Augustine was not happy in his love, he was tormented by jealousy and suffered with being a slave of his carnal lust "My God, my Mercy," he exclaimed, "how much gall did you mingle into my lustfulness! I secretly entered the prison of enjoyment, and was readily fettered with sorrow-bringing bonds, that I might be scourged with the burning iron rods of jealousy

and suspicion and fears and angers and quarrels I experienced what difference there is between the self-restraint of the marriage-covenant and the bargain of lustful love ”

After they had lived together for a year, Augustine's concubine gave birth to a boy He was called Adeodatus, a gift of God Patricius, however, was denied the joy of seeing his grandson He died in the year of Adeodatus' birth At Monica's entreaty he agreed on his deathbed to receive the sacrament of baptism Augustine was now eighteen years old

As the father of a family, who had to take care of a wife and a child, Augustine was eager to finish his studies as quickly as possible so that he might be able to earn his living by teaching rhetoric. He was well qualified for this sort of work, for he had a natural gift for eloquence

Here again the characteristic paradoxicalness of the life of this saint is clearly apparent Whatever he did in his earlier years, seemed to lead him away from his final destination, and even his talents qualified him for anything but a career of saintliness

Thus his efforts at this time were bent on the acquisition of a professional skill which would enable him to excel in the law courts where his task would be to give wrong the appearance of right He strove for mastery in an art "that brings glory to the shrewd" and was fundamentally an art of deception

When he finally obtained the degree that gave him the right to establish himself as a licensed rhetorician, he was consumed by greed of wealth and money "In those years," he wrote, "I taught rhetoric, and, overcome by cupidity, made sale of my loquacity to those who loved vanity and sought deception."

At this time, when Augustine was still completely entangled in sensuality, greed, and vain endeavors, he yet experienced for the first time a deeper urge of self-scrutiny It was occasioned by a book he read, which the pagan statesman and philosopher Cicero had written about a century before Christ

Cicero was required reading for students of rhetoric in Augustine's days Three of his works dealt with the rhetorical art and discussed the rules which govern the most effective use of the devices and tricks of eloquence Cicero's prose was considered a model of perfection in Latin style As an ambitious young man

who wishes to excel, Augustine took up the study of this author, and going beyond the required assignments, he also read *Hortensius* which was an essay on the value of philosophy

This essay of Cicero's has not been preserved, and we know about it only from fragmentary quotations. In it the famous rhetorician Hortensius was apparently carrying on a discussion with three philosophers, one of whom was Cicero himself. Hortensius spoke in praise of rhetoric and valued it more highly than any other human achievement. The philosophers, however, although each one represented another school of thought, were agreed that love of wisdom, which is philosophy, raises man above the level of ordinary existence and bestows upon him an incomparable superiority and bliss.

This work made a lasting impression on Augustine. "For," as he put it himself, "not to sharpen my tongue did I employ that book, nor did it infuse into me its style but its matter. Not how it talked but what it had to say, won me over to its side." He recognized suddenly the wretchedness of his life and the vanity of the things he had so far considered his most glorious goal. "This book," he wrote, "altered my mind and made me have other purposes and desires. I longed with an incredibly burning desire for an immortality of wisdom."

Augustine's impetuous decision to lead henceforth a life of greater dignity and worth, remained, however, a pious wish. His quest of truth was soon again deflected by the lure of worldly vanities.

The truth of philosophical deductions could not bring about a transformation of Augustine's inner self. For that a more powerful, a deeper and more stirring shock was required. Yet the unrest and dissatisfaction which Cicero's *Hortensius* planted in Augustine's soul, marked at least the first preparatory step in his ultimate conversion.

So far Augustine had been an easy-going young man who abandoned himself completely to his instincts and carnal cravings. But now he was suddenly split in two. One half of him continued his old life while the other looked down on it with contempt. Augustine was torn back and forth between his natural inclinations and his spiritual aspirations. He suffered with this conflict in his soul and was deeply dissatisfied with himself.

In his helplessness he took up the Bible which his mother Monica had given him on his way and which she had praised as the source of all wisdom. The language of Vergil and Cicero, however, had developed in him a very fastidious taste, and the awkward Latin of the earliest Bible translation, the so-called *Italic Version* or *Itala*, was quite offensive to him. The contents of the Bible could not attract him either. There was something repelling in all those stories whose symbolic significance escaped him, in those eternal exhortations to be chaste and pure, the insistence on humility and renunciation which he was incapable of practicing, and the threat that every sinner will end up in hell.

"The holy Bible is a thing low in access," he concluded. "To creep in one should not be bigger than a child or stoop one's head and neck." And later on he explained, "I was not such that could enter it or stoop my neck. Yet it was such as would grow upon a little one. But I disdained to be a little one, and swollen with pride, took myself to be a great one." So he was disappointed and put the Bible away. For fully thirteen years he was not to take it up again.

He began to look for another doctrine of salvation which might help him to bridge the abyss between his life as it was and as it should have been. Trying to characterize his futile search, he said of himself, "In these years I was a mind gone astray. Therefore I fell among men proudly doing, exceedingly carnal and prating. Yet they cried out 'Truth! Truth!'—and spoke much thereof to me, but it was not in them. They spoke and taught falsehood." In these terms the great Church Father spoke later on about the sect of the Manichaeans, in whose doctrines he had once hoped to find the answer to his quest for truth.

The founder of Manichaeism was a Persian painter by the name of Manes. He was born around 215 A.D. According to his doctrine, he was the most perfect incarnation of Christ, a sort of embodiment of the Holy Ghost. He taught a strange mixture of elements taken from the mystic dualism of Zoroaster's doctrine of light and darkness, of Buddhistic rules of conduct, Christian prophecies, and gnostic speculations.

All these heterogeneous ingredients, which a clear and logical thinker would never have tried to combine, merged smoothly in

the artistic imagination of the painter Manes. To his mind there was nothing strange in the juxtaposition of cosmological myths with Biblical commandments and passages of philosophical speculation. The result of this colorful mixture of contradictory elements was a doctrine of salvation which corresponded perfectly to the contradictory makeup of young Augustine's inner life.

The Manichaean dualism with its principle of eternal strife between the powers of light and darkness had the greatest appeal for Augustine. According to Manes, it was a strife going back to the beginning of all time, when the Godhead was split in the God of righteousness and light and His adversary Satan, the representative of darkness and evil. The whole universe took part in the struggle,—the world of matter as well as man who was formed of light and darkness and constituted a battlefield for the forces of good and evil.

In all this Augustine saw an explanation of the discord in his soul which caused him such relentless suffering. Furthermore,—and this was even more important,—Manes freed him from the responsibility for all his weaknesses and sins. His higher aspirations corresponded simply to the constituent of light in his soul, and the things that dragged him down were the fault of the darkness that was part of his existence as of everything else in the world.

The practical application which the Manichaeans made of their doctrine was also well adapted to Augustine's mental state at the time. Manes rejected the "brutal force of commandments" which Augustine had found so objectionable in the Bible. He was ready to make allowance for the innate frailty of human nature and divided the faithful in two classes: the "chosen" who were obliged to practice the strictest abstinence, and the "hearers" of whom nothing was expected that might surpass their strength. Such an accommodating doctrine of ethics made it possible for the frailest of the frail to attain salvation of their souls.

As an adherent of Manichaeism Augustine returned to his native town, planning to open a school for rhetoricians. He was by nature not free from conceit. Now he came home with a rhetor's license, he had excelled among his fellows in the great city of Carthage, and above all, he arrived with the conviction that as

a Manichaean he held the monopoly of all forms of truth His self-assurance rose to downright arrogance

A haughty professor of rhetoric and an ardent proselytizer for the Manichaean truth—that was Augustine when he settled down again in Tagaste His ponderous conduct and the pretentious display of learning in everything he said impressed many of his acquaintances who had formerly seen fit to predict the worst for the future of Patricius' son Almost all his former schoolmates became now his students, and several of them, who were ready to receive the Christian baptism, turned Manichaeans through his influence. There was no argument which this sharp-witted rhetor could not refute, there was no doubt which the convinced advocate of Manichaeism was not able to dispel

All of Tagaste payed tribute to him! All but one single person Monica! As a loving mother she had forgiven him all his youthful sins But now, when her son strutted about in his native town as an arrogant apostle of the heresy of Manes, her Christian zeal prevailed over her maternal love When Augustine went finally so far as to try to convert her to his false doctrine, her patience gave out, and she showed him the door Augustine was obliged to move to the house of his wealthy patron Romanus.

All of Tagaste listened to the lectures of her famous son, but Monica stayed at home and worried about her strayed son In her despair she went to Madaura, the nearest episcopal see, and in tears she implored the bishop to advise her how she might lead her strayed son back to the straight path of the true faith The old bishop listened to her lament, and trying to console her he said, "Go your ways, and God bless you, for it is not possible that the son of these tears should perish" Monica took these words as a prophecy. And truly, although at first in a hardly noticeable way, its fulfillment began a short while thereafter

The event that started Augustine on his predestined road away from the Manichaean heresy was a spiritual shock the painful loss of his favorite friend, who had played and gone to school with him and who had followed him too in his Manichaean aberrations "From the true, Christian faith," Augustine confessed, "I had warped him to those superstitious and pernicious fables, for which

my mother bewailed me With me he now erred in mind, nor could my soul be without him."

One day this friend fell seriously ill. During a crisis, while he seemed to be only half conscious of what was going on around him, he received the Christian baptism Shortly afterwards his condition improved

"As soon as I could speak with him," Augustine relates in his *Confessions*, "(and I could do so as soon as he was able, for I rarely left him and we hung but too much upon each other) I tried to jest with him at that baptism which he had received, while being absent in mind But he so shrunk from me, as from an enemy, and bade me, as I would continue his friend, forbear such language to him I was dismayed but said nothing, for I wished to wait till he had fully recovered A few days later, in my absence, he was attacked again by the fever and died"

The loss of his friend put Augustine into a "delirium of grief" With lightninglike suddenness he perceived the terrible truth that a person one has loved can pass away, that life is ephemeral. "I felt that my soul and his soul were one soul in two bodies. And therefore my life became a horror to me, because I would not live halved"

So far young Augustine had lived for the pleasures of life, but now for the first time, through the grief which overcame him when his dearest friend was taken away from him, he experienced the true essence of suffering With the fury of an elemental upheaval, pain thrust its fangs into his soul, robbed him, the haughty master of sophistry, of all his self-assurance, robbed him, the fanatical apostle of heresy, of all his dogmatic confidence, and left him ravaged and in a state of utter confusion.

"At this grief," he wrote, "my heart was utterly darkened, whatever I beheld was death. My native country was a torment to me, and my father's house a strange unhappiness, whatever I had shared with my beloved friend, became unbearable torture without him My eyes sought him everywhere, but he was not granted them, I hated all places, because they had not him"

Augustine gave up his work as a teacher in Tagaste. He fled to Carthage and sought relief in the turbulent distractions of the big city. He did not find it "Whither," he asked, "should my heart

flee from my heart? Whither should I flee from myself? Whither not follow myself?"

The violence of his grief taught Augustine a truth which so far had never entered his mind the truth that there is in man a something which pure reason cannot grasp, an unconscious ego possessed of such power that it can do away in one fell swoop with all the conclusions of reason, with all aspirations and all one's laboriously acquired assurance.

In confusion and utter helplessness he faced this phenomenon of the unknown power of his own self, his own soul "I then became a great riddle to myself," he wrote "And I asked my soul, why it was so sad, but it knew not what to answer me"

For a while he tried to find solace in the teachings of Manes Manichaeism, however, this system of thought in which the whole universe from matter to God was accounted for, which had an answer to every question, a rebuttal for every argument, failed miserably in the face of the living phenomenon of a human soul in distress, knew of no explanation for the mystery of ego and self, and of no consolation in the unspeakable sorrow for the death of a beloved friend

Time soothed Augustine's grief, but the question it had raised remained unanswered The riddle he had come to be for himself demanded a solution His own self was now the fundamental problem in all his thoughts and endeavors

His restless mind began to look into other systems for a solution of the problem that gave him no rest He plunged into the study of the most different systems of ancient philosophy He did not find what he had set out to find, but in the course of his studies he came across new ideas and logical deductions which served to shake his faith in the reliability of a good many of the Manichaean principles.

It happened that just at that time the famous Manichaean bishop Faustus came to Carthage on a lecture tour Augustine hoped that a discussion with Faustus would clear up the contradictions which threatened to undermine his Manichaean faith

Faustus was a self-assured rhetorician of great skill as long as he could follow his own line of thought, but the passionate impatience of Augustine's queries caused him a good deal of embarrassment He was hard-pressed by this young man with his insatiable thirst

for knowledge and his disconcerting if's and but's, and finally he had to admit that he could not answer the questions put before him because the doctrine of Manes had no answer for them

"All my efforts whereby I had purposed to advance in that sect came utterly to an end," wrote Augustine after this highly unsatisfactory interview. At this time Augustine was twenty-nine years of age

A new phase in his development began. He fell back on the teachings of the *Academy*, which at this time had reached a stage of complete skepticism. The Academicians were spiritual heirs to the old cynics who had held that everything must be doubted and that the human mind is incapable of grasping truth. They denied that a philosophical doctrine or a system of beliefs can be in possession of the key to true knowledge.

Augustine had abandoned the idea of finding spiritual support in anyone of the established systems of thought. He had nothing to rely on except his own thinking. As a skeptic he had to return to his own self as the basis of all his deductions. And as he began to analyze his own being, he soon discovered in himself the source of good and evil which he had tried to discover with such passionate zeal.

As long as he had believed in the dualistic doctrine of Manes, according to which evil is the work of a god of darkness, Augustine had reasoned, as he expressed it himself, that "it is not we who sin but some alien power within us. My arrogance rejoiced in being free of guilt. I would rather vindicate myself and accuse something else. And just this was my incurable sin that I thought myself not to be a sinner. But now I realized that in truth it was I, only I who sinned."

This, however, was only a first step. What followed was the recognition that man's free choice of will makes him an independent agent in the decision between good and evil.

"What raised me into light," Augustine wrote, "was that I knew as well that I had a free will, as I knew that I lived. Thus when I did will or null anything, I was most sure that no other than myself did will or null, and I realized ever more clearly that there was the cause of sin."

The knowledge that the origin of good and evil lies in the human

soul, was the beginning of what we call conscience. In Augustine's development it marked the most important step forward.

Quite in contrast to St. Anthony, for whom good and evil were external powers which assumed the shape of angels and demons, Augustine knew now that both good and evil and right and wrong have their roots in man himself. In Anthony's case, the struggle against the powers of darkness took place in tombs and caves,—in Augustine's case, in the invisible realm of the human soul. Anthony fought evil by exorcising the devil. Augustine's weapon was wisdom and knowledge!

Hardly a century separated the two saints. And yet, what a tremendous change had taken place in man's struggle for perfection. What had seemed to be a problem in the world outside, was now a problem in man's own soul.

In the early centuries of the Christian era, spiritual trends were largely determined by the thought and deeds of the saints. The transition from Anthony to Augustine signifies thus a decisive transition in the spiritual history of the occident: out of a state of unconsciousness the human soul had awakened to full awareness of its own reality.

The life of St. Anthony,—in spite of its strange scenery of desert caves and tombs, in spite of demonic apparitions and excessive asceticism—presents itself with perfectly clear contours to the modern mind. St. Augustine's life, on the other hand, remains strangely problematic although its milieu is so much more familiar and although its difficulties and troubles are of a kind so generally human.

The course of Augustine's life is marked by insoluble contradictions. Its outer events are a seemingly aimless row of incompatibilities. Yet the fact that places the most emphatic stress on the confusedness of Augustine's career, is the extraordinary nature of his mental development which stands in clear contrast to his experiences and his conduct, in that it follows a perfectly straight and clear line which takes him—in spite of occasional false steps—to the highest peaks of human thought.

To his thirty-third year, Augustine's mental development and his outer life progressed on two different planes which had nothing in common. His mind followed its upward trend as though it were

fully aware of its final goal, and all the while the external events of his career moved along the meandering line of lowly mediocrity. Although in the course of his spiritual development he reached the most decisive conclusions of ethics and morality, his own life, his conduct and actions, remained totally unaffected by them. For decades the searching soul in Augustine and Augustine the vain-glorious rhetorician lived as two separate beings, without interest in each other's concerns or even in outspoken hostility.

After his conversation with Faustus, Augustine recognized Manichaeism as a futile delusion. Yet for his own actions he drew no consequences from this knowledge. For years he continued as a member of the sect of the Manichaeans, he went to their meetings and used his Manichaean friends when they could help him in his career.

Encouraged by his friends, the Manichaeans, who could provide him with excellent letters of introduction, he now decided to leave Africa and to try his luck in the capital of the empire.

A major obstacle in the way of this plan was Augustine's mother Monica, whose fears for her erring son had made her follow him to Carthage. When she heard about his decision, she implored him to stay with her in Carthage, for she could not bear the idea that in faraway Rome he would live entirely outside the range of her maternal influence.

Not troubled by either her tears or her despair, Augustine decided to deceive her. On the night of his departure, she followed him to the harbor, but he assured her that he had to go on board only in order to say good-by to a friend who was leaving for Rome. He succeeded in convincing her that she should wait for him in the nearby church of St. Cyprian. She spent the night there in prayer, waiting desperately for her son whose ship meanwhile had left Africa, heading under a full press of sails for the continent of Europe. In the morning Monica left the church and went to the harbor to realize how cruelly her son had deceived her.

In Rome Augustine's hunt for fortune was continued under changed conditions but without greater success. His high hopes, for the sake of which he had deceived his mother, were not fulfilled. His entire Roman adventure stood under an unlucky star. Shortly after his arrival he fell ill with a disease that seems to have

been a sort of malaria. For weeks he hovered between life and death. Helpless and without financial means, he depended completely on the charity of a Manichaean who had received him as a fellow-member of his religious sect. After his recovery, Augustine opened a school of rhetoric, but it was a complete failure. He succeeded in enlisting a number of students, but when their fees were due, they had all disappeared.

At this time Rome was a city of wealth. The streets were lined with marble mansions and one gilded gate stood next to the other. Augustine, however, the teacher of rhetoric, lived in the slums near the Aventine hill.

After a very short time, he began to think again of moving elsewhere. He thought of Milan as the most promising field for his work. Rome, to be sure, was the capital of the empire, but the focal point of Western social life was Milan, for it was there that the emperor had his residence.

Unexpectedly favorable circumstances made it possible for Augustine to carry out his plan sooner than he had hoped. It happened that the Roman prefect Symachus, who was the leader of a powerful pagan faction, returned from the court at Milan with the order to look in Rome for a good rhetorician qualified to take over the professorship of rhetoric in the imperial residence.

How little Augustine's Manichaean patrons were aware of his inner apostasy, may be deduced from the fact that they brought all their influence to bear on Symachus to induce him to give the position in Milan to their co-religionist from Tagaste.

Symachus, the leader of the pagan party, was well-disposed toward all anti-Christian sects. He sent for the young rhetorician, and was so impressed and delighted with his familiarity with pagan literature, that he sent him immediately with the warmest recommendation and at the expense of the state to Milan.

As the protégé of the Roman prefect, Augustine was received with open arms by the high society and given a cordial welcome at the court of the emperor. Milan really seemed to open up for him the glorious career he had been dreaming about.

Referring to this period of his life, Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*, "My wicked and sinful youth had passed and I entered into manhood, yet the further I advanced in age the more increased my shameful invalidity."

But it was here at Milan that Augustine's conversion to Christianity was finally to take place. It was at Milan that he received the Christian baptism from St. Ambrose, the bishop of that diocese.

The names of St. Augustine and St. Ambrose were destined to shine in history as the names of the first great "Doctors of the Church." Their first meeting, however, was quite impersonal and cool.

The motive that induced Augustine to visit Ambrose was by no means his interest in Christian teachings but rather the endeavor to establish himself in the good graces of the most powerful man in Milan, if not the entire Western Empire. Ambrose, the first statesman among the bishops of the Christian occident, had been, since the beginning of Gratian's rule, the advisor of the Christian emperors and occupied the most influential position at the court of Milan.

The bishop accorded his visitor a friendly and benevolent reception, but friendliness and benevolence were simply part of Ambrose's nature. His episcopal offices were accessible to everyone. Whoever had a request to make could enter without being announced. However pressing the burden of his work might be, this dignitary of the church always found time to listen to the petitions and complaints of his numerous callers. In Augustine's case he displayed, however, a certain unmistakable reserve. This unbalanced young African, who came as a protégé of the pagan leader Symachus, who, furthermore, had the reputation of being a Manichaean, did not impress the bishop too favorably. When Augustine's visits grew more and more frequent, he came to consider them a great bother. Sometimes, when Augustine entered, the bishop was engrossed in his reading. Then he would not allow himself to be interrupted and went right on without paying the slightest attention to his visitor. Augustine stood around for a while in great embarrassment. He tried to say something, but there was nothing to encourage him. Ambrose did not even look up, and finally Augustine sneaked away, seemingly quite unnoticed.

In spite of Ambrose's coolness, Augustine felt more and more strongly attracted to the saintly bishop. It was the typical Roman in Ambrose that fascinated him. For throughout his career, which had taken him from the post of a consular prefect to being the

pastor of Christianity, Ambrose had maintained the imposing demeanor, the liberality, and natural assurance of a Roman of noble birth. Nothing could have impressed the restive, unbalanced young African more deeply than the serene poise of this patrician.

"I began to love him," Augustine wrote, referring to St. Ambrose, "at first not as a teacher of truth, for at that time I did not search for truth at church." He regarded the bishop as an ideal worthy of being emulated. Only one thing amazed him. The fact that Ambrose led a life of celibacy struck him, as he put it, as a "painful course."

Every Sunday Ambrose preached a sermon in the basilica of Milan. His reputation and the power of his eloquence made of these sermons important events in the life of the city. Every Sunday Augustine went to hear the bishop preach. Ambrose spoke as a Christian bishop, but the clarity of his thought and the precision of his language proved that he had gone through the school of Cicero, Theophrastus and all the other great writers of classical antiquity. As few others he mastered the rhetorical devices of realistic portrayal, allegorical interpretation, and even caustic satire.

"I listened eagerly," Augustine explained, "yet not with the veneration I owed to him, but merely to judge his eloquence. And thus I drank in his mode of expression, but I paid no attention to what he said and even thought little of it. But finally, together with the words that sank into me, their contents and meaning entered my mind." His experience was again what it had been in the case of Cicero's *Hortensius*. Formal beauty induced him to pay attention also to the meaning it conveyed.

In Ambrose's interpretation the most contradictory Bible passages struck Augustine as clear and beautiful, for he learned not to take them literally but to grasp their allegorical truth.

And yet he said with reference to this period that Christian truth "was within and I without. It was beyond space, but I still clung to things in space. And thus the lower things rose above me and dragged me down."

Before going to Milan, Augustine had devoted his entire life to vanity, ambition, and pleasure. Now, when fame and success seemed to be definitely within his reach, he lost all restraint and sense of shame. He flattered whomever he had reason to consider

a potential patron of influence. As a rhetorician he produced panegyrics to order and mingled right and wrong with great skill to serve the ends of his clients.

He had now a fairly substantial income. Yet he not only had his concubine and his son Adeodatus with him; also his mother Monica and his younger brother Navigius had joined him. So he had to take care of five people, and that, together with his high-flown social ambitions required a good deal of money.

Every minor or major success added fuel to his burning ambition. He was dreaming of great wealth and an influential position. What he was aiming at was nothing less than the post of presiding judge at Milan with an income sufficient to permit him the acquisition and maintenance of a big estate in the country.

To further his career, he thought it desirable to marry a girl from a wealthy and noble family. The one great obstacle in the way of such a plan was the presence of his concubine who was a girl of poor and lowly parentage. She had been a loyal companion to him for more than sixteen years, she had borne him a son, but now, goaded on by his inordinate ambition, he simply sent her back to her African home, not granting her even the consolation of her son's companionship. A short while later he was engaged to a girl from one of the best families of Milan. He had reason to expect from her a handsome dowry.

The girl was only twelve years of age, and the wedding ceremony had to be postponed for another two years. Since, however, as he admitted to his friends, he was incapable of spending a single night without a woman, he took another mistress immediately after Melania's departure.

He was now the most sought-after rhetorician of Milan, and in due time the highest honor was to be bestowed upon him. The Lord Chamberlain in conjunction with the Chief of Staff commissioned him to write a eulogy on the thirteen-year-old emperor Valentinian II, which he was to read in person as part of a ceremonial program at court. Augustine knew as well as everybody else in the empire that the young emperor was a totally insignificant little boy, a mere puppet in the hands of his domineering mother Justina. But that was not enough to prevent him from composing a masterly eulogy.

He was fairly delirious with pride and delight. Yet for a brief

moment his exuberance was interrupted by a sobering experience, which was, significantly enough, the spectacle of another human being in a state of drunkenness. Accompanied by his friends he was on his way to the imperial palace where he was to deliver his speech, when he encountered in some back alley a beggar who was totally drunk and who, in his drunkenness, seemed to be having a marvelous time. Augustine stopped for a moment, and watching the foolish demeanor of the happy beggar, he said to his friends, "Look at him how he enjoys himself without care. Don't we want to arrive only at that very joyousness whither that beggarman has arrived before us? And perchance we will never attain it. For what he has obtained by means of a few begged coins, the same am I plotting for by many a toilsome turning and winding. Certainly I am more learned than he, but knowledge does not afford me the joy which he finds in wine, and what do I do with my learning? Do I make use of it to instruct men or simply to please the powerful and the crowds, to earn money and utterly foolish flatteries? Even now I am on my way publicly to appear as a paid eulogist. The beggar this very night will digest his drunkenness and awake with a clear head. I, however, drunk with vainglory, shall go to sleep with it and rise with it day after day."

What poignant self-analysis! Yet it exhausted itself in this tirade addressed to his friends and did not outlast the moment. Augustine did not turn back. He went straight on to the palace and delivered his eulogy, "full of lies, so that the liar might win the favor of those who knew about his lies."

Thus things continued for a good while. With his intellect Augustine recognized the shallow wretchedness of his life, but in spite of this knowledge he did not interrupt his vain and useless existence. "Often," he wrote later on about this time, "I paid heed to what had become of me, and I found that I was in a bad way. This saddened my heart but caused me only to redouble my iniquity and my shame."

And yet, in the end he managed to arise from the depths of iniquity and shame to the peaks of glory and perfection. Self-scrutiny, knowledge of his own soul, led him to knowledge of all existence and raised him not only to the plane of sainthood but made of him one of the most important thinkers of the western

world. Anthony, his ascetic precursor, attained holiness through renunciation, Augustine attained it through the power of his intellect. In the case of Anthony, God revealed Himself to a soul strong in faith, in Augustine's case He finally answered the quest and query of a man who had been searching after Him long before he knew Him or even the road that leads into His kingdom.

For Augustine, the "salesman of words," the ruthless fortune-hunter of Milan, was possessed of the deepest and most incorruptible power of self-scrutiny. His profound insights were too often and for too long a time enslaved by the lower instincts of his nature, but in spite of all this the passionate quest for true understanding persisted in his mind unbroken and undismayed. And even more than that! His passion for understanding drew strength from his failures and the frailty of his physical nature. The mysterious force that could induce Augustine to do wrong in the face of his better knowledge, became for him a problem that would never again give him rest.

"I knew already," he wrote, "that we have the freedom of choice between good and evil," and went on to describe the desperate struggle he had to wage in his soul. "Trying to draw the eye of my mind from that pit, I was plunged again therein, and trying often, was as often plunged back again. But when I lifted myself proudly, the inferior things were placed above me, and pressed upon me, and nowhere was there alleviation or breathing space. They encountered my sight on every side in crowds and troops, and in thought the images of bodies obtruded themselves as I was returning to Thee, as if they would say unto me, 'Whither goest thou, unworthy and base one?' And these things had sprung forth out of my wound. And this raised me towards Thy light, that I knew as well that I had a will as that I had life. When, therefore, I was willing or unwilling to do anything, I was most certain that it was none but myself that was willing and unwilling, but what I did against my will, I was equally certain, I suffered rather than did, and I judged that not to be my fault, but my punishment; and quickly I confessed myself to be not unjustly punished. But again I said, 'Whence came I then to will to do evil, and to be unwilling to do good? Who was it that put this in me, and implanted in me the root of bitterness?' By these reflections was I again cast down and stupefied."

Augustine's friends played a decisive part in his development. The grief, which the loss of a beloved friend had caused him, had been the starting-point of his self-scrutiny. Now again an experience in which friends of his played a major part enabled him to broaden his knowledge of his own soul and to advance to a higher form of wisdom. For in the exchange of ideas with his friends, Augustine came to recognize that the problem of the origin of evil, which occupied him so much, was a generally human problem, the greatest human problem of all times.

"We lived together as friends and often took occasion to exchange our somber ideas on the origin of evil," Augustine wrote, referring in particular to his companions Alypius and Nebridius. These two had kept faith with him since the beginning of his career. Alypius had joined him in Tagaste and Nebridius in Carthage. His intellectual superiority had fascinated them to such an extent that they had followed him in everything, through all his devious errors to his most recent ethical insights. Every word of their idol had for them the validity of revelation. Yet while Augustine seemed to be satisfied with a merely intellectual grasp of the solution of his problems, they, on the other hand, did their best to adopt his wisdom as the standard for their actions and conduct in everyday life. This endeavor of theirs showed Augustine the vast gulf that can separate man's knowledge from his behavior. Here he saw two young men who tried to be and to do good to the best of their abilities, and who stumbled nevertheless and time and again were enmeshed in evil.

Something that happened to Alypius showed Augustine with striking clarity what the power of evil is like. Alypius had been a passionate circus fan. His greatest delight had been the gladiatorial contests. But now, under Augustine's influence, he tried to combat his passion for the circus and shunned everything that might have rekindled it in his soul. Then one day, it happened, as Augustine described the event in his *Confessions*, "that Alypius met by chance certain of his acquaintances and fellow students coming from dinner. And they, with a familiar violence, hailed him, refusing and resisting, into the amphitheatre, during the progress of those deadly entertainments. Again and again did he protest. 'Though you drag my body there and there set me down, you cannot force me to turn my eyes or mind upon those horrors. I

shall then be absent even while I am present, and so shall overcome both you and them.' They, hearing this, bore him on nevertheless. But he, closing the passages of his eyes, forbade his mind to range abroad—and would that he had stopped his ears also! For in the fight when one fell, a mighty cry of the people striking him strongly, overcome by curiosity, he opened his eyes. And as soon as he saw that blood he therewith drank in savageness, nor turned he away, but fixed his eyes upon it, frenzied unawares, and was delighted with the wicked fight, intoxicated with the bloody pastime."

Describing his discussions with his two devoted friends, Augustine wrote, "We were three beggars, come together to listen to each other's complaints. And as we kept inquiring about the purpose and significance of things in spite of the bitterness resulting from our worldly deeds, we met with darkness devoid of light. How much longer shall we remain bound therein? Often we asked this question, but did not change our lives, because we had found no assurance which we could have seized, abandoning our trust in everything else."

What kept Augustine in this state of confusion was the fact that all his thinking continued to idle within the narrow limits of materialistic views. This made it impossible for him to conceive of the existence of a purely spiritual world. "I could not," he said, "think of anything as real except what my bodily eyes perceived. Even of God I did not think otherwise, if not in human form, still as a physical being, infinite in extension and filling the space of the world. So heavy was my mind, so lacking in clarity and light, that I deemed idle and vain what had no extension in space and could not be seen in a body. Therefore the nature of evil remained hidden to me."

Augustine owed his emancipation from the fetters of materialism to the writings of the Neoplatonists, which were recommended to him by some of his philosophical friends at Milan. The strongest impression he received from the *Enneads* by Plotinus, a book accessible to him in the Latin translation by the famous Marius Victorinus. The Neoplatonic doctrine of the "logos," the "eternal word" that is God, taught him to accept a truth which is not embodied in matter, it made it possible for him to understand the spiritual essence of all created things. In the light of this Neoplatonic view

he also recognized the divine homogeneity of good and evil, he understood that evil is no independent power, that it has no existence by itself, but is the product of an error of volition, the result of a will that has turned away from the supreme being

But if the Neoplatonic doctrine taught him the reality of an eternal spiritual truth, it did not as yet give him the strength to change his way of life. Its theoretical denial of evil was not a path of righteousness which he could follow. What was missing in the writings of the Neoplatonists, was the practical advice on what a frail human being must do in order to overcome his frailty. Commenting on this point, Augustine wrote, "In all those pages nothing was said about the sacrifice of a contrite heart, a troubled spirit, the salvation of the people, and the cup of our redemption. No one there hears him calling, 'Come unto me all ye that labor.' For it is one thing, from the mountain's wooded summit to see the land of peace, and not to find the way thither,—in vain to attempt impassable ways, and another to keep to the way that leads thither, guarded by the host of the heavenly general. So I sought after the way, but I found it not until I embraced that 'Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus,' calling unto me, and saying, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'"

What Neoplatonism presented merely as a sublime doctrine, assumed in Christianity the form of a living and acting reality. The "logos," the "eternal word," in Christ it had become flesh. He who could believe in Him, who could follow Him and see in Him the tangible embodiment of a purely spiritual essence, had reached a point where emancipation from the sins of the flesh and of worldliness and the attainment of the pure spirit and of God were possible.

Neoplatonism showed Augustine the way that led to the "fatherland of bliss," but it was Christianity that taught him to "inhabit it." He who had at one time talked so contemptuously about Holy Scripture, who had called it a book for children, recognized now that it contained the highest truth, which "God has kept from the wise and revealed to the simple and innocent."

The epistles of St. Paul were finally the key that opened up for Augustine's comprehension the truths of the Christian doctrine. He plunged into the study of these letters and found that they were

written by a man who knew by actual experience about the transforming power of the spirit

After this, events of inner and outer importance occurred in quick succession, drawing the thinker Augustine, who was deeply engrossed in Paul's writings, ever more strongly into the orbit of Christian teachings

It was mainly due to the influence of bishop Ambrose that Augustine's attention was focused more fully on the positive values of Christianity. So far Augustine had admired in Ambrose the Roman virtues of an influential dignitary of the church and the superior rhetorical skill, but Ambrose's heroic attitude in the face of the renewed Christian persecutions initiated by the emperor's mother Justina, demonstrated to him the irresistible force which the true Christian faith can impart to its adherents. The fight which flared up between the Arian empress and the orthodox bishop, was an event that for days kept all of Milan in breathless excitement. The fact that Monica, siding wholeheartedly with the bishop, was personally involved in the conflict, added naturally to Augustine's interest in what was going on.

The empress had fallen completely under the influence of the Arians and demanded that a church at Milan be reserved for the use of her favored sect. Bishop Ambrose, as representative of orthodox Christianity, refused steadfastly to comply with the empress' request. Relying on her imperial authority, Justina decided to settle the matter by issuing a decree in the emperor's name. Ambrose refused to obey, for he felt that he represented a power greater than the Roman Empire. He was the representative of the kingdom of God. In her anger the empress resorted to the use of force and sent out a detachment of soldiers against the renitent bishop.

On the critical morning, when the imperial soldiers were ordered to seize a church for the Arians, the bishop ordered his flock to early mass in the basilica. Monica, one of the most faithful adherents of Ambrose, was present, and it was she who reported to Augustine what happened in the basilica.

The church was filled to capacity. The bishop stood in the pulpit and read a lesson from the Bible. Suddenly a man came rushing in and shouted excitedly, "The soldiers are coming!" Now their

marching steps were clearly to be heard. But Ambrose would not be disturbed. He went on with his sermon. He was reading from the book of Job, explaining the great suffering which the Lord imposed upon this righteous man to test the power of resistance of his faith.

The soldiers had been ordered to lay siege on the basilica until the bishop and his flock would capitulate. But Ambrose would rather die than abandon a house of the Lord to the heretics. He remained at his post.

The faithful had merely come to attend early mass. They had brought no food, and the basilica was so overcrowded that there was no room to lie down and rest. The day passed and when night fell, not only the bodies of the faithful but also their prayers had grown tired. Only by dint of great exertion could the faithful manage to hold out. Something had to be done to comfort them. Then the voice of the bishop was heard in song. The distressing plight of himself and his followers, the coming of night, the dimly lit basilica, the soldiers outside and the congregation within, the belief that the truth of Christ was at stake, all this,—but the belief in the truth of Christ above all,—arose in the rhythms of Ambrose's hymn. Sublimely solemn it was and yet simple and familiar like a popular street song, and everyone in the basilica, man, woman, or child, was immediately able to join in.

God that all things did create
and the heavens doth moderate,
Who doth clothe the day with light,
with benefit of sleep the night,
which may our weakened senses make
able new toils to undertake,
and all our minds from anguish ease
and our distempered grief appease
that so when shadow round us creep,
and all is hid in darkness deep,
faith may not know of gloom and night,
borrow from faith's clear gleam new light
Sleep not, O steadfast heart and will,
sleep rather all ye thoughts of ill
Let faith allay the warm caress
of slumber and its wantonness

From snares of sense, Lord, keep me free,
 and let my heart but dream of Thee
 Let not the jealous foe draw near
 to vex my quiet rest with fear

The whole church resounded with the song. Danger and deprivation were forgotten, fatigue of body and soul had gone, there was in the basilica nothing but the firm belief in the divinity of Christ, and this belief, this unshakable faith went on singing all night long.

At dawn the following morning the soldiers still kept the basilica surrounded, but the first rays of the rising sun, falling obliquely through the narrow church windows, inspired the bishop with a new morning hymn. It was a song that gave the congregation the strength to persist in prayer and steadfastness.

O splendor of God's glory bright,
 o Thou that bringest light from light,
 o light of light, light's living spring,
 o day, all days illumining

Morn in her rosy car is borne
 Let Him come forth, our perfect morn
 The word in God the Father one,
 the Father perfect in the Son

Now Ambrose set up his congregation in several choirs and had them sing his hymns with male and female voices alternating. And all the faithful were as one in their desire to sing the praises of God as perfectly, as beautifully as they could. And as the day went on, four of Ambrose's best hymns, four of the most magnificent hymns of the Christian church, were composed by the bishop and learned and sung over and over again by the congregation inside the basilica at Milan, which the imperial soldiers kept under siege. Such were the beginnings of the great gift to the culture of the western world, which has come to be known as Ambrosian hymnology.

Two days and two nights went by. On the third morning, when the bishop and his flock still refused to submit to the empress' demands, Justina ordered her soldiers to take the basilica by storm. The gates were forced open, just as the faithful were chanting another antiphonal hymn which Ambrose had composed for them. The choir of deep male voices responded to the theme given by the soft voices of women and children. When the soldiers saw and

heard the congregation of Ambrose's flock, whom they had come to expel from their church, they stopped, putting down their swords whose rattling might have disturbed the solemnity of the hymn, and as one man they fell to their knees, singing the praises of Christ in whom God had assumed the shape of man, as taught by Ambrose and denied by Justina

The power of swords had lost out against the power of song. At the same time, however, the Christian Church in the western world had won a new weapon, the hymnic gospel, whose power of melody and rhythm exerted itself over the souls of men and women everywhere, winning them over to the cause of Christ. From these beginnings of the Ambrosian hymnology later centuries developed the greatness and power of Gregorian church music

In St Paul's christology, the searching mind of Augustine had finally discovered the answer to its quest for truth. Now the prodigal son was ready to return to his mother, for her faith-inspired words no longer impressed him as "womanish chatter." The prophecy of the old bishop of Madaura was to come true. "The son of such tears could not perish."

As a disobedient boy and, later on, as a conceited rhetorician, Augustine had thought too highly of himself to pay attention to what his mother said. Now, as a mature man, he had acquired the childlike humility to listen to her. Deeply stirred, to Monica's report on her experiences during those three days she had spent with Ambrose's flock in the besieged basilica. And Augustine's heart was one with hers in flaming admiration for the heroic bishop, who was in possession of a firm faith which is able to instill the highest form of courage and confidence into the human heart.

The hymns, which owed their existence to the distressing days of siege, gave further strength to Augustine's union in faith with his mother. What had prevented Augustine for so long from entering sympathetically into the spirit of Christianity, was above all the rigidity of its ethical demands. In Ambrose's hymns he heard for the first time the conciliatory mellowness of a simple and fervent trust in God. These hymns, furthermore, appealed to his sense of formal perfection and classical beauty in rhythm and melody. Yet if he was truly overwhelmed by their solemn grandeur, it was first of all because he sensed in them an element which

was absent from the most perfect works of the ancients, not only from their music but from their art in general and even from the greatest achievements of their philosophers. He had no clear term for it, but it was something that could speak directly to the human soul, that could console the disconsolate and had power to promise redemption from the deepest distress. It was the function of this art to give comfort to the soul of man, to soothe and heal the wounds in his heart.

In his *Confessions* Augustine described the impression which the Ambrosian Hymns made on him when he heard them for the first time, at Monica's side, in the basilica of Milan. "How often did I weep," he wrote, "hearing these hymns and canticles, touched to the quick by the sweet attuned voices! They flowed into my ears, and the truth distilled into my heart and aroused my passion for devotion."

The decision to begin a new life in Christ was ripe in Augustine's soul. To carry it out, however, implied the readiness to bring great sacrifices. He would have had to conquer his old self, practice chastity, forget success and fame, and abandon all the sweet indulgences of a life of comfort and ease. Faint-heartedness and fear prevented him from taking the decisive step.

As a master of psychological portrayal, Augustine described the struggle which his mind had to wage against "the inertia of his heart," against the "reluctance of the flesh" and the "stubbornness of his habits." He wrote: "I was sick and tormented, accusing myself far more severely than was my wont, tossing and turning me in my chains till that I was utterly broken, whereby I now was but slightly, but still was held. And I said mentally, 'Lo, let it be done now, let it be done now.' And as I spoke, I all but came to a resolve. I all but did it, but I did it not. Yet fell I not back to my old condition, but took my position hard by, and drew breath. And I tried again, and wanted but very little of reaching it, and somewhat less, and then all but touched and grasped it, and yet came not at it, nor touched, nor grasped it, hesitating to die unto death, and to live unto life, and the worse, whereto I had been habituated, prevailed more with me than the better, which I had not tried. And the very moment in which I was to become another man, the nearer it approached me, the greater horror did it strike into me;

but it did not strike me back, nor turn me aside, but kept me in suspense

"The very toys of toys, and vanities of vanities, my old mistresses, still enthralled me, they shook my fleshly garment, and whispered softly, 'Dost thou part with us? And from that moment shall we no more be with thee forever?' And from that moment shall not this or that be lawful for thee forever?' And what did they suggest to me in the words 'this or that?' What impurities did they suggest? What shame? And now I far less than half heard them, not openly showing themselves and contradicting me, but muttering, as it were, behind my back, and furtively plucking me as I was departing, to make me look back upon them. Yet they did delay me, so that I hesitated to burst and shake myself free from them, and to leap over whither I was called,—an unruly habit saying to me, 'Dost thou think thou canst live without them?'

"But now it said this very faintly, for on that side towards which I had set my face, and whither I trembled to go, did the chaste dignity of Continence appear unto me, cheerful, but not dissolutely gay, honestly alluring me to come and doubt nothing, and extending her holy hands, full of a multiplicity of good examples, to receive and embrace me. And she smiled on me with an encouraging mockery, as if to say, 'Canst not thou do what these can? Or can one or another do it of themselves, and not rather in the Lord their God? The Lord their God gave me unto them. Why standest thou in thine own strength, and so standest not? Cast thyself upon Him, fear not, He will not withdraw that thou shouldst fall, cast thyself upon Him without fear, he will receive thee and heal thee.' And I blushed beyond measure, for I still heard the muttering of those toys, and hung in suspense."

By his own strength he would not have been able to find a way out of this impasse. He needed a guiding hand that would lead him out of his state of uncertain vascillation. With this in mind he went to see an old priest by the name of Simplicianus, who long ago had initiated the Roman prefect Ambrose into the tenets of the Christian faith. To him Augustine confessed his carnal aberrations and spiritual conflicts and asked for his advice and help.

It is a frequent observation that a seemingly unimportant detail, a chance remark, a casual phrase, can often determine the entire future course of a human life. This is what happened in Augus-

time's case In the course of his conversation with Simplicianus, he spoke about the books that had influenced him in his thinking, and as one of them he mentioned the translation by Victorianus of Plotinus' *Enneads*

"Victorianus, Marius-Victorianus," the old priest interrupted "I know him well' I baptized him " And he told Augustine the story of how Victorianus had come to embrace the Christian faith

He was a man of African parentage He was one of the most celebrated pagan authors and rhetoricians of his time The city of Rome honored him by the erection of his statue on the Forum of Trajan while he was still among the living At the height of his career, he took up the study of the Christian Bible, solely because he wished to refute its principles in another one of his brilliant essays But what happened was that the things he had set out to refute, cast their spell over him until he could no longer resist the ardent desire to become a Christian himself and fight with all his might for the cause of the Christian truth He came to Simplicianus and asked to be baptized According to the customs of the time, baptism was a public ceremony and had to be preceded by the candidate's abjuring his old religion and making a solemn confession of his new creed Simplicianus was ready to spare the famous rhetorician, who was the pride of contemporary pagan philosophy, the embarrassment of a public confession But Victorianus would not accept such special favors "I have uttered so many empty and false words in public," he declared, "why should I hide now, when I profess the truth?" And he boldly professed his new allegiance before a large crowd of people.

Augustine was greatly affected by this story It sounded to him like an exhortation A pagan rhetorician, whose pagan learning had brought him the highest honor and distinction, coming to the conclusion that his teaching was false, that the real truth lay in the faith of Christ, had not hesitated to abandon the greatest glory which a rhetorician can attain during his lifetime. He, Augustine, had come to the same conclusion, but he had not had the courage to draw from it the same consequence His success as a rhetorician was nothing compared with what Victorianus had felt called upon to sacrifice And yet he continued to waver!

A short while later Augustine was conversing one afternoon with

his friend Alypius, when he received the unexpected visit of his compatriot Pontitianus who held an important position at court. As Pontitianus entered the room, he saw to his great amazement, lying on the gambling table where Augustine and his friends were wont to play at dice, a copy of St Paul's epistles. Pontitianus was a Christian, and so it was but natural that the conversation should turn to the topic of the Christian creed. In the course of the argument, Pontitianus came to talk about the strange hermit's life of St. Anthony in Egypt.

Augustine was fascinated by the story of the simple farmer's son, whom a single quotation from the Bible, which he had accidentally heard in church, induced to abandon all his worldly possessions, to master his carnal appetites, and to spend his entire future life in austerity and renunciation in order to obey the laws of Christ. He felt deeply ashamed. The simple farmer's son had needed but a single sentence from the gospel to begin his new life, and he, the learned professor, whom the study of Paul's writings had convinced of the truth of the teachings of Christ, who for more than two years had heard every Sunday the most eloquent bishop of the church interpret the meaning of the gospel—he continued to waver and to postpone the beginning of the new life which he had recognized as true.

Augustine's confusion became quite unbearable when his visitor told him about two of his friends, high dignitaries at court, who had read the *Vita St. Antonii* by Athanasius and were so deeply moved by it that they did not hesitate for a moment to abandon their lucrative positions and to exchange all the joys of their worldly lives for a life of ascetic austerities in emulation of the example set by the saintly farmer from Coma.

When his visitor had left, Augustine turned to his friend Alypius and exclaimed in a turmoil of shame and bitter self-accusation, "What shall we do now? Do you not notice it? The unlearned start up and take heaven by force, and we with all our learning, continue to delay. High dignitaries at court abandon everything and begin a new life, but we persist in our lives of iniquity and filth."

Disgust with himself filled his heart and threatened to choke him. Once again his old self gathered together all its strength for a final stand. It was the last struggle of flesh against soul, pleasure against

higher aspirations. In frenzied excitement he tore his hair, covered his eyes and burst forth in a fit of tears "O Lord, how long? How long? Tomorrow and tomorrow! Why not today? Why not now? Why does this very hour not end my wretchedness?"

The hour of his conversion had come. What happened in his soul during this crisis in his life, was described by him in one of the most impressive passages of his *Confessions* "Now that a profound reflection had from the secret depths of my soul, drawn together and heaped up all my misery before the sight of my heart, there arose in me a mighty storm I arose and went out into the garden, away from Alypius For it suggested itself to me that solitude was more fitting for the business of weeping. Thus was it with me at that time, and he perceived it, for I believe that I had spoken something wherein the sound of my voice appeared choked with weeping, and in that state had I risen up He then remained where we had been sitting, most completely astonished. I flung myself down, how, I know not, under a certain fig tree, giving free course to my tears, and the streams of mine eyes gushed out, an acceptable sacrifice to Thee

"I was weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo, I heard the voice as of a boy or girl, I know not which, coming from a neighboring house, chanting, and oft repeating, 'Take up and read, take up and read.' Immediately my countenance was changed, and I began most earnestly to consider whether it was usual for children in any kind of game to sing such words, nor could I remember ever to have heard the like So, restraining the torrent of my tears, I rose up, interpreting it no other way than as a command to me from Heaven to open the book, and to read the first chapter I should light upon. For I had heard of Anthony, that, accidentally coming in whilst the gospel was being read, he received the admonition as if what was read were addressed to him, 'Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me' And by such oracle was he forthwith converted unto Thee. So quickly I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting, for there had I put down the volume of the apostles, when I rose thence. I grasped, opened, and in silence read that paragraph on which my eyes first fell,—'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus

Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof' No further would I read, nor did I need, for instantly, as the sentence ended,—by a light, as it were, of security into my heart,—all the gloom of doubt vanished away

"Closing the book, then, and putting either my finger between, or some other mark, I now with a tranquil countenance made it known to Alypius. And he thus disclosed to me what was wrought in him, which I knew not. He asked to look at what I had read. I showed him, and he looked even further than I had read, and I knew not what followed. This it was, verily, 'Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye,' which he applied to himself, and discovered to me. By this admonition was he strengthened, and by a good resolution and purpose, very much in accord with his character (wherein, for the better, he was always far different from me), without any restless delay he joined me. Thence we go in to my mother. We make it known to her,—she rejoiceth. We relate how it came to pass,—she leapeth for joy, and triumpheth, and blessing Thee, who art 'able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,' for she perceived Thee to have given her more for me than she used to ask by her pitiful and most doleful groanings. For Thou didst so convert me unto Thyself, that I sought neither a wife, nor any other of this world's hopes,—standing in that rule of faith in which Thou, so many years before, had showed me unto her in a vision. And thou didst turn her grief into a gladness, much more plentiful than she had desired."

The yoke of his carnal cravings was shaken off, the spell of his ambition was broken. At the age of thirty-two, the sensualist Augustine renounced women, the "salesman of words" was ready to resign his professorship of rhetoric in order to lead a life in accordance with God's truth.

On his way to Damascus, Saul had turned into Paul with flash-like suddenness. Anthony heard in church the words of the priest, arose and went to give away his possessions. But Augustine was not a man of sudden decisions. His development was not determined by sudden impulses. The emotional upheaval in the garden had merely freed him from the last fetters of his lower nature which so far had been able to hold down his intellect in its high

flown aspirations, to prevent it from reaching the ultimate heights of thought in God

The conversion in the garden occurred several weeks before the end of the current school term. In heart and soul Augustine felt fully detached from his duties as a teacher, but in order to avoid notice he decided to go on with his work till vacation time. Meanwhile he dissolved his amorous relations with all the adroitness of a man of world. He left to Alypius the task of getting rid, as tactfully as possible, of his new mistress, while Monica had to carry out his decision to break off his engagement.

Anthony had interpreted his conversion to signify that he should withdraw to the solitude of a cave in the desert. Augustine, who was a man of the intellect, chose a different road to God. When school was over, he retired in the company of his mother, his brother, his son, Alypius, and a number of other friends to a pleasant country house at Cassiciacum which his friend Verecundus had lent him. There he did not live as a penitent but rather as a philosopher who has turned his back on the world in order to enjoy the true bliss of pure thought. Undisturbed, in cheerful simplicity, and surrounded by a stimulating circle of relatives and friends, he spent a most pleasurable furlough in esthetic and philosophical discussions, frequently relieved and animated by jesting and laughter. Monica was not only the housekeeper for this family of celibates. She also took part in their intellectual pursuits. "A woman in dress," wrote Augustine about his mother at this time, "a man in faith and vigor of thought, with all the quiet assurance of age, the love of a mother, and the devotion of a Christian."

At Cassiciacum the thinker Augustine set himself the task of re-examining in the light of his new standards all the things which his intellect had so far been able to accept as valid. "I desired," he once said, "to be as well informed about metaphysical as about visible things, to be just as sure of them as I knew that seven and three make ten."

Now he was the center of a sort of academy after the model of the ancients. He and his group discussed all the problems of science, philosophy and literature, the poems of Vergil, the writings of the Neoplatonists and of all the other schools of pagan philosophy. Six full days were spent to settle the question whether happiness could be attained without knowledge.

Along with all this, Augustine also did some writing. He gave a final literary form to his dialogues with friends, wrote brief pieces "About the Happy Life," "About Order," "Against the New Academy," and composed one of his most profound essays, "De Magistro" or "About the Teacher," a summary of his conversations with his son Adeodatus, who, in spite of his fifteen years, was as he said, the intellectual equal of himself and the entire circle at Cassiciacum.

With the end of vacation time approaching, Augustine wrote to Bishop Ambrose, asking to be received as a convert and to be given the holy sacrament of baptism at Easter. At the same time he tendered his resignation as a professor of rhetoric. Still not willing to risk a sensation, he explained his action as dictated by reasons of health. That he was actually suffering with great shortness of breath and that his voice had lost in force and sonorousness, stood him in good stead.

In April, 387, Augustine returned to Milan in order to prepare himself for his baptism. He studied the teachings of Christ and composed various books of his own, all of which—in subject matter as well as in form—followed closely the pattern of ancient thought. He wrote about rhetoric, dialectics, geometry, arithmetic, philosophy, about the elements of music, and the seven liberal arts.

During this period he also composed his famous two books of *Soliloquia*, which are possibly the most revealing of all the works of this man who found his way to God through the force of his intellect. "Have trust in the conclusions of your thought," says Reason by way of summing up the argument of the *Soliloquia*. "Have trust in truth. For truth itself tells you that it lives within you, that it is immortal, and that it cannot be lost through physical death. Turn away from your shadow, and turn within. You cannot perish except in losing the truth that you cannot be lost." And Augustine replied to Reason, "I hear you, I take courage, I shall begin again to live."

The problems with which Augustine concerned himself during this time immediately preceding his baptism, were in their sum the essence of classical science and philosophy. It was destined to become part of the great structure of Christian thought, for the peculiar function of Augustine, the first great thinker and intellectual genius of the Christian era, was to make use of the immortal

treasury of ideas of the declining world of the ancients as building material for the rising Christian culture of the West

The night before Easter, Augustine together with Alypius and his son Adeodatus was baptized by bishop Ambrose. In a solemn ceremony, which symbolized the rebirth of the convert from death in sin to a new life in Christ, he professed his faith in the Redeemer.

After the baptism Augustine decided to return to Africa. His thirst for fame and success had driven him away from the country of his birth to the continent of Europe. As a convert, who wished to live henceforth in the service of Christ, he felt the urge to retrace his steps and return to the starting point of his career.

All the members of the little group of Christians that followed him in his new life in Christ were Africans. And African too was almost everything that influenced him in his career as a saint. Plotinus was African, the founder of Neoplatonism, whose teachings had been instrumental in Augustine's conversion. Victorinus was African, the man whose translation had made the Neoplatonic writings accessible to him, and whose conversion had impressed him as such a glorious example. And finally, the hermit Anthony was African, whose exemplary life had produced in him so deep a shock that the entire future course of his life on earth was decided by it.

Anthony and Augustine were not the first Africans to make important contributions to the growth and development of Christianity. Origen and Tertullian, the greatest Christians of the first two centuries, had both been Africans, and the powerful school of Alexandria had also been an African institution.

Three continents worked together in shaping the culture of Christianity. The Christian faith sprang up in Asia Minor, it was given the status of a world power by Rome and Europe, but in the formation of the typically Christian and Western molds of thought, it may be said that Africa played the really decisive part.

The boat that was to take the little group of Africans back to their homeland sailed from the Roman port of Ostia. It was there that Augustine spent the last few days of waiting before the scheduled time of departure. During those days he suffered a

grievous loss Monica died. She was then fifty-three years of age. He was thirty-three.

"I cannot express the affection she bore to me, and with how much more vehement anguish she was in labor of me in the spirit, than at her childbearing in the flesh," Augustine wrote later on about the deceased whose loyal heart he had only come to appreciate since the time of his conversion. "My life and hers had become one," he said, "and now that one life was torn asunder, for she had left me."

To the mother of his spiritual rebirth Augustine set an immortal monument in a passage of his confessions, where he speaks of his last, ecstatically mystical conversation with Monica, which took place on an early summer afternoon a few days before her death.

"She and I stood alone, leaning in a certain window, which looked into the garden of the house, where we now stayed. We were discoursing then together, alone, and talked about life eternal. Raising up ourselves with a more glowing affection towards the 'Self-same,' we did by degrees pass through all things bodily, even the very heaven whence sun and moon and stars shine upon the earth, yea, we were soaring higher yet, by inward musing, and discourse, and we came to our own minds, and went beyond them, that we might arrive at that region where life is the Wisdom by whom all things are made, and where 'have been' and 'shall be' does not exist any more, but only 'to be,' seeing that is eternal. And while we were discoursing and pausing after her, we slightly touched on her with a whole effort of our heart."

It was truth eternal, the guardian of all things, which they touched through the effort of their "swift thoughts." "When we were speaking about these things the entire world around us disappeared. The tumults of the flesh were hushed, hushed the images of earth, and water, and air, hushed also the poles of heaven, yea the very soul be hushed to herself, hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, every loud word and silent sign and whatsoever exists only in transition was hushed, and in this utter silence there was only one wakeful mind that beheld the ultimate face of wisdom. God. We sighed, and there we leave bound the first fruits of the Spirit, and returned to vocal expressions of our mouth, where the word spoken has beginning and end."

In this discourse, in which mother and son rose above the things

of the world and were united in a mystical vision of eternal truths, we see Augustine and Monica for the first time as St Augustine and St Monica whom the Church reveres.

The earth, into which he had lowered the body of his mother, would not let him go. He postponed his return to Africa for another year. He spent this time at Rome. But it seemed to be a different city than the one he had left not so long ago when all the young rhetorician's ambitious hopes for fame and success had come to naught. Then he had looked at it from the point of view of his own individual career. But now he came as a changed person and saw in Rome the eternal city of Christianity, the site of suffering of the martyrs, the Rome of the Church. And now only did he really come to know the Christian church, whose faith he had embraced, in its organization as a worldly and spiritual institution. His stay at Rome was the apprenticeship of the man who was destined to become one of the greatest teachers within the organizational setup of the church.

In the year 388 Augustine landed in the port of Carthage and proceeded from there to his home town Tagaste. He transformed the house he had inherited from his father, where he had spent his sinful youth, into a sort of monastery where he lived for two years, in the company of several likeminded men, in monkish seclusion.

During this period his conversion, which had begun in the garden at Milan, was definitely consummated. He composed his first religious work, the first truly Augustinian masterpiece, *De vera Religione*, "Of the True Faith." Secluded contemplation had transformed the intellectual philosopher into a Christian thinker. The monastic discipline and quietude, which characterized his life at this time, chastened not only his character but also his talents—most particularly, his eloquence. For fifteen years he had abused this gift of his as a "salesman of words", but now, when his days were spent in prayer and silence, his eloquence too was harnessed by an ascetic discipline. When he was ready to raise his voice again, to speak again before men, the brilliant rhetorician had turned into a preacher of the truth of Christ.

Without his taking the initiative, he was soon to have an opportunity to prove his worth as an inspiring preacher. Bishop Valerianus of Hippo Regius on the coast invited the monkish scholar to

spend a few days with him as his guest. During his stay at Hippo Augustine yielded to the bishop's insistence and spoke to the Christian congregation in the local church. The faithful were deeply stirred by his sermon and would not allow him to leave. They acclaimed him priest, and finally Augustine gave in to their impetuous request. He accepted the post of assistant to the old bishop, and after the latter's death in 395, he succeeded him in office.

Hippo, the modern Bona, was far away from the Christian centers of Rome and Constantinople. At the time its diocese was of only minor importance. Through Augustine's work, however, the place turned soon into a focal point of Christian thought, for it was there that the foundation was laid for the entire future development of Christianity not only as an organization but also as a religious doctrine. What Augustine, the "pope in the spirit," taught and wrote in his remote episcopal residence, assumed in due time an importance second only to that of the holy Bible.

At the beginning of the fifth century—a time beset with dangers for Christian unity—it was the superior intellect of St. Augustine that saved the church from falling prey to a multitude of schismatic trends and disintegrating attacks. It was a time when paganism tried once again to recover the hegemony it had lost. While Augustine preached the gospel in his church at Hippo, the priests of Faunus were celebrating their wild festival of the Lupercalia outside. The northern tribes of the Goths and Vandals had penetrated farther and farther into the heart of the empire. Its very existence was in jeopardy, and the church, which was already closely interlinked with the state, was in danger of going down with it in the general decline.

Within the church itself equally destructive trends were at work. There were the Donatists, the "Puritans of early Christianity," who declared that a sinner cannot be a member of the church and certainly not an ordained priest. They established an African national church, and the so-called Circumcellions—a faction of particularly fanatic Donatists—began to storm church buildings, they stoned orthodox priests, and tried to further the cause of their doctrine by all sorts of terroristic means. Then there were all those various heretical movements, clearly in the ascendancy at this time, whose endless controversies about dogmatic details served only to confuse the clear import of the original Christian

beliefs Next to Manichaeism and Arianism, it was mainly the doctrine of will power of the British monk Pelagius, that drew increasing numbers of Christians away from the old church. The Pelagians denied the importance of divine grace as a necessary means of salvation and proclaimed an absolute autonomy of the human will

Augustine, who himself had found his way to the orthodox Christian faith only at the end of a long spiritual Odyssey, was qualified as no one else to refute all these attacks on the Christian dogma His intimate knowledge of all the tenets of pagan thought enabled him to demonstrate convincingly the absurdity of all arguments favoring a restoration of paganism His sinful past and final conversion made it possible for him to speak by experience when he had to prove the danger and fallacy of the Donatists' idea that all former sinners should be expelled from the church As a former Manichaean he knew about the illusory appeal of the doctrines of Manes Thinking back to the time when he had listened at Milan to the arguments of Ambrose, the mighty opponent of Arianism, he was not at a loss for proofs in support of the divinity of Christ And the Pelagians, finally, were confronted in him with a man whose thinking had always revolved around the problem of the freedom of will, so that he was only too well aware of its value as well as its limitation

In his struggle against the heretics, both his skill as a writer, which enabled him to compose his polemical treatises, and his oratorical talents stood him in excellent stead At church councils, conferences, and from the pulpit, his words were always replete with such powers of conviction and inspiration that even his opponents could not help being impressed. Yet, Augustine's appearance was in no sense imposing or forceful He did not look at all as he was painted by El Greco, who adapted the physical proportions of his saints to their spiritual stature He was rather small and insignificant-looking Even his voice had lost its resonance through years of asthma But the things which this unimpressive man stated in a surd and flat tone of voice secured the survival of the catholic church

To the strenuous tasks of a preacher and fighter for the Lord were now added the manifold duties of the first pastor of the dio-

cese Augustine heard confession, dispatched administrative matters, managed the patrimony of his bishopric, sat in judgment, and took care of a thousand and one other things

During Augustine's episcopate, in the year 410, Rome, the holy city of Christendom, fell into the hands of Alaric's Gothic hosts. The danger of being overrun by the migrating Teutons loomed large over the African continent. The Vandals, following in the footsteps of the Goths, flocked together in Spain and were ready under the leadership of their king Gaiseric to strike out in a decisive campaign against northern Africa.

Early in the year 429 an army of eighty thousand Vandals crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and advanced into northern Africa. Hippo was one of the strongholds that remained for a while in Roman hands. Endless columns of fleeing people streamed into the city, and the resulting difficulties gave Augustine a chance to prove himself a helper and organizer of superior caliber. In his hands the property of the church became the property of the needy. He fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and ransomed the captives. His eagerness to help knew no bounds, it was as boundless as human misery and distress.

Finally the town of Hippo had to suffer the fate of all the other cities and towns of northern Africa. In May, 429, Gaiseric's troops surrounded it and kept it under siege. Inside the town the bishop devoted every hour of the day to his work of rescue and assistance. He was seventy-six years of age. Under the strain of his efforts he finally broke down. A deadly fever undermined his strength. His eyesight weakened, and the physicians forbade him to read. To his consolation and edification he asked that the penitential psalms of king David be written in large letters on sheets of parchment which could be fastened to the wall opposite his bed where he might be able to see them to the end.

On August 28, 430, while throngs of Vandals, flushed with victory, were hammering at the gates of the city, Augustine passed away on his monkish cot, surrounded by praying followers and friends.

Augustine's life as the bishop of Hippo is in its simple grandeur the saintly counterpart of the confused and restless years of his earlier life. And yet this last part of his life is merely the setting

for the truly immortal greatness of this saint for the creative work of his intellect

It came into existence in the course of quiet nights and the rare hours of leisure which the overburdened pastor, administrator, and fighter for the faith had left to himself With relentless persistence, sitting in his monkish little cell and covering one sheet of parchment after another, he produced one book after another, one masterpiece after another. There he wrote not only his *Confessions* but innumerable treatises, pamphlets, and essays on problems of pedagogical, philosophical, epistemological importance, on controversial questions of contemporary significance, and on matters of church administration and reform. Some two hundred and thirty-two books were conceived by this most productive of all thinkers and authors. One hundred volumes gathered the works he left to posterity. They represent a veritable encyclopedia of the entire treasury of thought of catholic Christianity. They summarized and in part created it.

The influence of almost all the works composed by Augustine was deep and lasting. Yet the *Confessions* of this "sinner who became a saint" are unrivaled in their appeal to modern readers, which they owe in part to their unconditional honesty and in part to the amazingly keen psychological insight of their author.

The thirteen chapters of this work were written in 397, about ten years after Augustine's conversion. In them the devout bishop of Hippo looked back on his sinful past and asked God in a spirit of repentance to hear his confession. His passionate self-scrutiny gave him the courage to penetrate to the deepest depths of the *grande profundum homo*, the great abyss called man. A man, who might well have said that "he deemed nothing that relates to man foreign to himself," gave to the world in the form of these thirteen chapters the most stirring, the most masterly work of self-revelation to be found in the literature of any age or nation.

The first nine chapters tell the story of Augustine's outer life, of his struggle against the animal carnality of his nature. In the tenth chapter Augustine turned his attention from his outer life to the life within. He who had vainly tried to find the solution of the riddle of selfhood in the turmoil of material existence, came here to the conclusion that life in the body is fragmentary. And so he

proceeded to investigate his inner life in order to discover at the basis of the motley multiplicity of the phenomenal world the true unity of his and all life. He searched his own soul because he was seeking after God. Self-knowledge, he hoped, would lead him to knowledge of God. "O Lord," he exclaimed, "help me to perceive thee. Help me to perceive myself. For understanding thee, I will know about myself. And once I understand myself, I will know about thee. Thus I beseech thee, O my God, discover to me myself!"

His quest for the ultimate truth made him sensitive to the most delicate psychological nuances. And the keenness of his observation was coupled with a power and skill of expression which succeeded in describing the indescribable with amazing directness and precision.

Thus he wrote: "I turned myself unto myself, and said to myself: who art thou? And I answered: A man, for behold here is a soul and a body in me, one without, and the other within. By which of these two ought I to have sought my God, whom by my body I had inquired after from earth to heaven, even so far as I was able to send those beams of my eyes in ambassage? But the better part is the inner part, unto which all these my bodily messengers gave up their intelligence, as being the president and judge of all the several answers of heaven and earth, and of all things that are therein, who said, We are not God, and He made us. These things did my inner man know by the ministry of the outer man. And I the inner man knew all this, I, I the soul, by means of the senses of the body. By this very soul will I ascend up unto Him, I will soar beyond that faculty of mine, by which I am united unto my body, and by which I fill the whole frame of it with life."

His analysis of sense impressions, of sensations, emotions and voluntary actions, of all the fluctuating elements of human consciousness, did not, however, lead him to the ultimate, immutable self.

So he penetrated more deeply and reached the one fixed point of consciousness—memory. "I came," he wrote, "to the fields and spacious places of my memory, where are the treasures of innumerable images, brought into it from things of all sorts, perceived by the senses. There is stored up whatsoever besides we think. In its unmeasured space are likewise stored the recordings

of my emotions And there too are the things learned and not yet vanished Great is the force of memory, excessive great, O my God, a large and boundless chamber ”

The excitement of a man discovering a new continent cannot be greater than the awe which overcame Augustine, the man who explored for the first time the vast and unknown realms of the soul. “A wonderful admiration surprises me, amazement seizes me upon this’ And men go abroad to admire the heights of mountains, the mighty waves of the sea, the broad rides of rivers, the compass of the oceans, and the circuits of the stars, and pass themselves by.”

Soon, however, Augustine recognized that even the vast expanse of consciousness did not suffice to solve the riddle of egohood And he tried to go beyond the limits of the powers of recollection He advanced to the sphere of “oblivion”—the subconscious—where things are kept which have slipped from memory but remain active as causes and motives of emotions and actions And he discovered that dreams are the threshold leading into the realm of this other self

“There still live in my memory,” he wrote, “the images of such things as my ill custom had there fixed, and they rush into my thoughts—though wanting in strength—even while I am broad awake But in sleep they come upon me, not to delight only, but most like to the deed done So far prevails the illusion of that image, both in my soul and my flesh, that these false visions persuade me when I am asleep in a way that true visions cannot do when I am awake Am I not myself at that time, O Lord my God? And yet there is so much difference between myself and myself in the moment when I pass from waking to sleeping or return from sleeping to waking Where is my reason at that time, by which my mind when it is awake, resists such suggestions as these? Is it lulled asleep with the senses of my body?”

“Through all this do I run and advance as far as I can, and there is no end So great is the force of life in mortal man O my God what a frightening secret, a deep and boundless manifoldness. And thus thing is the mind, this I am, I, myself’ What am I then? What nature am I? A life various and exceeding immense’

“Who will solve this riddle, who conceive what it means? I, at least, truly toil therein, yea and toil in myself, I am become a heavy soil, requiring overmuch sweat of the brow For we are not now

searching out the regions of heaven, or measuring the distances of the stars, or inquiring the balancings of the earth. It is myself I, —my mind!"

Augustine, the saint of the early Christian era,—in his attempt to find God in the mechanism of his senses, instincts, and emotions—had reached the borderline separating the conscious and the sub-conscious realms of the soul. With this discovery he anticipated many an important conclusion of modern psychology and philosophy, as Bergson's definition of memory and Freud's doctrine of the subconscious.

If Augustine had been merely a curious investigator of the human soul, he would never have tried to go beyond the limits of rational comprehension. In the pursuit of his quest for God, however, he had to go on, for all the results and conclusions so far obtained constituted in no way a satisfactory answer to the questions about 'Whence?' and 'Why?' and about God, the Creator and ultimate cause of all things existent. For without such an answer all his knowledge of the human soul remained fragmentary, and the progress in self-scrutiny he had achieved was merely part of the way to truth eternal which lay beyond the limits of an individual life.

"With my outward senses," he wrote, "so well as I might, I took a muster of this world, observing the life that the body has of me and these senses of mine own. Thence I turned inwardly into the withdrawing chambers of my memory, those manifold large rooms, so wonderfully furnished of innumerable stores, and I considered and stood amazed, being able to discern nothing without thy help, yet finding none of all these to be thyself. Nor was I the finder of these things, I, who went over them all, and who now labored to distinguish and to value everything according to its proper worth receiving some things with my faltering senses and inquiring, feeling other things that were mixed with mine own self, yea, and taking particular notice of the reporters themselves, and anon thoroughly canvassing over some things laid up in the large treasury of my memory, storing up some of them there again, and for my use drawing out some. Neither was I myself when I did all this, that is, that ability of mine own by which I did it, neither was it Thou, for Thou art that never failing light, which concern-

ing all these I still advised withal, whether they were, what they were, and how to be valued they were."

But then "a spiritual force, which the mind itself was unable to grasp," came to his assistance and enabled him to look beyond the "vertex of his ego." And he recognized the last motive and cause which was no longer identical with anything within him but was a power of a class all its own and was called by the name of God. And thus arose the Augustinian conception of God, according to which the Creator precedes all human knowledge and exists independent of the ability of the human mind to know him

The fleeting contact with God, which Augustine had once experienced together with his mother for the brief span of a passing conversation, had now become a permanent part of his fund of knowledge.

In the last chapters of the *Confessions*, the analytical thinker made way for the mystic. Here Augustine no longer related what he had thought but what he had seen. He wrote about the finite that touches the infinite, about time that turns into eternity, and about the ego that reaches God. This visualization of the human soul merging with the actions of God as described in the *Confessions*, was given a still more potent form in Augustine's work *About the Trinity*. Here he investigated again the basic structure of the human soul and conceived of it as triune in all its manifestations; and all the ternary series he established—as being, knowing, willing, mind, consciousness, love—impressed him as patterned after the nature of the Triune Godhead. "In a miraculous way," he wrote, "the inner man bears in these three forces the image of God impressed upon his being."

Augustine's wisdom was not just the product of abstract deductions. It consisted of truths discovered by experience, of laws governing the soul and mind of man, which he had deciphered in life itself.

Descending thus to the darkest depths of his human, all too human soul and ascending at the same time to its loftiest peaks from where he surveyed in mystic vision the ultimate boundaries of its realm, he covered the full range of human thought and of human emotions. What he discovered for and in himself, accrued immediately to the benefit of all of mankind. As he expanded the limits of his own inner life, he expanded likewise the intellectual

and spiritual limits of mankind "Is not my heart the heart of man?" he wrote.

In the history of Western thought, it is the early church father St Augustine who must be credited with having been the first to investigate man's inner life, and so it is possible to see in him the founder of modern psychology

When Augustine wrote his *Confessions*, a thousand years had gone by since Heraklitus, the "Dark Philosopher," the "Father of Metaphysics," had written down as one of his one hundred and thirty-three maxims the phrase, "I search my self" At about the same time, in the fifth century before Christ, the portal of Apollo's temple at Delphi bore the inscription, "Know Thyself" But Heraklitus' phrase of wisdom and the Delphic inscription too were little more than well-phrased sayings, and even Socrates, the greatest thinker of Antiquity, had to admit, "And still I am not able to know myself as the Delphic maxim bids me do"

The spirit of investigation of the Ancients, which ranged throughout the universe, paid little or no attention to the riddle of the human soul There is nothing in the entire literature of the early Greeks and Romans that could in any way be compared with the self-scrutiny of Augustine's confessions When the ancients spoke about themselves, they did so to vindicate their deeds or to establish their claim to fame and recognition All they had to say about themselves concerned the "outer man" and led never to a revelation of their essential inner nature Marcus Aurelius, the "Philosopher on the Throne," wrote, it is true, his famous *Meditations*, but even these are rather a commentary of a general kind on his moral and ethical principles

Only through Christianity, whose doctrines assigned superior importance to the individual human soul, was it possible for the desire of true self-scrutiny to arise in man Only the Christian conscience, which felt responsible for its deeds and thoughts before God, could lead to confession in the full sense of the word And Augustine, the sinner on the road to sainthood, who knew all the depths of hell and the heights of heaven, is the first "self-scrutinizer" and "self-revealer" of true greatness

A thousand years separated Augustine's *Confessions* from Heraklitus' maxim, and another thousand years had to go by before the

Confessions actually brought about the reorientation in the course of human thought which gives them their great historical importance

Augustine's theological essays assumed an immediate dogmatic importance for all of Christianity, but the purely speculative forms of thought of the Byzantine era and also of the ensuing centuries of medieval scholasticism, whose main concern it was to establish a theologically flawless definition of the concept of God, were not equipped to attain a just appreciation of the *Confessions*. Only the Renaissance with its individualistic propensities was finally ready to accept them with sympathy and understanding. It is certainly no mere coincidence that it was Petrarch—the protagonist of Renaissance individualism—who discovered the genius of self-analysis, St. Augustine, and followed his example.

Petrarch, the poet of the *Canzoniere*, was so typically modern in his emotions and reactions that he went out to climb a mountain merely because he enjoyed both the view and the physical exercise. On April 21, 1336, he climbed Mont Ventoux, the highest peak in the vicinity of Avignon in the valley of the river Rhone. It was a difficult ascent, and when he reached the summit and his eyes had drunk their fill of the sublime Alpine view, he decided—in true Renaissance style—that not only his senses but also his soul must participate in the grandeur of the moment. He opened at random the volume of the *Confessions*, which he took with him wherever he went, and chanced upon the lines, “And men go abroad to admire the heights of mountains, but they pass themselves by.” And he felt that this had been written for him.

“I decided,” he wrote about this event, “that I had seen enough of the mountain and turned my inner eye upon myself. In silence I contemplated our great lack of insight, when disregarding our most noble part, we lose ourselves in manifoldness and search outside for what we could find within. How often during this memorable day did I turn around to view the summit of the mountain, and it appeared to me to measure but a few feet, as compared with the elevation of inner self-reflection.”

His experience on Mont Ventoux marked a decisive turning point in the course of Petrarch's life. So far this poet had lived in complete abandon to the joys of worldly existence, but now he

withdrew to the solitude of Vacluse, where he spent his life in penitent confession and self-scrutiny

In his own "Confessions," the *Secret, or the Soul's Conflict with Passion*, he chose St Augustine as an imaginary father confessor and guide. To him he confessed his most secret instincts, his vanity and his craving for fame and profit and the inertia of his heart. And Augustine, the imaginary interlocutor of these dialogs, advised and encouraged him in his quest for the true bliss of a God-inspired life.

All of Petrarch's later works, and particularly his essay *De Vita Solitaria*, are filled with the spirit of St Augustine.

Petrarch was the most renowned poet of his time. His conversion and the example he set of "being intoxicated by the living miracle of the own ego, and eager to communicate the result of its study," exerted a determining influence on his time and contributed substantially to the development of the typical Renaissance mentality. It also drew attention again to his great model, Augustine, and now only came the time when the confessions of this early Christian saint could rightfully be regarded as one of the mightiest factors determining the course of the spiritual history of the Occident.

A veritable flood of confessions and self-analyses followed. Girolamo Cardano employed all his scientific care and precision in the investigation of his own self. Benvenuto Cellini, the firebrand, whose autobiography had such great fascination for men like Goethe and Oscar Wilde, tried to outdo St Augustine, "the master of confession," by the utter frankness of the story of his disgraceful deeds. Jean Jacques Rousseau borrowed even the title of Augustine's famous work for his own *Confessions*. Addressing reason, the new goddess of the eighteenth century, he exclaimed, "I have divulged my inmost core, as only you, Eternal Being, have seen it!" And boastfully he added, "My undertaking is without an example, and no one will ever be able to imitate it. I will show to the world a man in the full truth of his nature, and I shall be this man, I alone!" Rousseau's *Confessions* became in due time the inspiration for the whole literature of confessions of the era of French romanticism. De Musset, Alfred de Vigny, Victor Hugo, and Madame de Staël vied with each other in the unveiling of their innermost selves. Starting in France, the confessional fervor soon affected England.

and Germany, where objective self-analysis took more and more frequently the place of emotional effusion.

But all of them, Frenchmen, Englishmen, and Germans, were outshone in fervor and perseverance by the remarkable Swiss professor of aesthetics, the Genevan Henri Frédéric Amiel, who renounced real life in order to be able to describe the life of his thoughts and emotions. This martyr of self-revelation spent thirty years in complete seclusion and composed during that time a gigantic work of forty-eight volumes, consisting of sixteen thousand and nine hundred pages, wholly devoted to the observation of his inner ego.

The nineteenth century came to be the greatest century of confessional literature. The Danish philosopher Kierkegaard, the Russians Dostoevski and Tolstoi, the Englishman de Quincey, and the Swedish dramatist Strindberg—to mention but a few—they all presented to the world emotional, penitent, or simply descriptive analyses of their inner life.

In the twentieth century the literary form of the confessions passes over into the autobiographical novel which is sufficiently characterized by the mere mention of names like Marcel Proust, James Joyce, and Ferdinand Céline.

Yet, however much the literature of the fifteen hundred years that have passed since Augustine's time may have enriched and broadened man's knowledge of himself, none of the later works can equal the power of that early genius "looking beyond the vertex of his ego" and discovering beyond the limits of the ephemeral individual the general and eternally valid aspects of the human soul—the *aeternum internum*. Thus Augustine's *Confessions* continue to be what they were once called, "a work of solitary greatness."

Of equal significance for the spiritual development of Western civilization were the twenty-two books of Augustine's work *On the City of God*, the *Civitas Dei*. The composition of this work was begun in 413, three years after the fall of Rome. Augustine worked on it, with interruptions, for fourteen years. It was conceived in compliance with a suggestion made by Augustine's friend Macellinus, the Christian tribune of Carthage. Its purpose was to refute the accusation made in pagan quarters that the introduction

of the Christian faith had angered the gods and was responsible for the fall of Rome. In this work Augustine started out with a discussion of the struggle for the eternal city, but in his treatment this historical event assumed more than historical importance. His personal problem of the struggle of good and evil was presented as the basic problem for all humanity and even all life on earth. In a magnificent synthesis of secular and divine phenomena he made of it one universal, all-embracing conception. He confronted the worldly city of Rome with the heavenly city of God, the *civitas diaboli* with the *civitas Dei*, and divided all mankind into the citizens of two rival communities, the inhabitants of the city of carnal pleasures and those of the city of the spirit.

The powers of evil in man were shown in their social implications, as flowing from an egotistic orientation of the will, which constitutes always a violation of the law and the meaning of the whole, an aberration into private and individual interests. Under the rule of evil, Augustine argued, the wealth which is given to the individual as a means or a tool becomes a goal and an end in itself, what ought to serve to assist man in his aspiration toward the highest good, is abused by the individual trying to enrich himself. In the ideal city of God as seen by Augustine, community life, social ties, justice, state, and church are always evaluated in their relation to the infinite: the things that are bound in time, space, and matter are made to take their place within the framework of God's eternal plans.

In an interpretation of visionary impact, Augustine pursued the origin of evil beyond time and material existence to the metaphysical moment of the creation of man, to the fact of his inborn sinfulness, and likewise to the final settlement of right and wrong on Judgment Day. The conflict of good and evil assumed thus the character of a cosmic drama occurring in the spheres beyond time and space where genesis and doomsday meet.

Augustine's *City of God* has all the fascination of one of the most remarkable works of literature. In it the boldest visions and realistic accounts work smoothly together in conjuring up the same images, contemporary reports from the battlefield and the fate of fallen angels, Roman history and the history of creation, dated anecdotes and eternal events are intermingled in the proclamation of the same truth.

The *City of God* served as model for all later world-political theories of the church. It was the favorite work of Charlemagne and engendered in him the idea of the Holy Roman Empire. But also the great political utopias of the past fifteen hundred years have taken their inspiration from this work of Augustine's.

The ideas set down in the *City of God* have not lost their timelessness even today. When Augustine condemned imperialism and war, when he stipulated the ultimate ideal of peace and equality of all men of good will, regardless of race, nationality, or creed, he addressed himself to all times, ours included.

There is scarcely a problem of deeply human importance which Augustine did not take up somewhere in his varied and voluminous work. Let it be the problem of time, the origin of language, music, or medicine, everywhere his thought went far beyond the limits of his time and anticipated the conclusions of the most advanced thinkers of the present. He conceived of the phenomenon of time as a special form of consciousness and might well be considered a precursor of our modern relativism. In terms of a strangely modern flavor, he spoke of language as the crystallization of unconscious forms of thought and archetypes. Investigating the causes and the nature of morbid states, he established a certain interdependence of body and soul and concluded—again in anticipation of modern ideas—that physical disturbances can lead to mental and psychic anomalies. He discussed the mysterious affinity of the human soul and the art of music with such delicate understanding that his argumentation deserves the fullest respect of the musical theorists of today.

That Augustine's all-inclusive work is not devoid of antitheses and contradictions can hardly be surprising. While he, however, was deeply aware of the "beauty of polar contraries" which his genius managed to visualize as an organic whole, his spiritual heirs were not capable of anything of the sort. Not heeding the wider context, they picked detached fragments from his work and held them up as representing the ultimate Augustinian truth. As a result the doctrine of Augustine was made to supply and to support the basic principles of the most varied and even opposite trends of thought.

Augustine's wisdom inspired the "last Roman thinker," Boethius,

to write, in the sixth century, the purely philosophical meditations of his work *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, or *The Consolation of Philosophy*

Augustine's speculative analyses of the idea of God had a profound influence on medieval scholasticism, that trend of thought which endeavored to force, by means of reason, its way into the supernatural realm of revealed truths. His experience of God inspired Christian mysticism, that other trend which taught the impotence of reason and found the true knowledge of God through grace in ecstatic visions.

Scotus Erigena, Abelard, and Anselm of Canterbury as well as Bernard of Clairvaux and Master Eckart acknowledged their indebtedness to Augustine, the first great teacher of rational thought and the first great representative of Christian mysticism. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine's only peer among the many Christian thinkers of genuine greatness, invoked at the beginning of his *Summa Theologiae* precisely the authority of Augustine to show that he was not obliged to accept with blind faith every word Augustine had said.

The *Doctrina Christiana* of Augustine, the earliest pedagogical text book of the Western world, served throughout the Middle Ages as the ultimate authority in matters of education and supplied the foundation on which the first European universities were built.

The great humanists, whose intellectual outlook broke with the scholastic past and marked the beginning of modern times, regarded St. Augustine nevertheless as their spiritual forebear. For them he was the first Christian universalist, the first Christian thinker in whose mind a harmonious fusion of classical and Christian thought had been achieved, and since, according to them, it had been he through whom knowledge had been elevated to the rank of a Christian virtue, they regarded him as the founder of Christian civilization in general.

The Renaissance honored him as the emancipator of ego and individuality. When a new form of Platonism arose to take up the struggle against the Aristotelian tradition of the Middle Ages, it appealed to the authority of St. Augustine, regarding him as the one great Christian through whom the Platonic tradition had been preserved and enriched.

The Catholic defenders of the idea that the holy church is in-

divisible and one and that the part it plays as a mediator between man and God is indispensable and cannot be replaced, as well as the representatives of the Reformation, who fought against tradition and the dictatorship of the Church for the right of free Christians to find God in their own souls, claimed the support of Augustinian authority. He is regarded as the father of orthodoxy and at the same time a precursor of the reform. Wycliffe and Huss referred to him, and Luther regarded him as the lodestar of the purified Christian faith. The protestant doctrine of the pre-eminence of faith over good works, of grace over reason, is basically an Augustinian doctrine.

In the great clash of Jansenists and Jesuits, in which one faction fought for the idea of predestination, the other for the principle of free will, both sides laid claim to the support of St Augustine's authority.

To justify its persecution of heretical dissenters, the Inquisition referred to Augustine's stand against the Donatists, and the later protagonists of the freedom of conscience drew their main arguments likewise from Augustinian writings.

The religious fervor of the Baroque derived its inspiration from the religious pathos of Augustine. He was the prototype of its passionate devotion, and the artists of this age liked to adorn their altars and pillars with his figure symbolically represented as a man holding in his right hand his flaming heart.

It is not at all difficult to trace the principles of Cartesian rationalism in Augustine's works. The famous axiom of Descartes, the founder of modern philosophy, '*Cogito ergo sum*,' 'I think, therefore I am,' was anticipated by Augustine in his *Confessions* as well as *The City of God*. Spinoza, whose philosophy was a continuation of that of Descartes, walked likewise in the footsteps of St Augustine. He too regarded self-knowledge as the first stage in man's knowledge of God and praised this truth as the key to perfect bliss. His statement, "the finite and the infinite are one in God," is not only characteristically Spinozistic, it is Augustinian as well.

If Augustine's influence is traceable in the works of practically all great philosophers of modern times, it is particularly apparent in the case of the so-called romantic school of philosophy. Pascal, the great initiator of this trend in the seventeenth century owed

his development to a large extent to the precedent of St Augustine. As a celebrated prodigy in mathematics, he suddenly turned his back on this science, broke off his social ties, abandoned the prospect of an extremely profitable marriage, and withdrew to the abbey of Port Royal where he led a life of renunciation deeply absorbed in the study of Augustine's works. The undeniable greatness of his *Pensées* is not affected by the fact that they are often mere variations of a theme by Augustine.

The romantic philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries went consciously back to the church father of the fourth century. This is strikingly apparent in the case of the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard and the Frenchman Malebranche. Cardinal Newman, finally, who taught that God is immanent in the human soul, has justly been referred to as "*Augustinus redivivus*."

With the exception of Plato, no other thinker has exerted as varied and fertile an influence on Western thought as Augustine. His thought, his deductions and conclusions were the destiny of European civilization. They are alive today.

He started out as a reckless ne'er-do-well of Tagaste.

SAINT FRANCIS

FRANCIS *the Saint of Love*

AFTER A LONG STRUGGLE against the autocracy of the German kings, the popes won the upper hand in the eleventh century and were about to establish their hegemony over and beyond all national boundaries. Strengthened within by monastic reforms, the Church entered upon an era of greatness and power.

At this time the prophet Elizabeth of Schonau lived in her cell on the Upper Rhine. Deeply devoted to the church, she was at times overcome by a supernatural force which took her away from everyday life into the realm of ecstatic visions. Then she saw things that formed a scornful contrast to everything she had known, to the world around her, even to the triumphant church. She saw the essence and the destiny of her age, and the visions she beheld were visions of evil. In horror and fright she tried to rebel and endeavored to forget. But the visions came in the guise of commands. An angel, terrifying in his great beauty, appeared to her and said in the name of the Lord: "You have been called to reveal what lies hidden. Call out with a loud voice, call out into the world. Woe! Woe! The whole world lies in darkness. The vineyard of the Lord is barren. There is no one to till it. The Lord has sent His workmen but they are idle. The head of the church is ill and its limbs are dead." The power of this vision permitted no resistance. And Elizabeth became like unto the prophets of the Old Testament and was a humble tool obeying the will on high which directs it.

The worldly triumph of the church, which began in the eleventh century, was consummated in the twelfth. The Swabian emperor Frederick Barbarossa lost the imperial sovereignty over Italy, and the struggle between church and empire approached its final phase. Since the time of the Roman emperors there had been no power of world-wide sway comparable to the church at this time. A wave of religious enthusiasm swept over the occident. Powerful armies of the faith stood up. It was the time of the crusades.

In her convent of Rupertsberg near Bingen St. Hildegard, the abbess, was favored with divine revelations. Because of her inspired knowledge of the soul of man and the laws of nature she was honored by high and low alike, and popes and princes, scholars and beggars came to seek her advice. She was a faithful daughter of the church, but her visions made her the mouthpiece of dreadful accusations. She saw the triumphs of Christianity as bloody comets of war which spread the seeds of disaster and left the earth in darkness. She saw that the struggle of the church for world domination was treachery against the Lord, was the downfall of mankind. She saw that both emperor and pope were the product of this ruin and strove in turn to perpetuate it. Like her prophetic precursor of Schonau, St. Hildegard too was reluctant to proclaim what she saw. But then a vision of great brilliance came over her and a voice from heaven spoke through its light. "Oh human weakness! Ashes of ashes! Frailty of frailty! Speak and write what you see and hear! And write it not as it pleases you and the like of you, but write it after the will of Him who knows all and orders all in the hidden depths of His secret counsel."

The visions stayed with the abbess of Rupertsberg. They accompanied her in her daily life, they constituted a second life which had its home in heaven. More and more often the visions broke through the barriers of time, penetrated the future and revealed in mighty prophecies the shape of things to come. "*Scia vias!* Know the ways!" Through the dark night of ruin a star blazed forth to comfort and encourage the scattered Christians. Like the prophets of old who had foreseen the coming of the Redeemer, St. Hildegard saw a future salvation in glowing symbols. A new race of God will be born. Its men will be enlightened from above. And the promise of the prophet Joel will be fulfilled. For the spirit of God will again descend among men. The time of dis-

grace will be over, and the earth will rejoice with all its trees and beasts and birds, and a boy will lead them in jubilation, a boy without knowledge of harm who will play near a nest of vipers. A road will lead to him which the Lord will build for His people. He will not be possessed of beauty and force which the world can admire, but he will be poor and destitute like a withered reed, and love and humility will gird his loins. His hut will be a house of prayer for all nations, and he and his friends will go out and mark with the sign of the cross the forehead of those who live in innocence.

Confused by the abundance of her visions, St. Hildegard was helpless and did not know how she might proclaim all that had been revealed to her. But the voice spoke again through a vision of light: "Because you are timid and not wont to speak, do not speak and write after the fashion of men but through the gift which divine grace has given you. You shall proclaim it as you have heard and seen it in the miracles of God."

Then Hildegard obeyed the command of God and set out to write. "I am but the trumpeter," she began, "and pass on the sound which the trumpeter calls out into me."

The time for which she proclaimed what she had been told, heard her but did not understand. The church was enmeshed in its strategy of world domination. It waged war upon war, and those who had turned their backs on the world, lived secluded in the cells of their monastic fortresses.

The time which came after St. Hildegard's time brought the message of her visions—ever more clearly, ever more sharply—out into the light of fulfilled reality. The seed which the comets of war had sowed began to sprout up, and the harvest was hunger and pestilence and death. The crusades which had been conceived as missions of faith wound up as expeditions of conquest. The church which had gone out and had conquered the world was shaken within to the foundations of its faith. The sects of the Albigenses, Cathari, and Waldenses seceded in the endeavor to build, outside the church, a more genuine form of Christianity, which would rest again on the principles of the apostles. The church could try to eradicate the heretics by inquisition and bloody wars—the conviction that poverty and renunciation are the road to Christ had already affected the laity and began to undermine the absolute power of the church.

The growing restiveness of the Christian world assumed before long the shape of an apocalyptic fear of the imminence of the end of the world and, at the same time, of hope and longing for salvation and the coming of the kingdom of the Redeemer

This new spiritual trend cast its spell also over the Cistercian abbot Joachim da Celina in his monastery of San Giovanni at Fiore in Calabria. He too perceived the fate of the age in prophetic visions. In cosmic symbols he saw the decline of the old order and the coming of the new, which would be founded by the poor and grow up in opposition to worldly Christianity. What was revealed to him, he put down in his prophetic writings. He lived and wrote toward the end of the twelfth century. The time, which St Hildegard had proclaimed, was not far off, and the language of Joachim of Floris is pervaded by the excitement of an imminent event, of prophetic assurance and trust in the "redeeming realm of the Holy Ghost." His gospel of poverty is the gospel of a herald, a John the Baptist. His words are the words of a messenger who announces the arrival of his master. "I am but the voice that calls you so that you may be prepared for the reception of him who will come after me. And he is coming." In Joachim's vision the one whose coming he announced assumed the tangible shape of a corporeal person, and when later on St Francis of Assisi appeared, he became for many the one of whom Joachim had spoken. When the Cistercian abbot died in 1202 at Fiore, Francis, a youth of twenty-two, was about to pass the threshold of his mission.

In him the prophetic promises were fulfilled. In him the gospel of Christ came to life and was lived on earth. The stern Christian doctrine of the Middle Ages was turned into a message of good cheer. The earth rejoiced at his coming, and the stars, the trees, the beasts and the birds chimed in with the choir of jubilation.

Love was the force that brought about such changes in time and world. Love was the essence of Francis' life. He lived it in all he did and proclaimed it in all his words. It gave him power beyond the most powerful popes, devotion beyond the devoutest monks, wisdom beyond the most learned doctors, it made him the most cheerful among the cheerful, the most knightly of all knights and the most immortal among all troubadours. It gave him power, which time could not impair, wisdom, which no later doctrine could qualify or expand, devotion, which no one after him could

equal, cheerfulness which jubilates even today, chivalry of imperishable grandeur, and the "Song of the Sun" of this "troubadour of God" will radiate joy as long as the sun continues to shine in the sky. All the beauty, all the greatness ever thought of, dreamed about, longed for by men, is surpassed by the lived and living beauty and greatness of this life.

The brief span of twenty-four years, which encompass the life in sainthood of Francis of Assisi, ~~may be considered the most glorious years~~ in the history of the church. They are of greater weight and importance than the sum of all its other claims to fame. They were years of human fulfillment, truer and fuller than any in other human lives before or after. For in Francis' earthly existence one common bond of joy dissolved all contrasts and all contradictions. The world within and the world without, man and nature, thought and action, humility and power, renunciation and abundance, they all were made to unite. The gulf between man and God was bridged. The time of innocence preceding the Fall had been recovered. Love had recovered it. The same love, which had made of Jesus of Nazareth the mediator between God and man, had been reborn in Francis, had once more assumed the shape of man, and had made of Francis the mediator between Christ and His faithful.

Martyrs have given their blood to bear witness to the truth of the gospel, learned doctors of the church have demonstrated its validity through cogent deductions, ascetics have relinquished all earthly goods to live wholly in the spirit of the gospel. But in St. Francis a lover heard the message of love of Christ the Redeemer and lived in its spirit through the spirit of love. The pious chroniclers of the *liber confirmatum* adduced facts and legends to work out the parallel between the lives of St. Francis and Christ, but they are not the only ones whom Francis of Assisi impressed as the most Christlike of all the saints. Anyone imbued with the true spirit of Christ's life and teachings will visualize St. Francis at the side of the Nazarene. For what Jesus taught and what His life exemplifies to men, was this: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself—Francis' *imitatio Christi* was the fulfillment of this command.

Nine hundred years before, St. Anthony had praised love as the final fulfillment of all faith in God. For Anthony this knowledge had represented the crowning yield of almost a hundred years of

devout living, transfigured love was the concluding harmony in the life of a 'saintly patriarch' For St. Francis devotion and piety had their *beginning* in love, love was the opening chord of a hymn of youth.

At first it was but a blind urge. Whatever presented itself became its object. St. Francis' first love was devoted to the joys of the world, its first expression was foolish exuberance. Yet the unfermented enthusiasm of his youthful love of life and the transfigured calm of his sainted love of God were generated by the same innate force. A hue of divine grandeur shows through the foolishness of his early love of life, and an undertone of transfigured foolishness continues to pervade the worshipful love of the later saint. A fool in Christ, that is St. Francis in the circle of saints. The thoughtless years of playful joy, the sublime years of matured sainthood, both were glorified by the same beauty. All the foolishness and wisdom, all the pain and all the joy which in this life appear to blindfold common sense as quite devoid of rhyme or reason, are given by love the richness of rhyme and the keenness of meaning of the most perfect lyric of the troubadours' art. God made St. Francis in an hour of joy. God is the poet who wrote this life.

Francis was born in the year 1182 a budding Renaissance began to emerge from the medieval past. He saw the light in the little Umbrian town of Assisi cities and towns were beginning to differentiate themselves as autonomous communities from forts and castles, farms and cloisters. His father was the Italian merchant Pietro Bernardone guilds and corporations, but recently established, began to lend substance to the social pride of traders and merchants, whose acquired wealth was ready to compete with the inherited holdings of the landed nobility. The crusades brought new fabrics of wool and silk to European markets, and the draper Bernardone accumulated a considerable fortune in a very short time. Francis' mother, Donna Pica, had all the cheerful ease, the lighthearted charm of her race. When Pietro Bernardone had found Donna Pica on one of his frequent trips through the Provence, he had become enamored not only of her person but also of her language, of the refinement of her manners, and of everything characteristic of southern France. The genius of the Provence determined the edu-

cation of Bernardone's first-born son. His Christian name was really Giovanni, but his Italian playmates called him Francesco because his language and whole demeanor impressed them as distinctly French. This nickname stayed with him. It has been consecrated by the history of the saints.

After Francis had attended the school of the Benedictine monks at Assisi, his father took him into his shop as his assistant. The crusaders had brought back from the Orient not only wealth and all kinds of merchandise but also new methods of trade—bookkeeping with assets and debits, commercial arithmetic, new monetary units and systems of weighing and measuring. Francis, with his quick grasp, felt soon at home in all these newfangled intricacies. But he brought with him into his father's shop still another valuable gift—the pleasant charm of southern France which he had inherited from his mother. He was never at a loss for a friendly remark, a winning smile, a cheerful joke.

There was nothing about the merchant's business at the time that could remind one of the hurried bustle of modern department stores. The people entering the shop stayed often for hours and expected to be asked and informed about everything under the sun. Young Francis liked to talk, there was nothing that did not interest him, he was always friendly, always in the mood for an amusing story, and soon he proved to be an extremely profitable acquisition for his father's business. He attracted new customers, and those who had entered the shop to buy a mere trifle, left often, after a long and delightful conversation, with a heavy load of materials which they had somehow felt urged to purchase in exchange for a neat little pile of coins. Old Pietro was a skilled business man, but never had he managed to take in as much as now with his son working as his clerk.

To be a perfect man of affairs, Francis lacked but one essential trait—thrift. "He was skilled in the art of making money," writes one of his earliest biographers, Thomas of Celano, "but also rash and ready to spend it again." It was his love of life that made him extravagant. Money was worth to him only what the joys and beauties were worth that could be exchanged for it. Yet from the beginning, when his extravagance was still completely absorbed in worldly concerns, there was in it already an element which in a spiritualized form was destined to become a basic trait of his saint-

hood. Already the happy-go-lucky merchant's son knew of no greater delight in life than that of giving and regaling, to be joyful meant to him to give joy to others

His favorite pastime were merrily festive parties, but it was always he who made the host and treated his friends with lavish liberality to the rarest and costliest delicacies, to the finest wines that could be had. But not only his generosity made him the uncontested leader of Assisi's gilded youth. His whole nature predestined him for it.

He was not exactly impressive-looking. He was small and very thin. His oval face with a low forehead, black eyes and narrow lips was not ugly but certainly not beautiful either. He described his portrait without flattery as he had seen it in the mirror of a dream in which he appeared as a little black hen. "Look at me well," he said making fun of himself, "I am that hen, small of stature and black." In his outer appearance he differed rather unfavorably from his better-looking friends, but all of them, even the noblest, were easily put in the shade by him through the graceful charm which emanated from his person. His little black eyes were filled to the brim with sparkling vitality, his smile was captivating through its ever-present friendliness, his voice was melodious and pleasant and his cheerfulness contagious. In conversation he had a quick and ready repartee, and with his jokes and clever jests he was as lavish as with his coins. No one knew more songs and stories than he. "The little black hen" was the admired ideal of his friends and of the prettiest girls and women in town.

Under all sorts of merry ceremonies the enthusiastic circle of his friends crowned him Assisi's lord of wags and king of the banquet. Night after night he occupied his throne at the end of the table, surrounded by merry boonfellows, wielding a floral staff as his royal scepter, directing the conversation, leading in song, telling stories of love and heroes, and seeing to it that the glasses were never empty.

And when the banquet was over, the jolly company would not disband. Each one had his lute or his viol. Torches were ready. And the feast continued as a procession of minstrels. Francis the troubadour! Specifically for this purpose he had a pair of bicolored trousers, for that was the fashion which the great troubadours of France had set. And thus he marched on, at the head of his group,

through the steep and narrow streets of Assisi, over dreamy piazzas, disturbing the good burghers in their sleep with jolly songs and the bright flicker of torches.

These years of pleasure and rejoicing in the life of the rich merchant's son of Assisi coincided with years of pleasure and rejoicing in a new and youthful conception of worldly enjoyment of life. The charm of Francis' cheerfulness was borne by the genius of the world-loving troubadours of his time. Like everything else that enriched life in the course of this century, the art of the troubadours had spread from France. Starting from France it conquered the world.

Every country has its astral hour when it can lavish its abundance on the world and can impress its stamp upon it. Once it was Egypt, then Greece and Rome, then Holland, England, or Germany. In the twelfth century it was France. From Burgundy in France spread a new spirit of Christian devotion, the reform of monasticism. French art built up the new style of architecture, the domes and arches reaching up to heaven. Paris contributed the new form of Christian learning, scholastic thought, and at the same time the direct opposite of all ecclesiastic trends, the *gaia sciencia* or "joyous science" of worldly orientation.

Love of music, love of song, had till then been confined to the pious hymns of the church. In the Provence, in southern France, the first worldly song of love of modern Christian times was sung and imparted its rhythms and its melodiousness to the youthful exuberance of a new conception of the joy of life. The first troubadours and the itinerant minstrels, who carried their songs out into the world, came from southern France.

The minstrels and troubadours, who traveled from court of love to court of love, brought the new art also to Italy. Francis' song-loving soul fell straightway under its spell, for there was nothing better suited to give expression to his love of world and love of life than the tunes of the troubadours from France. They celebrated worldly love, the beauty of women, the virtues of knighthood, unswerving loyalty, and self-sacrificing devotion, they sang the song which his soul had harbored as an inborn dream.

When later on the merchant's son of Assisi turned into a saint, the troubadour he had been in his youth had merely to accept a

new object of his cult. God took the place of the world, virtues of sacred knighthood replaced the chivalry of men, and heavenly sacrifice assumed the position of earthly hospitality. But love as love, its passionate drive, its lofty impulse, and its sweet melodiousness survived. The little Frenchman of worldly cheer, the troubadour of the earth, became the troubadour of God, the little Frenchman of heavenly cheer.

And charity too, which was to adorn the later life of Francis the saint, came to the fore quite early in his younger years. The merry boon companion who wished to see all his friends in high spirits, the lover whose love encompassed the entire world, the generous giver for whom money was but a means to attain happiness for himself and others, gave freely and lavishly to the poor and ailing.

Father Bernardone's shop was the richest and most fashionable draper's shop of Assisi. When he opened his stall on important market-days, it surpassed all others with its rich assortment of fabrics. Wealthy noblemen and even dealers from neighboring towns, who were looking for an especially fine velvet, for precious lace or rare brocades, were wont to see old Bernardone first.

Next to his commercial skill, Pietro Bernardone owed his wealth to his thrift. When now this sober businessman observed how his son Francis threw out his good money in careless carousing or handed it over to idle beggars, he often could not help wondering about the extravagance of his son's style of life. His paternal pride succeeded in calming him for a while. For he had risen from lowly beginnings, and it flattered him that his son outdid all the young noblemen of Assisi, that he was the uncontested leader of the younger set, that he was celebrated as the king of their parties, wore the most precious clothes, and surpassed even the richest in liberal generosity. When Bernardone learned that a certain notorious beggar was in the habit of taking off his tattered coat whenever he met young Francis and of spreading it reverently as a sort of festive rug before the "benefactor of the beggars," he could not deny that this pleased his heart more than it vexed him to observe that his son was wastefully distributing his good money among the beggars.

One market day, when old Bernardone was just busy inside his shop, Francis was alone in charge of the stall and got involved in an animated conversation with a rich customer who wanted to pur-

chase whole bales of precious velvets and brocades. At that moment a poor man approached Francis asking a charity of him. But Francis was so absorbed in the problems of his sale that he paid no attention to him. Later, when the deal was concluded so that he could look around for the beggar, he was nowhere to be seen.

For a moment Francis was deeply distressed, for it seemed to him that his negligence was a terrible sin. Then he hastened away, left the stall with bales of merchandise and an unguarded cashbox on the open market place and tried to locate the beggar. He ran across the square and up and down the narrow, winding streets of Assisi, asking everyone he met whether he had seen a beggar of such and such appearance. The market people and passersby thought that he was trying to catch up with a thief. Quite out of breath Francis came thus to the city gate where he finally found his beggar. He gave him all the money he had with him and also his coat. The beggar was quite overwhelmed, but before he had found time to come to and say thank you, Francis was off again, with a relieved conscience, on his way back to his father's stall.

Up to this time Francis had never thought about misery and destitution. In giving alms he had merely indulged his instinctive generosity. Now for the first time the spirit of true charity awoke in him. It was also the first time that he came into a serious conflict with his father.

While Francis had been away looking for the beggar, Pietro Bernardone had gone back to the piazza where he had found his stall and all his precious bales deserted and unguarded. After a while his son came strolling along across the square. When he called him to account for his negligence and the only explanation he could get out of him was that he had followed a beggar whose request for alms he had left unheeded, the old man lost his temper. He just could not understand that his son had left his valuable fabrics for the sake of a beggar and poured forth a deluge of oaths and abuses over poor Francis' head.

Shortly after Francis had aroused his father's anger, a war broke out in which the little town of Assisi was involved. At that time wars were an almost normal part of life. They were a necessary consequence of the trends of expansion which animated the new economic life, borne by the rising middle class, and the struggle for power of church and empire, princes and cities. At one mo-

ment the pope and the emperor were fighting for this or that strip of land, then again the burghers tried to wrest new privileges from their noble lords, or the towns and cities contested each other's supremacy. Every few years it happened that the merchants had to leave their stalls to mount the barricades, that the merry strains of the troubadours were drowned out by the noisy clatter of arms, that festive torch-light processions were replaced by warlike marches to the fields of battle, and that exuberant youths in the prime of life were called to arms by the tocsin of war to give their lives for church or crown, for liege lord's honor or burgher's pride.

Over Francis' earliest childhood wars had cast their shadow, and he was barely seventeen years old, when the people of Assisi, encouraged by the pope, stormed the imperial castle on top of Sasso Rosso, laid it in ruins and, having cast off the yoke of the German intruders, erected a mighty wall around their city. The nobility and the burghers worked smoothly together on this occasion, and young Francis too went out with trowel, mortar, and sand to help the townsmen build their ramparts. The share which the burghers of Assisi had had in the fortification of their town, made them aware, for the first time, of their strength and importance, and their awakening civic pride was one of the factors leading to the outbreak of new hostilities.

No sooner had the foreign tyrants been driven away, than the burghers took up arms again to cast off the yoke of their tyrants at home, of liege lords and landed aristocracy. What began as an uprising of the citizens of Assisi, ended in 1202 as a war against the superior forces of the neighboring town of Perugia, for the lords of Assisi had asked the citizens of Perugia for help and these were only too glad to come, for they hoped to emerge from the struggle as masters over the town of Assisi.

For a while there could be no banquets. Francis was twenty-two and as enthusiastic about the war as all the other young men in town. He got ready to move out into the field at the head of a group of lancers. Fighting for burgher's rights and freedom, he was going to gather his first laurels. Fate had decided differently. The struggle ended in favor of Perugia, and Francis and his men were taken prisoner as soon as they had reached the bridge of San Giovanni on the plain halfway between the two towns. But this

bit of martial bad luck did not affect his spirits in any way. He preserved his cheerfulness even as a prisoner of war. He remained what he had always been, the king of the banquet,—even though the fare was the wretched fare of prisoners—a jester and troubadour, all through this time of trials and tribulations. After one year, Perugia and Assisi made peace. Francis returned home and took up again his life of good cheer as of old.

A first change came over Francis through an illness which befell him shortly after his return. It tore him out of his accustomed routine and kept him for weeks in a confused delirium of fever and pain. What aroused him from this semiconscious state to fully wakeful consciousness, was the sun shining through the window onto his sickbed. His first conscious look, his first smile of recognition were addressed to the sun. But when it left the room again, Francis fell back into the night of torture of delirious dreams and awoke from it only when the rays of the sun touched again his pale face and emaciated hands. Day after day his waking hours were now gauged to the coming and going of the sun. And the sun, which had aroused him from the lethargic state of his long weeks of illness, was also his guide back into his accustomed life. His mother, his father, his friends, they all had often been in his sick-room, but he had not noticed their presence. Now only, when the sun had taught him again to see, did he recognize them: they were standing in the sun. They had tried time and again to talk to him, to ask him questions about this and about that. He had not perceived their voices. Now only, when they were speaking in the sun, did he hear what they were saying. But when the sun disappeared, his father and mother disappeared too, and his friends, and all their voices. His room was again the bottomless abyss of painful dreams.

The sun, which came to him day after day, was also the one thing that helped him to move his stiffened limbs. The longing expectation to see it come up in the morning and the fear to lose sight of it sooner than necessary when it went down, gave him the strength to overcome the heavy torpor of his ailing body and to sit up for a time in his sickbed.

His growing attachment to the sun enabled him finally to get up and move about. His first steps as a convalescent took him to the

window at night, to follow the sun when it had left his room and moved through the narrow streets of Assisi on its way into the night, in the morning, to welcome it when it rose from the gray of dawn and started on its daily course through the sky. A lover got up from his bed and went to the window, every morning and every night, day upon day, to bid his beloved welcome and farewell, and without her his life was but pain and darkness.

As he looked out through the window, he saw again the things of the world outside his sickroom. He saw the sky and the earth over which the sun moved, the little street in front of his window and the horizon, the houses of the neighbors and the distant hills over which the sun poured its radiant light. And his eyes were vividly alert and saw all the things of the world out there, even the smallest. And he began to love them all, he loved them with a yearning heart, for the hills and the streets and everything he saw were heralds of the sun, proclaiming its arrival and witnessing its departure. More and more often in the course of his days he went to the window and stood there as though in a trance and saw that all things, like himself, were living by the rays of the sun and basking their lives in its light. Then he saw the entire world—men and animals and things—as one great community of love, singing the praises of the sun.

His longing for the sun grew from day to day. Its urge became ever more irresistible. One morning he asked his mother for his coat and hat, for he wanted to go out and follow the lure of the sun.

He was still weak, and his nights were still haunted by feverish dreams. But his lover's joy, which the sun had given back to him, lent him the strength to leave the house and walk out into the streets. He still needed the support of his staff, but that was the last tie connecting him with his illness. He had promised his mother to go only to the end of the street, and although it seemed to him that he was now strong enough to follow the sun and go on and on till he might reach the horizon, he kept his promise and turned back. He did not want to distress his mother when his own heart was full of rejoicing and bliss.

The following day he went to the gates of the town, and before long he could leave the walls of Assisi behind and extend his walks for longer and longer hours. Often he left home in the morning

and returned only at sundown. For outside the city walls, where the vineyards were and the olive groves, he was really overcome by the greatest and most genuine bliss. Here there was nothing that could cast a shadow over the sun and force it back into corners and narrow nooks. Here it spread its light over all things, every blade of grass turned up toward it, every fruit was its work, and every bird sang its praises. And Francis stood there, surrounded by vines and blades of grass, by hills and birds and joined them in their jubilation. His heart sang, and he swung his staff and thrust it far out into the fields.

In a short time Francis had recovered so far that he could take up again the routine of his former life. As of old he spent his days again behind the counter in his father's shop and at night he joined again the circle of his old friends. But the happy-go-lucky, self-forgetful joy of former times was somehow difficult to retrieve. It was as though the exuberant joy of his walks in the days of his convalescence had given him a promise of bliss which everyday life could not fulfill. He spent whole nights drinking with his friends, but the blissful unbending of heart and soul and mind and body, which had come over him out in the fields, in his drunkenness with the light of the sun, refused to answer his call. He was the king of the banquet and sat at the festively lighted table and led his friends, late at night, in torch-light processions through the streets of Assisi, but since he had seen, out in the hills, how the whole world was dissolved in the light of the sun, all the lights of candles and torches which brighten the nights of merriment, appeared to his eyes as dim and fallow. The joy that had been blazing in his heart was dead. And when he sang the old songs, their melodies sounded hollow in his ears, for he had heard the song of joy of creation out in the fields. Even his generosity, his lavish giving of alms, afforded him no satisfaction, for in happy hours on sunny hills he had experienced the bliss of giving away his entire self.

The memory of happy hours which had been his during the days of his convalescence thwarted his quest for carefree contentment. And every day his restiveness grew, he felt haunted by an indistinct longing for a higher form of bliss.

Just at the time when Francis experienced this disillusionment about his accustomed life and was seized by such deep and painful

yearning for something new, the old struggle for power between the German emperors and the popes broke out again and touched off the war which the French knight Walter of Brienne waged in the name of the pope against the German general Markwald. The bone of contention was the Sicilian crown which was claimed by both Brienne and Markwald. But this fight about the Sicilian crown was to become a decisive factor in the Italian struggle against German hegemony in general. All the towns and all the peoples that were ready to rebel against the German invaders took part in this war and saw in Brienne, who had beaten the Germans more than once, the liberator of their own country. Together with a great many other Italian towns, Assisi too was filled with warlike ardor. A well-known nobleman of the city gathered together a group of volunteers to lead them into the field.

Francis too was carried away by the general enthusiasm. Somehow he felt that the war might help him to find the new life for which he was longing. A dream he had at this time confirmed his decision to go to war. He was standing in his father's shop. It was the same shop which he knew so well, but the spatial ambiguity which is so often characteristic of dreams, presented it at the same time as the stately hall of an unknown palace. The shelves were not filled with bales of cloth but up to the ceiling with shining shields and helmets, with polished spears and swords. And all of them were marked with the sign of the cross. As he stood there, not knowing what he should make of it all, he heard a voice which said "All this shall belong to you and your warriors."

Filled with the hope of honor and fame, which his dream seemed to promise him, he mounted his horse the following morning and rode away in the glory of his rich accoutrements. At the city gate he turned around and called out to his friends accompanying him "I shall come back a great knight."

He took the road toward Spoleto from where the Flaminian Way led to Rome and further to Apulia in the south. At Spoleto, however, an unexpected relapse of his old illness forced him to interrupt his journey. He spent a whole night in a delirium of feverish dreams. And then, in this state between sleep and wakefulness, between dream and reality, he heard the same voice which had admonished him in Assisi to depart, but now it sounded much more insistent as it said, "You have misunderstood the apparition in As-

sisì. Go back to your native town. There it will be made known to you what you shall do."

In the morning the fever relented and Francis thought that the voice he had heard during the night was only a feverish delusion of his brain. His hope for a career of knightly glory was too strong, and the shame of returning empty-handed after the confident pride of his farewell remarks, seemed quite unbearable. So he put on his knightly armor and mounted his horse, for he had decided to continue on his way to Apulia.

When he stopped his horse after a long and wearisome ride, he found himself at the city gates of Assisi. He could not explain why he had, against his decision, obeyed the voice of his feverish dreams, why, although he had meant to start out for Apulia, he had taken the opposite direction back to Assisi, where humiliation, scorn, and laughter awaited him instead of the fame which the distant fields of battle promised. Obeying an inexplicable urge he rode back into the city, accompanied by curious looks and mocking remarks on the part of those whom he had told, at the time of his departure, that he would come back as a great knight. And although he felt himself that his explanation did not sound very convincing, he yet obeyed the voice of his feverish dreams and said that he was destined to achieve great things at home.

Often, in the ensuing weeks and months, it seemed to him again that it was after all a feverish delusion which he permitted to lead him astray, but the words, "At home it will be made known to you what you shall do," proved in the end more powerful than daily disappointments, idle waiting, and the apparent hopelessness of his situation. Somehow he could not escape the force that made him go on although his whole life was thrown out of equilibrium by it. At first he lived along in a state of indifference and absent-minded distraction, but in course of time the awareness of his condition affected him ever more painfully and aroused in him the desire to be left alone, for he felt vaguely that that might be the way in which the task, to which the voice in his dreams had been alluding, would be revealed to him. But the expected result did not come about, and finally he gave in to the insistent requests of his friends and decided to participate again in their nightly gatherings.

For the first time after all these months Francis arranged again one of his great banquets, and the friends celebrated the return of

their king in speeches of gratitude and praise. One goblet after another was emptied to his health. But when the hilarity of the party had reached its climax, Francis suddenly rose from the table. His friends took their viols and lutes and marched—as was their wont—shouting and singing through the dark streets of Assisi. Francis tried to join in, but it was as though his voice were held back by a lump in his throat, and as soon as he possibly could, he stayed behind. His friends did not immediately notice the absence of their leader, but when after a while they did notice it, one of them went back to look for him. He found him in one of the steep and narrow little streets of Assisi. There he was, all by himself, vacantly staring into empty space.

"Hey there, what are you dreaming about?" shouted his friend. And trying to make a joke, he added, "I suppose you are thinking of marriage." Francis looked at him for a moment in deep silence, and then, not only to his friend's amazement but also to his own, he said, "You are right. I intend to be married, but to a lady purer and more lovely than you have ever seen. Her name is Lady Poverty."

This answer came over his lips without his consent. It had usurped power over his will, for he had not thought of saying what he said. He had always enjoyed giving to the poor and helping them to forget their misery, but the thought of exchanging his position of a man who can give for that of one who must accept, the thought of no longer being able to play the part of a generous benefactor but of having to join instead the ranks of the needy and poor, such a complete reversal had never entered his mind. And yet he felt as though no other decision were possible but to choose poverty as an inseparable companion for the rest of his life.

The answer which he had involuntarily given to the jesting query of his friend, was soon to become the contents of his life. Before long he courted Lady Poverty with passionate love and perseverance as others court a coveted woman. He pledged eternal truthfulness to her and kept his promise unto death.

A complete break with his past life, which came about immediately after this night, was the first preparation for his strange wedding. Francis withdrew from everything and strove in solitude to become worthy of receiving Lady Poverty. He hid in a deserted

cave which he had discovered on one of his solitary walks, for there he felt closest to the beloved.

✓ One day, when he was once again obeying the call of his yearning impatience and rode in the direction of his secluded cave, he saw at some distance a leper. At the time leprosy, which the crusaders had brought back as a curse from their expeditions of plunder and adventure, was the most generally feared and abhorred of all diseases. The mere sight of a leprosy-eaten individual, that symbol of all the misery and frailty of humankind, inspired horror and disgust. Barred from all contact with human society, the lepers had to live outside the cities and towns in specially built huts. There, in their so-called lazaret houses, they lived all by themselves and depended upon the charity of the members of the hospital order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem, who cared for them in a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice. They had to wear special clothes which made it possible to recognize them at a great distance. Everybody avoided the districts in which the lepers had their huts and even the roads over which they had walked. Francis too shared this fear and disgust.

When he saw the approaching leper, he gave his horse the spurs to escape the horrible encounter. But then, as though some other hand had taken the bridle away from him, he rode on, straightway along the path on which the leper was coming toward him. Now he could distinguish all the terrifying deformities of the man who was dragging himself forward on his crutches. He could see that his lips were eaten away, that a festering hole was all that was left of his nose. Francis could hardly stay in the saddle. A dreadful odor of decay took his breath away. He felt sick, but he kept on riding toward the terrible apparition. When he had reached him, he sprang out of the saddle and gave the leper all the money he had with him. The hand that took his alms was like one big open boil. The fingers were gone and the palm which was full of sores could barely receive the charitable offering. Francis was overcome with horror and fright. He wanted to turn away! He wanted to turn away but—he bent his face over the leper's hand and kissed it. Then he looked up. He felt neither disgust nor fear, but a sense of relief came over him and of such happiness as he had never known before. He mounted his horse to ride on toward his cave.

After a few moments he turned around to wave farewell to the leper. The road was deserted. The leper had disappeared. . .

What he had done, Francis was unable to account for, but the effect which the kiss on the leper's hand produced was clear. From now on no sensation of horror or disgust separated him from the misery of mankind. Through that kiss he had recognized the leper as his brother, and a brother of lepers he was to remain for ever.

The following day he hastened to the district which was shunned by all and knocked at the door whose threshold no one crossed. The rich brother came with gifts to help the poor brothers. He distributed what he had brought and went to the prior of the Lazarists and asked for permission to care for the lepers. He knew about an elixir which even the most charitable had never brought to this place—the elixir of joy.

Henceforth he came every day, and every day he brought new gifts and new joys. And the leprosy-eaten lips of the miserable inmates of the leper house were the first to call him by the name which was to remain his for all times—St. Francis.

Through his work for the lepers Francis found his way to Christ. What happened to him was not unlike the experience of St. Martyrius as told in his legend.

Once upon a time St. Martyrius met a leper on his road. The leper could not move for he suffered great pains. Martyrius wrapped him in his cloak and meant to take him to his cell. But on the way the leper changed under his hands into Jesus, who ascended to heaven, blessing Martyrius and saying to him: "You were not ashamed of me on earth. I shall not be ashamed of you in heaven."

While Francis was serving the lepers in humbleness and sacrifice, he recognized that he was serving the Lord Jesus Christ. For it was the Lord who met a leper on His way to Capernaum and, touching him and healing him through His love, set up the law of charity to the wretched and the poor and illustrated the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar.

So far Francis had given no more thought to the teachings of Christ than other Christians living like him in the world and for the world. Seized by a sudden impulse, he kissed a leper, and this kiss made him a brother of the most miserable outcasts, it made

him practice charity toward them and, like the Lazarists, enter the service of Christ

As the teachings of Christ grew clearer to him through his work at the lazar house, he recognized more and more clearly too that he had been serving Christ, that through his deeds he had been in Christ's employ, long before he had known about it himself. Feeding and clothing the poor, he had acted in the spirit of the Master who had said, "What you did to these my lesser brethren, you did unto me" And now he understood also that the voice in his dream at Spoleto had been the Lord's voice and that he had acted as an obedient servant of the Lord when, against his earlier plans, he had returned to Assisi

From this time on he went more and more frequently to the little church of San Damian, in the fields just below Assisi. In all his prayers he repeated the request and waited that the Lord might reveal to him the task of which he had spoken at Spoleto. Then one day it happened that he was kneeling before the crucifix of the old shrine, and deeply absorbed in prayer, he heard a voice. It came down from the crucifix or up from the depth of his soul. It was impossible to say which, for in the selfless absorption of prayer the things within are merged with those without. And the voice said "Francis, do you not see that my house is in ruins? Go and restore it for me"

The house of the Lord of San Damian was a dilapidated little country church, threatening to collapse at any time. In his eagerness to obey, Francis took the command literally and got up to begin immediately to carry it out. The money he had with him would not have been enough to cover the costs of restoration. So he hastened back to his father's shop. Old Pietro Bernardone was away on a business trip, and Francis could not discuss his plan with him. But the order which he had received before the sacred shrine, was an order of the Lord and could not be postponed. Therefore Francis went up to the shelves in his father's shop, took out several bales of costly material, placed them on the back of his horse and rode off to Foligno, where a great fair happened to be held at the time. It did not take him long to find a buyer. He sold his bales and his horse and returned with a considerable sum of money.

The priest of San Damian was delighted with the prospect of seeing his wretched little church put in shape, but he did not feel

certain that the wealthy merchant Bernardone would approve of his son's action and hesitated to accept the gift before Francis' father had given his consent.

The son heard voices, and the father calculated. The son considered the proceeds from the Foligno deal earmarked for the restoration of the dilapidated house of the Lord, but for the father the bales of material were precious merchandise, and the proceeds, which the son had appropriated, were a commercial liability. Francis believed that he had merely obeyed the will of God, but the old merchant Pietro viewed the whole matter as an outrage against law and morality. "Thievery!" he shouted indignantly when he came back and heard what had happened. And when Francis would not heed his father's angry admonitions and refused steadfastly to return the money, old Bernardone's patience finally gave way. "You fool, you thief! I shall teach you!" he shouted, and beside himself with rage, he laid hold of Francis, dragged him into the cellar and locked the door behind him. After a few days, when Francis still showed no signs of repentance, he decided to take sterner measures and allowed the prisoner in his cellar no food beside a little bread and water.

Then an urgent business matter called him away from Assisi. Donna Pica disapproved as much as her husband of Francis' obstinate whim. But she lacked his determined perseverance. She had promised Pietro solemnly to keep Francis in the cellar on bread and water until he thought better of it. But the loving mother forgot her promise the very first day after Pietro's departure, and instead of bread and water she carried all sorts of dainty morsels down into the cellar, for she hoped to succeed through kindness where father Bernardone's harsh commands had failed. But against the "voice" she could not prevail either. "Mother," he replied obstinately to all her remonstrances, "God has ordered me to restore His church. I must obey Him." Donna Pica looked at her son. He was thin and pale. And her motherly love won the upper hand. If the son would not yield, his mother would. She did not lock the door again, and Francis was free to go.

When Bernardone returned, he found that the prisoner in his cellar had departed, and his anger rose to blind fury. Now he saw in his son Francis nothing but a dishonest clerk who had stolen

bales of precious fabrics from his shop, a common thief, a hardened sinner whom one could only deal with in court. That he had begotten him and cared for him throughout all these years as a good father should, was painful enough, but such considerations must not be allowed to shield a mean criminal against due punishment which the law would mete out to him.

The wronged draper went to the courthouse of Assisi. He denounced the fugitive thief and demanded that steps be taken to assure his immediate arrest. The officials were ready to comply with the request of their worthy fellow townsman. Forthwith a messenger was dispatched to summon the accused to appear before the district court. It was not hard to find the fugitive. His eccentricities bound him to a limited area within which he could hide. He was either at the church of San Damian or in one of the near-by caves. The messenger did find his man after a short search but he also found that he was not at all disposed to answer the court's summons. He told the messenger that his case did not belong before the district court. He had done what he had done, in order to obey the voice of God, and therefore he could be called to account only by a canonical court.

The secular authorities saw in this reply merely a hairsplitting technicality, but they did not cherish the thought of a dispute of competence with the episcopal court and felt obliged to their great regret to refer Bernardone with his complaint to their canonical confreres. Bernardone was not at all discouraged by this turn of events. The command, "Thou shalt not steal," was valid before the courts of the church as it was before the courts of the world.

With tense interest the people of Assisi were awaiting the extraordinary event, when father and son—the wealthiest merchant of the town as plaintiff and the former king of banquets, town jester, and troubadour as defendant—would face each other in court. When the time for the trial arrived, the courtroom was filled to the last seat with merchants, knights, clerics and jugglers. But what happened then surpassed the boldest expectations.

The merchant Bernardone, in perfect control of his facial expression, stood motionless like a statue of stone. When his son was brought in, he looked at him with a cold and steady gaze. Bishop Guido asked him to present his case against Francis. In a harsh tone of voice the robbed draper formulated his complaint against

his dishonest assistant With businesslike clarity he described the stolen goods, quoted the exact amount of the loss incurred by his firm and petitioned the court to have his money restored to him and to impose a just penalty on the thief

Then the bishop asked the defendant to present his side of the case Francis was still wearing his costly garments of scarlet velvet The expression of his face was that familiar to all present His appearance was entirely unchanged But what he had to say in defense of his actions seemed indeed strange, if not foolish, to those who had known him as an efficient clerk, a songster and jester about town He talked about "voices" which he had heard and about a task which Christ Himself had assigned to him, and he insisted that he had withdrawn money from his father's shop only in order to make use of it for a higher purpose, to rebuild the ruined house of the Lord Not simply a father and his son who could not understand one another anymore, two worlds obeying different laws stood face to face in clashing immediacy

The bishop held the scales of justice He weighed the motives, the unselfish purpose and the zeal of devotion, against the deed, the unauthorized use of another's property, and he judged accordingly He gave the father what was the father's, but the son, who had trespassed, was acquitted by him because his faith was strong "You intend," said the bishop to Francis, "to serve the Lord, but however worthy your cause may be, it cannot bear fruit if the means you employ are not just The money you have taken away from your father cannot benefit the church Restore it to the rightful owner "

Now the unexpected happened Francis stopped for a moment Then he replied in a clear and firm tone of voice "Lord bishop, not only the money but everything I have of him I will restore to him, even the very clothes he has given me" And before those present could recover from the surprise which his words had wrought, he took off his scarlet garments and the fine linen he wore, and facing the people in a gown of hair, he threw down his clothes at his father's feet and put the money on top. "Hear all of you!" he called out into the tense silence of the courtroom "Hear and understand! Until now I have called Pietro Bernardone my father, but now I wish to say, 'Our Father who are in heaven.' "

The bishop was deeply moved, and walking across the court-

room to young Francis, he put his own cloak around his shoulders, but the merchant Bernardone picked up the money and the clothes from the floor, and without showing any sign of what was going on in his heart and mind, he went out and returned to his shop

The words, in which Francis had expressed his decision to let his heavenly father take the place of his father on earth, surprised him as much as his audience. But what a sudden impulse bade him say, was always decisive in what he did and molded the course of his life. His words had been meant in their literal sense, and literally he obeyed them and lived accordingly. As sudden as his decision was also his change. This very day the son of the merchant Pietro Bernardone of Assisi began his life as the child of the father of all. And all the things in his later years, which may strike one as incomprehensible or foolish, will look quite differently, if one remembers that Francis was no longer the son of a wealthy merchant.

As he left the courtroom, he went out into the woods. Besides the gown of hair on his body he owned no clothes, he had no money for food, no family and no home, neither purpose nor goal. It all looked very much like a wild adventure, and the good townspeople of Assisi predicted a shameful failure. Yet from Francis' point of view, it was quite consistent and the only thing he could do. He had accepted God as his only father, and in truly childlike trust he turned to Him and put himself into His care. He had to worry about clothes and food as little as the lilies in the fields which the Lord clothes or the birds in the woods which He feeds. God's creature had entrusted its care to the Creator. If Francis had lost his paternal home, God gave him the world as his home. If the merchant Bernardone would no longer take care of his needs, charity was more generous than the richest draper. He abandoned his family but was taken into the great family of God's creatures. If the future course of his life was uncertain, he faced the great certainty of God which has been, and is, and will not end. If he had neither aim nor purpose—the father of all would take him by his hand, and since he had trust in Him, as a child has trust in his father, he reached without thought or endeavor the goal of all goals: holiness.

Francis moved into the wall-less house of God on one of those days in the early spring of Italy, when the earth is still drowsy

with the sleep of winter while the sun in the sky pours down the living warmth of spring, when the soil is still half frozen and the clefts and ravines are filled with snow while the numb twigs and branches are lured by the first rays of the sun to open their buds

And as he walked along, with joy in his heart, over the frozen ground, he suddenly burst forth in song. He sang in the language of southern France. The joy of his heart was wont to burst forth in the jubilant sounds of the language of France. It was the language of his early love, the language of the troubadours, the mother tongue of his soul. But the exuberant heart, the joyous mood, which sought expression in the language and melodies of the troubadours, were changed and were new. Francis himself, who had been silent for so long and was now beginning again to sing, was no longer the same. A troubadour without bicolored trousers, without clothes except for his gown of hair, an itinerant minstrel with no roof over his head but the sky above, with nothing to his name but his faith. A troubadour of God went out through the woods on this wintry morning of early spring. He sang in the language of France, but it was the language of God. He sang songs of courtship, but she to whom they were addressed was a lady purer and more lovely than any in Assisi, it was Lady Poverty, with whom Francis went out to celebrate his wedding in the house of the father of all. And all of creation was given to them as a wedding gift.

Abruptly his singing and jubilation was interrupted. The rustle of dry leaves, the noise of broken branches, and then a harsh voice calling to him "Stop! Stay where you are!" A group of way-laying bandits came out of a thicket and blocked his path. But when they found themselves confronted with the most penniless of all penniless paupers in the strangest of all strange outfits, they were sorely disappointed in their craving for booty and asked him angrily. "But who in God's name are you?" Whereupon Francis replied, quite without fear "I am the herald of the great king." Now the disappointment of the bandits gave way to a furious rage. "What," they shouted, "you think you can make fun of us, telling us that you are the herald of the king. You villain, you boor you! We shall herald you and do it royally!" And they grabbed him and threw him into a ditch that was filled with snow. When Fran-

cis finally succeeded in getting out of the ditch, he continued on his way and sang as though nothing had happened.

After this extraordinary wedding ceremony in the woods, life was different. And first of all the task, which the voice of the crucifix at San Damian had assigned to him, appeared now in a different light. "Restore my house for me!" the voice had ordered. As the son of a wealthy merchant, Francis could not interpret these words as meaning anything but that he should raise the funds which were needed to rebuild the church. But now, as a penniless pauper, he understood that he must carry out the assignment through the work of his own hands.

He put on a threadbare peasant's coat, with a hood attached to it, which had been discarded by its former owner as no longer fit to be used and which was just right for the pauper of God, he tied an old rope, which he had found somewhere, as a belt around his waist, and thus, ready for his work, he began to rebuild the old church. In his youth he had learned, on the ramparts of Assisi, how to work with trowel and mortar. That stood him now in good stead. He had no money with which he could have bought the materials he needed. All he had was his naive trust in charity. He, for whom it had been a natural urge to give, could not doubt that it was also a natural urge of other people and that, in order to be given, it was merely necessary to ask. And then he had at his disposal a very special gift: the art of the troubadours which served him well on his begging expeditions. He knew how to sing, with his clear and resonant voice, the songs of love and adventure which were made to arouse the enthusiastic applause of his contemporaries in all walks of life: the songs of King Arthur's Round Table, of Tristan's love, and of Sir Percival, who had started out as a foolish boy and had finally become a knight of the Holy Grail. And so Francis set out on his way, singing and begging for the tools and materials he needed for his work of restoring the house of the Lord.

One day a begging troubadour walked through the streets of Assisi, singing at the doors and asking for no other alms but stones and mortar. Some gave him what he wanted because his songs touched them, others because they felt moved by his strange request, and still others simply because he amused them. But what-

ever the reason that induced them to give, in a very short time Francis had enough mortar and stones to begin the work of reconstruction. Now the problem was to transport the materials he had obtained for his songs to the church of San Damian in the fields.

Francis, who had nothing in his possession, nothing in the world, disposed of no mule that could have carried the heavy stones and bags of lime for him. Instead of the mule, which he did not have, he designated his own body to serve him as beast of burden. He lifted the heavy stones, one at a time, and said "Now, Brother Donkey, carry it to San Damian." And when Donkey Body broke down at times under the great burden, driver Francis would encourage and calm him and sternly he would add "Brother Donkey, the father wills it, we must hurry." Then Donkey Body would obey, and he did his very best until finally all the stones and bags of lime, the shovel, ladder, ropes, and water level, which Francis had borrowed, were piled up in front of the old dilapidated church of San Damian.

Then Francis spent days on end, working hard, to rebuild the church, always joyfully singing to himself. He spent the few hours of rest, which he permitted himself, with his brothers at the lazaret house. In his youth he had learned something about the mason's trade while helping to fortify the walls of Assisi, but the intricacies of church architecture were something of which up to now he had not even heard. When practical experience failed him, enthusiasm and will could teach him what to do, for both these had their origin in God. And so it came to pass that, when his work at San Damian was finished, he had set up an entirely new form of pointed arch which, later historians of architecture have maintained, presaged the coming of the new style of the early Renaissance.

In his zeal Francis restored two additional churches, St. Peter's and St. Mary's of the Angels, the little forest church which at a later time acquired great fame under the name of the Portiuncula.

His enthusiasm needed no other food but the word of God. Donkey Body, however, had to carry heavy burdens and insisted on being fed. The churches had been restored by Francis in obedience to a divine call. For that he could not want to be rewarded,

even though it be only in the form of food and shelter, by badly paid priests of destitute parishes. And then, the safety of table and roof would have been a breach of trust, an expression of lack of confidence in the divine care of the father of all, whose child he had become, it would have been treason against the poor and the needy, the beggars and outcasts whom he had chosen as his new brothers and sisters, it would have been disloyalty toward Lady Poverty whom he had promised to remain true and faithful to the last.

When the priest of San Damian offered Francis to repay him for his work by sharing with him his home, his frugal meals, his crust of bread, his bacon, and his grapes, the bricklayer of God replied "Thank you, but you should keep all that for yourself. God, who takes care of all, will also care for my donkey. I shall go and beg what I need. And the shelter of God, is it not to be found in all places where a man lies down in peace?"

Thus Francis began to live the life of a beggar. At first he found it hard, but only because Brother Body could not grasp as quickly as Brother Soul that Francis was no longer the son of a rich merchant, dressed in scarlet-red velvet, that the soul was no longer the servant of the body but its driver, and that Donkey Body had to obey.

His hand hesitated for a moment before it knocked for the first time at a stranger's door, but that was so only because this same hand had been used to give lavishly and had no experience in accepting alms. His tongue was heavy when it had to articulate for the first time the words, "I ask you in the name of God for what is left over from your meal," but that was so only because that same tongue had been used to grant the requests of others and had no skill in articulating them itself.

Beggars going from door to door get many rebukes and many unfriendly refusals. Especially a beggar like Francis, who was a beggar by his own free will. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself," croaked the unpleasant voice of an old shopkeeper through his half opened door, "to bring such dishonor upon your father's good name? You lazybones! Rascal! Disgrace of a son! Get going or I shall set the dogs at you." And at another door the biting sarcasm of a haughty woman, "So that is what has become of you, sir Francis, noble troubadour!" And turning to the maid, "Give him

the bones we kept for the dogs. Then he has something to gnaw at and will not bother us any longer with his presence."

Francis often felt his blood boiling when he had to listen to such words, but an instant later he would turn to the shopkeeper who had insulted him and said, "Sir, I thank you for the abasement." And to the woman, "I thank you, noble lady, for the bones and for the humiliation which is welcome food for my soul, for it wants to practice humbleness."

He had cleaned out an old pail and used it as his beggar's trough. In it he gathered the scraps from rich men's tables, a few spoonfuls of soup, a crust of stale bread, a bone with a few shreds of meat, some leaves of lettuce, or half-rotten grapes. When after his day's work, he sat down for the first time by the roadside to eat his meal, the mere sight of the swill in his pail made him feel sick, and in disgust he turned away. But immediately his soul intervened and chided the body for its foolish demeanor. "Brother Donkey," it said, "foolish Brother Donkey, try to control yourself. Think of Lady Poverty, who so kindly prepared this meal for us. You don't want to hurt her, do you?" And as though it wanted to smooth over the awkward slip Brother Donkey had committed, the soul spoke in a loud tone of voice that the whole roadside might hear it, "What delicious food, Lady Poverty! So many courses, and so wonderfully varied! You are really much too kind, Lady Poverty!" And then, just in order to set a good example for Brother Donkey, the soul added, "Now, Lady Poverty, let us be grateful and content with what we have." Then Donkey Body felt ashamed and, heeding the words of the soul, he too began to acclaim Lady Poverty's cooking, and did it in his simple-minded donkey fashion. He emptied the pail hastily to the last drop.

Francis' soul was used to sing when it felt happy. So now it sang songs of praise and gratitude to Lady Poverty. Donkey Body chimed in as best he could. And then a very strange thing happened. Donkey Body and the soul which heard the voice of God became one. It was as though their separation had been only a mistake which the Creator now tried to correct because he took such great delight in the joyous beggar's meal of his son Francis.

Thus passed the first meal, begged together by Francis the beggar, eaten in the open banquet hall of the roadside, in happiness and contentment. After it was finished, Francis' joy rose to ex-

uberant heights the like of which he had never known during the merriest feasts of his past. When the last morsel was eaten, when the last drop from the beggar's pail was drunk, Francis arose in a mood of weightless delight to walk singing through the night as the troubadour had done at the end of a carefree carousal. But the alleys and streets and even the piazzas of Assisi were much too narrow for his great jubilation. And so his troubadour's walk took him out into God's creation, to the woods, the hills and the fields.

He went out alone. But as the troubadour in beggar's clothes walked through the night, the heavens above took care of his escort of torches. All the stars lined up in a festive procession to brighten his trail with their glittering lights. The precious viol, on which he had always accompanied his songs, had stayed behind in his old life. But being in the service of Lady Poverty had made him resourceful. He picked up a piece of wood and a stick lying under a tree, and straightway the wood was a viol and the stick a bow. If no one else heard the accompaniment, God heard it, and for Him it was that Francis sang and played his new troubadour tunes.

When he grew tired and the time came for him to lie down and sleep, he did not know which one of his many many beds he should choose. An abundance of possibilities was provided for him by Lady Poverty since he had given up the one bed that had been his own. Here was a bed of grass, there one with a canopy of rocks and another one made of soft leaves under the protecting branches of a tree. For this first night he chose the bed of grass in an open field, and the wealthiest youths of Assisi did not rest more comfortably in their beds of down, they had no richer tester to protect their sleep, than this penniless pauper under the canopy of the starry heavens above.

Rested and filled with the freshness and joy of dawn, Francis awoke. A bird sleeping near by in a thicket roused him with its call and the kiss of the April sun opened his eyes. But he knew that it was Lady Poverty, rich and generous Lady Poverty, who had awakened him through the song of a bird and the kiss of the sun.

Then the work of rebuilding the house of God began. It was a lowly and monotonous sort of work—mixing mortar, carrying stones, laying them down, climbing the ladder, up and down, up

and down, and walking around on the scaffold, to and fro, again and again. But not for one who is filled with the spirit of God and does it to please God and sings, while doing it, the praises of God, simply because an abundance of love for God must be released in continuous song

As joyful and as light and easy as his first beggar's meal, his first serenading tour as the minstrel of God, his first night under Lady Poverty's heavenly roof, as blissful as the first morning call of the birds, the first awakening kiss of the April sun, the first working day of song, as joyful and happy as these were also all the later ones That was the wonderful experience of Francis, who himself had chosen to be poor, that Lady Poverty made him rich, richer than the richest of the rich Her dowry was happiness and peace, which money cannot buy, and freedom within, which lowliness cannot lower, which does not depend on the fleeting moment because it is filled with an everlasting delight in God's creation.

And even the pleasure, which had always been one of his dearest delights, of being surrounded by good companions and of always acting as their generous host, was not denied him by Lady Poverty. As he ate his frugal meals, day after day, under a tree, by the roadside, or on the steps of a stairway, the place of his old friends was soon taken by a new set of boon companions. A stray dog was his first guest, and a sparrow, having noticed that Francis had no nest of his own either, followed as number two. Then a thrush came, and a rabbit, and a sheep that had lost its flock. They all, one after the other, dropped their fear of men and joined Francis like friends whom he had asked to come. And if his beggar's meal consisted often of nothing but a few crumbs of bread, some leaves of lettuce, and a miserable bone, in his great frugality he always succeeded in treating them most generously. Francis remained what he had been the king of the banquet. When at times, as he had been used to do, he rose from his meal and began to sing, the new companions listened attentively, as the old ones had done. The thrush was the first to join in, but also the sparrow, the dog, and the sheep did their best. The rabbit tried hard but in vain and had to be content with pricking his ears to participate in the general spirit of good cheer, and the next day he came back and joined again the circle of friends.

To give was the strongest urge in Francis' nature To let others benefit by his wealth, to have every one participate in his joys, had been the greatest delight of the wealthy merchant's son. And now, just because he was so poor, he had fallen heir to the greatest wealth, the riches of God's creation, and all the happiness on earth and peace and freedom were his. His generous heart could hardly bear it any longer, and every day and every night, every breath and every look made him richer and richer, and his riches was enough for the happiness of all life to the end of all days. But his mind did not know as yet how his treasure could be distributed. Yet, the word that told him how, that proclaimed his task and his destiny, had been spoken a good while ago. He himself had been the one who spoke it, on the very first day, when he crossed the threshold of Lady Poverty's house of riches: out there in the woods, when the bandits in their disappointment, because he owned nothing but a gown of hair, had asked him who he was, when he, hardly thinking about what he was saying, had burst forth with the almost waggish reply, "I am the herald of the great king." At the time his reason did not understand what was spoken in him above the limits of reason.

On still another occasion his task had been revealed to him when, before the shrine of the old church of San Damian, the voice of the Lord on the Cross had said in answer to his fervent prayers, "Restore my house for me." At the time his heart was open to the significance of Christ's words, yet his mind was still too deeply involved in material thoughts of the world. So he understood what he was told in a purely material sense and set out to rebuild in stone the ruined house of God. That the voice of the crucifix assigned to him the much greater task of rebuilding the ruined church of Christ everywhere in the world, that he had not as yet been able to grasp.

But one who strives as fervently and truly as Francis to come close to his God, will not stumble over the misunderstanding of reason, for even misunderstandings lead him to truth and even detours to the straight path ahead.

A very severe winter had interrupted Francis' work of rebuilding the Portiuncula, and he had spent his time nursing the patients in the lazaret. But in February, 1209, the cold relented somewhat, and now there could be neither rest nor delay. The work

of restoring the church was to be completed before St. Matthew's Day, when the priest wanted to re-consecrate it. Francis kept his promise

The inaugural ceremonies did not attract a large crowd. Beside the builder there was only a shepherd who happened to pass by with his flock. He was there simply because it was an old custom to sit down for a while in a church before taking one's herds to pasture. Yet this simple service was to become one of the most significant ones in the entire history of the church and indeed of all of mankind.

While the priest of the Portiuncula was celebrating the mass of re-consecration, Francis came to understand fully the task which the voice at Spoleto had assigned to him, and now he was truly the herald of the great king as he had passed himself off to the bandits in the woods. During this mass the master mason of wretched little Umbrian churches became aware of the fact that the great contract of reconstruction that had been awarded him at San Damian, was concerned with rebuilding the church of Christ. During this mass his mind came to grasp finally what his heart had known all along, and the most lavish giver on earth found a way of imparting to the world his abundant treasures which could last all created beings to the day of the last judgment.

During this mass on St. Matthew's Day the priest read from the gospel according to St. Matthew the words which Christ addressed to his apostles when he sent them out into the world to proclaim the kingdom of God. "Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Then Francis recognized that the apostolic lesson of poverty, humility, and love, which the Lord commanded his disciples to spread among the peoples, was exactly what he, in the simplicity of his heart, had thought and felt and spoken and done. The wisdom of Christ, before he ever knew it, had been given to him as the essence of his life. If he proclaimed his own way of life to the world, he would be doing what the Lord had demanded of His apostles.

"Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves." These were the words with which the Lord had sent out his apostles. And Francis, the penniless pauper, could go out on

the mission of the apostles, for he had readied himself for it even though he had not known what he was doing

Then one day he appeared, barefoot in his beggar's coat, on the steps of a stairway on the market place of Assisi and began to preach the gospel of Christ. "Men and women, but no, let me call you brothers and sisters, for God is the father of all of us. And God is love. So obey Him in love, for His law and all our duties are contained in love. Love your neighbors and love also your enemies In them you love your brothers, and your lives will be pleasing to God. Live in peace with one another, for then you will be at peace with yourselves and with God. Let peace begin in the small things of your own lives, and it will lead to peace for all, to a great peace for the entire world, and the entire world will become the house of the Father. We and all things live in Him and through Him. Have trust in Him. Do not let your hearts cling to gold and silver and all the corruptible wealth of the world, for He is your incorruptible treasure. If therefore you live as the poorest of the poor, all the riches of heaven will be given to you. He who renounces shall receive. Who humbles himself shall be elevated. Do not strive for worldly honors but honor the Lord. Do not worry about the morrow, for the Father will worry for you. Walk on the road of love and live together as brothers and sisters, for His kingdom is at hand! Peace be with you. Amen!"

Before this time the townspeople of Assisi had already been made to wonder about his strange mode of life. Old Bernardone's wealthy friends despised Francis as a hopeless ne'er-do-well, everybody disapproved of the madness of his demeanor, and even the most devout Christians were puzzled and shook their heads. "A pazzo, a pathetic fool!" That was the most benevolent verdict Assisi would pass on the onetime popular son of a rich merchant, who had abased himself to the level of absolute destitution, who had kissed a leper, went begging for stones and mortar, lived on the refuse from other men's kitchens, and roamed through the countryside as a homeless vagrant.

It was a time when money, which had just been reintroduced as the standard of exchange in commerce and trade, was considered the essence of all values, a thing which everybody strove to acquire and accumulate. A person who owned money and gave it away,

who refused to accept a coin that was offered to him, was a fool if there ever was one. A person who tied a rope around his waist, while everyone else was proud of the purse dangling from his belt, who had not even a pocket in his coat and no place at all to keep money, could hardly be called anything else.

Surely, at a time when the knights in the country lived in fortified castles and the people in the towns in houses built of stone, when the poorest of the poor felt no greater need than to have a roof over their heads, only a *pazzo* could abandon the safety of his home to share the life of the birds in the forest, of the hares in the fields, and of stray dogs by the roadside.

The men and women in town wore clothes of precious fabrics, Persian silk, Moorish lace, Spanish embroideries, and the son of a draper, who could have had all that, relinquished it of his own free will and walked about in a threadbare beggar's coat. And everything he did was as foolish as that in the eyes of the people of Assisi.

And now this impossible dunce stood up in the market place and announced that poverty and renunciation are the true doctrine of Christ, that love of one's neighbor, of one's enemy even, can alone lead to ultimate bliss. And that at a time when wars decided everything, when the power and greatness of towns and countries, when the might of the noble and the wealth of the burghers was determined by wars, when the popes and crusaders waged war upon war. And still this simpleton went on with his drivel about true salvation through peace and the love of peace on the part of every individual. A penniless pauper, who lived on the waste from the tables of the rich, had the impertinence to tell the rich what real wealth was, an individual whom everyone despised dared to tell respectable burghers and proud noblemen about humility and self-degradation as the core of a truly honorable life. A vagabond, a self-styled outcast from society, pretended to know about a better social order.

Laughter and scorn were the only reaction Francis got after his first sermon. And many times more he was to proclaim the teachings of Christ amidst laughter and scorn.

During the mass on St. Matthew's Day he had heard the priest read the words of Christ, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few," and "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed." Thus Francis could not be discouraged by laughter and

scorn. The Lord had sent him as a harvester into His fields, and cheerfully he set out to do as he had been told

If people called his message mere simple-minded twaddle, he knew that what he proclaimed was the truth of God. If they called him a fool, his humility turned the insult which it was meant to be into praise and distinction, for it was true that he was a "fool by the grace of God" and that he enjoyed the privilege of the fool's freedom to proclaim the fool's wisdom of paradoxicalness.

And then it came to pass, not long after he had begun his apostolic work, that among the people in the market place, who were listening to his words with wonder or amusement, first one and then another seemed suddenly to recognize that Francis' foolish talk was more than they had thought, that it was really the wisdom of Christ's gospel.

The first one to understand Francis' words in their true sense was precisely one of the wealthy merchants of Assisi. Bernardo de Quintavalle, dressed in silk and velvet, a heavy purse attached to his belt. At first he had stopped on the market place only because the crowd there had aroused his curiosity, but the following day he came because he did not want to miss the beggar's words, for it seemed to him that a kernel of truth was hidden in that rank growth of foolishness. The next sermon impressed him as containing the full truth, and even the "rank growth of foolishness" was part of it. Finally he recognized that the words of the strange apostle constituted a message of salvation which would lead all who heeded it to genuine bliss and happiness.

Francis had finished his sermon. The crowd had dispersed. Only Signor Bernardo in garments of silk and velvet was still there. He asked the beggar in his tattered coat to accompany him to his house where they might continue talking together. He wanted to know how Francis had learned about his mission. Francis spent the night in the house of Signor Bernardo. In the morning his host asked him what he would have to do to live truly in the spirit of Christ's teachings. And Francis was very happy to be able to help and instruct him.

It happened that after the next sermon a canon, who had often listened to Francis' words, came up to him to ask what had given him the idea of becoming a beggar for the sake of the Lord, and why he thought that the word of God as the priests proclaimed it in

the churches was not enough, so that he had to stand up in the market place and proclaim it there. This man, Pietro dei Cattani, was the respected vicar of the church of St. Nicolas, and through his profound knowledge of canon law, which he had acquired at Bologna, he seemed destined for a great career in the church.

"What the priests teach in church," replied the beggar, "is the doctrine of Christ, but not what they do in their lives. I will prove it to you from the Bible in your own church. Wherever you open it, you will find what the Lord expects of His disciples. And since you," Francis continued turning to Signor Bernardo, "want to know what you must do, come with us. You will be told in the words of the Lord Himself."

So the three men went to church together: the beggar in his tattered coat, the rich merchant in velvet and silk, and the canon in his soutane.

It was an old custom to open the Bible at random and consider the passage that first met the eye as a significant omen. Francis opened the gospel three different times. The first time he found the words which the Lord had spoken to the rich youth of Galilee and which had made such a deep impression upon St. Anthony: "If thou wilt be perfect go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have a treasure in heaven." The second passage was the advice the Lord gave His disciples when He sent them out to spread His gospel: "Take nothing on your journey, neither purse nor bread, nor yet two coats"—And when he opened the book for the third time he read: "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."

"So let us act according to the words of the Lord," said Francis, and the two obeyed him. The rich merchant and the canon obeyed the foolish beggar, for what he had preached to the crowd in the market place was literally identical with the commands of Scripture.

A few days later, on April 16, 1209, the town of Assisi witnessed a strange spectacle which put everyone in a state of extraordinary excitement. At noon, on the Piazza San Giorgio, the wealthy merchant Bernardo, the canon Pietro, and the beggar Francis appeared in the midst of a milling crowd of paupers for whom the big square was almost too narrow.

Each one of the three had before him several heavy bags filled

with money, which constituted Signor Bernardo's entire wealth. He had sold all his holdings, his houses and estates, and had decided to distribute the proceeds and all his cash among the poor. With both hands the three men dug down into the bags and handed out coins right and left to the excited crowd. The bags were at first cram-full, for Signor Bernardo's wealth had been great, yet in a few minutes they were completely emptied, for the number of the needy was also great.

On this fantastic occasion the people of Assisi had their last chance to see Signor Bernardo clothed in velvet and silk and Pietro in his precious soutane. For when the two, in the company of Francis, had left the piazza, their first move was to go and see the ragman who had his place not far from the city gate. They offered him, who could hardly believe his ears, in exchange for two badly mended and threadbare coats, Signor Bernardo's clothes of velvet and silk and the canon Pietro dei Cattani's soutane, with their shoes thrown in for good measure. When they emerged again from the ragman's place, the onetime wealthy merchant and the canon of St. Nicolas were walking along, like Francis, barefoot and in rags. They displayed the same foolish demeanor as the beggar who had talked them into this foolishness. They behaved as though they had now finally come to be the richest men in town, who were exempt from all worries, and all that in spite of the fact that they had not a penny piece to bless themselves with. They were cheerful, they were laughing and joking and greeted everyone with the words, "Peace be with you," and even when at times this or that former acquaintance of theirs called them a fool or a scamp, they replied, as their leader was wont to do, with a heartfelt "Thank you, good sir (or good lady), thank you for the humiliation which helps us to practice humility."

And before long Signor Bernardo and the canon too could be seen sitting on the doorsteps in Assisi or on the rocks by the roadside in the country, sharing with stray dogs the swill of waste food which they had gathered together in their troughlike pails. And all the while they sang cheerful tunes to thank God for letting them eat at His table and for caring for them so lavishly. In all other respects too they emulated the example of the foolish beggar. Finally it even became known that the three men went together

to the lazar house where they vied with each other in performing the lowliest duties

The general amazement was further increased when a man, who had followed them out of curiosity, came back to report to the townspeople that they were living near the Portiuncula in a hut they had built of branches and leaves and clay, which resembled a huge bird's nest rather than a place fit for human beings to live in. He had also overheard one of their conversations and retailed it post-haste to the people of Assisi. First the canon had read from the gospel, and then they had discussed a trip they were planning to proclaim the true kingdom of God. Finally they had started to sing, Francis in his beloved Provençal and the two others humming along with him.

The verdict the people of Assisi had at first passed on Francis alone, was now extended to apply to the entire tagrag trio: *pazzi*, fools, wretched fools. What a disgrace for a respectable town that three of its best sons had lost their minds!

Among the more humble folk, the so-called *minores*, views regarding the three began to appear, however, which contrasted sharply with those of the *maiores*, the burghers and noblemen. The poor found it less and less amazing and foolish that three *maiores* had abased themselves, of their own free will, to the rank of *minores* and lived a humbler and lowlier life than any of their new fellows. That they were always singing and that they seemed to be having a good time was surely a little queer, but then they managed with their cheerfulness to rid anyone listening to them of all his troubles and worries.

But what prepossessed the humble folk in their favor more than anything else, were the things the three were doing for the poor and the needy.

There was a rickety little old farmer toiling hard to till his field. Then the three came up to him and said, "Let us help you, good man," and took the plow out of his hands and would not rest till the work was all finished. —A woodcutter, who had to work very hard to eke out a bare living for his family, saw them in the woods. They suggested that he should rest a bit, and meantime, singing all the while, they cut down one tree after another, split the wood to the right size and stacked it up neatly for him. —If a drayman struggled along with a heavy load, helping hands would suddenly

seize the thills and ease the toil by their vigorous assistance.—Whoever found himself in a difficult spot, if he met the three or one of them, that meant that efficient help had arrived

When those, who had accepted their help, wanted to repay them by offering money to them, they would always refuse to accept or even to touch it as though it might burn their hands or as though it were under a curse. Only when they were offered a meal in exchange for their work, they would sometimes accept, but always in such moderation that it would have been costlier to feed the birds. "A piece of bread. A little water. Whatever there is. That is quite enough. Thank you." Leftovers seemed to be what they preferred, and everything was just right and delicious.

Queer customers in their extreme frugality, even when looked at through the eyes of the *mmores*, but certainly honest and good men, whom you could trust in everything, also in what they had to say about the gospel of Christ,—that people should love one another, live at peace, practice humility and refrain from too much worry about the morrow.

For the simple folk, who listened to them trustfully, Christ's doctrine began to grow clearer until finally it shone again in the light in which the Saviour had proclaimed it, the light of a message of joy.

Those three, who spread the words of Christ as a refreshing and bracing message among men, were unlike the priests in church, who also read the words about peace and the simple life from the gospel, but who lived themselves in comfort and abundance and feared no discord with their neighbors when some personal advantage was at stake. They were also unlike those severe monks in the cloisters, who obeyed the command of poverty but bore it as a heavy burden. For this merry trio, poverty was no yoke that weighed down upon them but a pair of wings that emancipated them from all weight. For them renunciation was not scarcity but abundance, and the law of Christ was not restraint but liberation. What they had to say about love and peace was not just meant as a pious exhortation, in their entire lives they set the example. And in their presence you did not have to be ashamed of being merely a simple human being full of frailties and faults—for among brothers you never need to feel ashamed. And also the kind of Christ they proclaimed did not just fill you with awe and did not make

you lose heart, for He loved every straying sheep and was the Saviour of all who were in need of His salvation

The number of the *mnnores* who listened worshipfully to the sermons of the three, kept increasing. And more quickly even than the news of the most recent eccentricities of the tagrag trio, which the spy of the *majores* had brought back with him to Assisi, spread the news, among the *mnnores*, of the beggar apostles' most recent good deed. So the story was told that one day, after Francis had been working from morning till night at the lazar house, he was sitting by the roadside, reading in the Bible, which was the only possession the three had retained, when a poor woman passed by on her way home. She was deeply distressed because she had nothing to eat for her children. When she saw the man by the roadside, she was so absorbed in her own sorrow that she did not notice what a threadbare and shabby coat he was wearing, and in her dire need, she went up to him and asked him for a piece of money, however small it might be, so that she could buy some bread and take it home to her children. This was the first time that Francis felt badly about not having any money, especially since he had nothing else either—except the Bible in which he read the words of the Lord to replenish his strength and cheerfulness through them. To him it was precious beyond all treasures of the world, but it was a possession, and the poor woman before him wept because she could not buy bread for her children. "Take this book," he said, quickly decided, "and go and sell it so that you can buy bread for your children." When the woman had left, he said to the Lord, "I have given away your word. But you will forgive me, for I have done it to fulfill your word." And then he heard the Lord who answered in his soul, "I have placed my living gospel in your heart. Who loves me and follows me, lives my word."—Many who heard about it said that this beggar was a saint, that the Lord Jesus was acting through him, and many believed that one should listen to him and follow him.

A woodcutter by the name of Aegidius did so. Often, when he was cutting wood, he stopped in his work, looked around and listened, for he expected to see Francis coming through the forest. One morning he was busy cutting down a very heavy tree—the whole forest was resounding with the echo of his powerful blows—when suddenly the deep rumble of the falling giant of the woods

passed over into a clear and ringing melody. And although its sounds were still soft and came to Aegidius from far away, it affected him more deeply and resounded in him more loudly than the thundering noise of the splitting tree. He left his work and hastened away in the direction from where the tune had come until finally he stood face to face with him whom he had been expecting for so long. "From now on I will follow you in poverty, and work with you for the kingdom of God," said the woodcutter. "Be cheerful and proud that the king of kings, the Lord Himself, has chosen you," Francis replied.

Aegidius was only a poor woodcutter. He had nothing to his name but his ax and his little hut. He was a strong man, yet with all his hard labor he could earn barely enough money to support himself. But God valued the ax and the hut and the small but assured income, which Aegidius abandoned in order to serve Lady Poverty, no less than the money bags of Signor Bernardo and the well-paid position of the canon. So Francis accepted Aegidius as an equal fourth member of his brotherhood.

When the four men had lived for a while together in the bird's-nest hut near the Portiuncula, they decided to go on a missionary journey. They decided to go in pairs. Francis and Aegidius southward toward Ancona, and Bernardo and Pietro through the regions north of Assisi. Horse and mule were for them their own legs and feet. Their traveling expenses would be covered by their readiness to work. And if at times it should prove impossible to earn their food, they would not worry, they would simply sit down at the table of God, the great hospitable banquet of charity where they would be fed together with all the other beggars.

At first people everywhere were scared by the appearance of these strange fellows in rags and tatters. "Thieves! Help, help!" cried the women who met them. And even when they sang their songs on open market squares, the feeling of fear was not immediately gone. "Sorcerers," cried the crowd, "chase them away, their presence spells harm!" The street urchins were the first to overcome their distrust of the strange "sorcerers" who told them wondrously beautiful stories about the stable at Bethlehem where a child was born whose name was Jesus and who brought joy and happiness to all men. Encouraged by their children, fathers and

mothers and all sorts of people came to listen to their songs, at first still a little embarrassed because they had barely managed to rid themselves of apprehension and fear, but soon deeply affected and with great delight, until finally many of them offered the travelers room and board in their homes and on their farms. The strangers were generous with their gifts of song and sermon, but when it came to accepting alms they were niggardly in the extreme. "Money?" No, thank you!—Join the family for a hearty meal? No, thank you. A piece of bread and a few mouthfuls of water. That is plenty!"

If the hardships they had to undergo on their trip were often considerable, at least the farms and hamlets and towns they visited had heard the true word of the Lord. God had helped them, and Francis felt assured of the justness of his goal. And God went on helping them when the four had completed their first missionary journey and lived again together in their hut near the Portiuncula.

They had hardly had time to settle down after their trip when three new disciples arrived at the hut and asked to be received into their brotherhood. One of them, Morico by name, came from the lazaret house. For years his terrible illness had forced him to live the life of an outcast, but suddenly a miracle had happened, he was cured and could live again among men. At the lazaret house he had tasted the fruit of Francis' self-sacrificing love and now he bent his steps toward the bird's-nest hut near the Portiuncula, for he wished henceforth to give to others the kindness and charity given to him. The second was Sabatino, a learned man, who had been searching in books for the truth and had recognized suddenly that salvation does not rest in man's knowledge of the things that are true but in living and acting according to the truth. The third, whose name was John, came as a great surprise, for he was the son of Assisi's most miserly merchant, and in his father's home the contemptible ragged beggars had been mentioned only in the vilest terms of abuse. But their words and their example had carried greater force of conviction for him than the sordid outcries of his father. John left his home, he abandoned comfort and wealth and decided to share the life of poverty of Francis and his followers. He renounced all worldly possessions with the exception of his broad-brimmed hat which he wanted to keep for fear of a sun-

stroke and because of which the little circle gave him the nickname of Brother Hat.)

Because of the merchant's son—again a rich man assuming the burden of poverty of his own free will—the indignation of the townspeople of Assisi broke loose again. John's father almost lost his mind with rage. He attacked Francis in the street, and raising a veritable riot, he shouted, "You thief! You criminal! You have stolen my son! The bishop will teach you a lesson!"

Bishop Guido summoned Francis to appear before him, not because he attributed particular importance to the merchant's accusations, but because this seemed to be a fitting occasion to do what he had been planning to do for quite a while, to have a serious talk with Francis about his queer cult of poverty. The sincerity of Francis' motives in choosing poverty as his life's companion had suffered no doubt in the bishop's mind ever since the day when he had sat in judgment upon him in the suit which old Bernardone had brought. The way in which Francis had begun his life of devotion was surely extravagant. His behavior since that time also surpassed the limits of what the church expects from its faithful children. But Bishop Guido was well-disposed toward Francis and ascribed his antics to youthful excess of zeal. He kept quiet when the rich of Assisi and even many among the priests came to him with their complaints. That Francis took his devotion seriously, was demonstrated by the pious service which he had performed in the cause of the church by rebuilding dilapidated houses of worship. The only thing that troubled the bishop was the fact that more recently Francis had assumed a sort of apostleship of poverty, so that the circle of his followers looked more and more like a new brotherhood.

Since the number of the brethren of poverty had gone up to seven, Francis had moved from the bird's-nest hut near the Portuncula to an abandoned shed in the neighborhood of the lazaret house of Rivo Torto. But in comparison with this miserable shed with its leaking roof and utter lack of furnishings, the most modest cell in the most severe monastery would have looked like a comfortable drawing room in a palatial mansion. The monks of the reformed order of St. Benedict lived a truly ascetic life, but in comparison with the abominable swill on which Francis and his followers managed to thrive, their tasteless faster's fare was glut-

tonous feasting The stern monks had no personal property, but the safety which the property of their monastery afforded them, could be condemned as treason against the spirit of the gospel compared with the standards by which Francis and his disciples strove for a brotherhood without any sort of property and without any sort of safety

Such considerations of a half practical and half ecclesiastic nature induced the episcopal pastor of Christ to speak thus to Francis "I know how sincere you are in your devotion, my son But consider the most God-pleasing men, the poorest monks, and you will find that there is a modicum of safety of which even the most devoted followers of Christ are in need "

Then Francis replied "If we keep property, we shall need arms to defend it, and this will often prevent us from loving God and our neighbor therefore do we desire to possess no temporal goods in this world "

So Francis proved at once indulgent and inexorable, simple and shrewd, precisely as the Lord had demanded that His apostles should be when He said, "Be therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves "

Francis returned to the brethren at Rivo Torto to live with still greater determination in the spirit of the gospel Now Philippus joined them as the eighth member of their group, a fellow tall as a lamp post whom the others called later on simply the long one A short while later the little community had a chance to show its mettle in new hardships and vicissitudes The lazar house, in which the eight men cared for the inmates, was itself so poor that the scraps from its table were not enough for eight ever so frugal stomachs The table of charity which the town of Assisi might have provided was suppressed When Francis and his followers went begging, they found all doors locked The *maiores* had conspired to teach these "beggars of recklessness" a severe lesson

In the fall there was still some work to be done in the fields and around the farms, and food could be earned by it But then the harvest was in The fields were ready for winter The farmer and his animals rested And often for days on end there was no food to be had anywhere The cold rains of late autumn began to fall, and the roof of the shed was still leaking The days were short, the nights long, and the shed was an island in a sea of mud Indoors

the eight shivered in their drenched coats, and when they came out they had to wade through the mud to get to the lazar house. But what did all this matter, these days of hunger, of cold and darkness, and all the things of life here below? One simply had to look at things through God, as Francis did and as he taught his disciples to do "Brother Rain," said Francis. And everything, including the interminable rain looked different. Whatever happened, it happened through God's will. What was created, was created by Him, and all creation was one great brotherhood in God "Brother Rain!" These simple words were more comforting than the most reasoned consolation. Simply because they were words which God had inspired. And forthwith the seven others greeted the cold autumnal rain as Brother Rain too. They welcomed it in their shed and did not complain when it splashed into their conversations about the gospel of the Lord and accompanied them on their way to the lazar house.

When at times little Brother Hunger grew too forward and noisy so that he threatened to disturb their edifying conversation, Francis talked to him with the severity of an older brother. "Now keep quiet, Brother Hunger, we have something to discuss with Father." Once, while they were away at the lazar house, a charitable soul deposited a few coins in their shed, but Francis told Morico immediately to throw them on the dung heap. "Dirt with dirt," he said. With money he would have nothing to do.

All he said in the shed of the eight sounded at once simple and wise. At any rate, they survived those days of rain, cold, and hunger. Surely, for old Bernardone, for all the *maiores*, the bishop and everyone else, they were eight starvelings in a miserable shed not fit to protect them against wind and weather. But Francis still remembered the high-sounding names of the heroic epics, by which he had once been used to call his boon companions of merry banquets. "My knights of the Round Table," he now addressed his hungering friends alluding to King Arthur and his host. And when they were singing their joyfully pious songs, he would call them *jongleurs de Dieu*, jesters of God. Everyone was in high spirits. The "knights of poverty" were joking and having a fine time of it while the "minstrels of God" were singing their exuberantly joyful tunes.

The first snow had fallen. It fell from dawn till dusk, all night

and all next day in big white flakes. It was difficult now to leave the shed. "Brother Winter has come," said Francis. "He has come to call us. We cannot sit around empty-handed. God wants us to work. Tomorrow we shall go out into the world, two and two together, to preach the gospel."

When the brethren had moved to Rivo Torto, they had planted a cross made of two pieces of unfinished wood in front of their shed. There they assembled the following morning so that Francis might give them the necessary instructions for their trip. In every detail he followed the instructions which the apostles had been given as stated in the gospel: Do not work for the sake of the earnings but in order to set a good example and to avoid idleness. If you are not rewarded for your work, sit down at the table of charity which the Lord has set for you. When you enter a house, say first, "peace be with you." Spread love, comfort the hearts of the sad and practice poverty. "Go forth," he concluded, "go forth, therefore, my most beloved, two and two, unto all parts of the earth, announcing peace and inciting to penance and the remission of sin. To those who question you, make answer humbly, bless those who persecute you, give thanks to those who injure and calumniate you, for because of these things an eternal kingdom is prepared for you."

Then they separated and went, in commemoration of the cross of Christ, in the form of a cross to the four quarters of the heavens, two eastward, two westward, two northward, and two—Francis and Morico, the cured leper—southward. A singing cross of Christ, stretching farther and farther over the snow into the wintry distance!

After a long journey Francis and Morico came to the valley of Rieti in the foothills of the Abruzzi. This second trip was beset with greater hardship and trouble than the first, but it was also richer in blissful confirmation of their faith. Scorned and rebuked at first, they were finally welcomed everywhere, and whole villages and towns listened to them in worshipful attention. But the abundant joy which the God-given success of his mission instilled in him, plunged Francis for the first time into serious doubts about himself, casting a dark shadow over the spirit of this cheerful servant of God. It was the work of his own past, of all the years of his youth which he had wasted away in the thoughtless distractions

of the world. A feeling of bitter remorse overcame him for every fleeting word, every thoughtless deed, every wasted moment which he had spent in the service of the untruth of worldliness instead of in the service of the truth of God

The day before Francis and Morico had been preaching near Poggio Bustone. The people there wanted to detain them. "Do not go," they said when the travelers were ready to leave. "You have brought us the salvation of Christ."

"Brother Morico," Francis said to his companion, "you have spent your life in purity. So stay with them. I have been a sinner and do not merit the grace of God. So let me go on alone."

He withdrew into a dark cave. It was so narrow that he could enter it only by creeping in on his hands and feet. Sore, covered with dirt, blinded by the darkness, he knelt down and wrung his hands in remorse with his former life, imploring God to forgive him. Then suddenly his dirt-covered hands which he held up folded in prayer were plunged in radiant brightness. He looked up and saw the cave filled with light which transformed the ugliness of the bats on the walls into starlike brilliance, and a soft voice, calling him by his name, said to him "Francis, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven. I have chosen you that you may proclaim my kingdom." He passed his hand over his eyes to make sure that no dream was deluding him. But his hand was filled with light and through it the vision of his eyes grew only keener. And he saw hundreds and thousands of brethren come toward him like rays converging from all directions. He saw them assemble around him in a circle. And then the vision disappeared.

He left the cave and was greeted by a howling snowstorm. The sky was covered with heavy black clouds. The wind tugged at his coat and blew his hair into his face. "Brother Winter," Francis exclaimed, "keep quiet for just one second, I have to proclaim a message of great joy." And when the snowstorm went on storming, he argued with him for a while, as an older brother would, to be given a chance to squeeze in a word of his own. But when Brother Winter would not listen, Francis resorted to a ruse and said softly in a low tone of voice like that of the soul or of a silent prayer: "Brother Bernardo and Aegidius, Morico, Sabatino, Pietro, Philip, John, all of you, wherever you are, return immediately from your trip. God has given us His blessing and has com-

manded our union to prepare His kingdom" Against these silent words, whispered into the distance, the howling uproar of unmannerly Brother Winter was powerless Morico and the brethren in the west, east and north heard them that very moment

The same day, when Francis returned to the little cross of Rivo Torto, it happened that within a few hours all the other brethren came back too Now there were nine, for Francis had brought along a new brother, whose name was Angelo and who had joined him under extraordinary circumstances on his way back through the valley of Rieti Immediately after leaving the cave of Poggio Bustone, when his mind was still entirely preoccupied with the vision he had had, Francis came unexpectedly upon a group of knights Their leader was a young man in a splendid armor whom he had seen more than once in the crowd listening to his sermons at Rieti What Francis said to him now may be accounted for by the excitement of what he had seen in the cave "It is long enough now," he said, "that you have worn armor, sword and spurs It is time that you replace the armor by a cord around your waist, the sword by the cross of Christ, and the spurs by the dust of the road of His disciples Follow me, and I shall make you a knight in the army of Christ our Lord"

This extraordinary request produced an effect which would seem to be part of a vision rather than in clear everyday reality Angelo Tancredi, the knight thus spoken to, dismounted, bade his companions farewell, and followed Francis, determined to share henceforth the austere beggar's life of the apostles.

When Francis told his returning brethren about the vision he had had, the first of the hundreds and thousands of followers that had been promised him stood at his side as living proof And as he continued to proclaim prophetically the coming realization of what he had seen in the cave, the eight others shared his faith and believed in their mission as he did "All of you, my brethren," he said, "will see that many will join us at our Round Table The French will come, the Spaniards are making haste, the Germans and the English are hurrying, great is the number of those, speaking all the tongues of the earth, that will come streaming toward us Rich and poor, burghers and knights, clerks and peasants will come with us to garner in the harvest of the Lord Persist therefore and be of good cheer on the road we follow so that you may

be an example for those coming after us For in the example is the force that changes the world "

The brethren in the shed continued their lives in the accustomed train Except that everything was still easier for them now hunger and cold and rain . It was only February, but the noontday warmth of the sun was a herald of the approaching spring They were only nine, but the promise of the vision shone like a heralding ray of sunlight proclaiming the future growth of their community

The ground outside the shed was still barren in wintry stagnation, but the hearts of those inside the shed were already filled with the expectant excitement which precedes the triumph of spring

The number of the brethren increased again by three A second John, a second Bernardo, and a man by the name of Barbero came to join them

"Now we are twelve," jubilated Francis "Twelve, like the apostles So let us live as the twelve disciples of Christ lived Do not forget that the Lord is in our midst, and be wary lest one of us become a traitor to Him "

The shed at Rivo Torto was really too small for twelve men, but to these twelve it seemed spacious enough Francis surveyed the available room and found for each one a modest little corner Up on the loft he marked out a place for each one to sleep In one spot he drew a chalice That was the canon's berth In another corner he drew a hat for Giovanni a Capello For Aegidius he chose a flower and for Bernado, because of his gentleness, a dove Surely, they were quite crowded, but that did not bother them very much, for each one thought of his neighbor and tried to take up as little room as possible himself And so there was room for all

When they returned from their day's work at the lazar house, they would sit down together in their shed and pray to God or talk about the great community of Christ into which they felt their little group destined to unfold From hour to hour their spirits grew in cheerfulness and often they did not notice that they had not eaten all day long, that their clothes had not dried all through the night

For the twelve men at Rivo Torto, the lives they lived, the words they spoke, the deeds they did were enough of a rule of conduct and action But if later on, as Francis had been promised in the vision of the cave, the number of his disciples would grow

beyond the initial twelve, if the life of poverty of Rivo Torto would be lived by vast multitudes in all lands and times, then it would be necessary that the mode of living of the twelve in the shed be laid down in binding precepts that the tree might become what the seed had dreamed of

Since the time of his vision at Poggio Bustone Francis felt an increasingly pressing urge to formulate the evangelical way of life in terms valid for all his followers in all times. The model was prescribed in unmistakable words in the gospel. There Christ spoke always of renunciation of worldly goods, of contempt for safety on earth. He and His followers owned nothing, no house, no garden. The roads, the fields, the shade of the trees were His and His apostle's refuge. To appease their hunger, He and His disciples had to glean the grains from ears of wheat or eat at the tables of others. He taught humility and practiced it. He preached forgiveness of sin and forgave, and even on the cross He asked His Father in heaven to forgive those who had harmed Him, for He taught love for all beings, also for His enemies, and for the sake of love and forgiveness he became the Lamb of God.

That the lesson of Christ had remained the truth of life after twelve hundred years was proved by the happiness of the twelve at Rivo Torto, who lived His life after Him.

One day Francis sent out two of his disciples to beg in Assisi for parchment, ink, and quill, that he might be able to write down what he had so close at heart. Then he sat down at the foot of the wooden cross at Rivo Torto and began to translate the life he lived into rules and precepts, and as he went on he could not help singing the things he wrote, for it was like a song that sprang with irresistible force from his heart and flowed through his voice into the words on his parchment. The troubadour of Lady Poverty sang the rules of his life. They embodied a vow of faithful adherence to absolute destitution, to love of all things created, and to unlimited humility, because of which his followers were to be called the Friars Minor, the lesser brethren. When he had finished, he called his disciples and read to them what he had written in a joyfully moving tone of voice.

Now he waited that the weather might improve so that he and his eleven brethren could start on their way to Rome to have the rules confirmed by the pope.

Pope Innocent III, the "ruler of kings," was faced, around the year 1210, with the difficult task of meeting with all his skill and authority one of the gravest dangers of his entire pontificate. After a long and bitter struggle he had succeeded in making the feudal power of the papacy supreme over the state, of gaining recognition as absolute ruler over the Patrimony of St. Peter, and of establishing the Curia Romana as the administrative center of all Christianity. He held kings and emperors in tutelage and crowned or deposed them. And now, when the church had been brought to the height of its extraordinary worldly power, its entire structure threatened suddenly to break down. The heretical movement of the Albigenses—which advocated the repudiation of the policy of the church to establish itself as a propertied world power and demanded the return of Christianity to the spirit of evangelical poverty—cast its spell from day to day over ever widening circles of Christians and kept growing in strength despite all papal interdicts and fire and sword employed against them.

The problem for Innocent III was thus to complement the external power which he had built up for the church by a comparable strength of its inner structure.

One day in April, 1210, harassed by his world-political cares and deeply absorbed in thought, he was pacing up and down the terrace of his *palazzo* near the basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome. Suddenly a voice aroused him from his thoughts. Looking up he saw standing before him the insignificant figure of a man with a dark beard and unkempt hair, clothed in a badly patched and threadbare peasant's coat. A begging vagabond that has managed to get by the guard unnoticed—that was his first impression. When the beggar began to talk to him at random about the true gospel, the pope grew impatient. A madman, he thought and decided to make short work of him. "Get going!" he said harshly. And apparently that was all that was needed. He did not have to call the guard. The stranger obeyed immediately and left. A moment later the pope had put the little disturbance out of his mind, and returning to his problems of world-wide statesmanship he continued his walk up and down the terrace.

About a week later the cardinal John of St. Paul, of whom Innocent thought very highly, asked the much-occupied pontiff for a special audience. He came to report, he said, that he had met a

man who had arrived in Rome with eleven followers in order to submit to the pope his rules for a new brotherhood. At first, the cardinal explained, he had been somewhat suspicious of the man and his group, especially since a mere cursory reading of their rules might remind one of the Albigensian heresy. The man's character, however, and his sincere devotion to the church had convinced him quickly of the opposite. To take all possible precautions, he, the cardinal, had quartered the twelve men, who called themselves Friars Minor, in his own house. He had examined them most painstakingly and had watched them in the routine of their daily lives. Thus he had finally come to the conclusion that he was dealing with a friar who was really animated by a noteworthy resurgence of piety. "I have found them to be," he concluded, "men of the highest perfection who strive to live in the spirit of the holy gospel. I believe that the Lord intends to use their work to reform the faith of our holy church everywhere in the world. Therefore I wish to petition the holy father that he receive the leader of this group and consent to listen to what he has to say."

The following day Innocent III was ready amid the pomp of the audience room of the Lateran palace to receive the man of whom the cardinal had spoken in such glowing terms. Then the beggar came in whom he had chased away from his terrace. Only because he wanted to keep the promise he had given the cardinal, the pope now asked Francis to read his rules.

Innocent III was one of the most learned theologians of his time. What the beggar at his feet was reading to him in a trembling tone of voice, impressed him at first as quite simple and naive. At the beginning of his career the pope had himself been full of ideas of world-renunciation, he had even written a learned theoretical essay on it, but his later experience and the growing power of the church had taught him that such notions cannot be adhered to in practice. He did not understand how a man of the intellectual status of cardinal John of St. Paul could ascribe any sort of significance to the rules of this beggar. Of what earthly good could this contemptible-looking little man be to the church? Yet simply to please the cardinal, Innocent condescended graciously to point out to the petitioner for what reasons his plan could not be carried out.

"My son," the pope said to Francis, "the form of life for which you and your brethren are striving, is much too austere, I fear. I

do not doubt that you yourselves can live that way by the strength of your initial enthusiasm. But you must think of those who will come after you and who may not be inspired by the same zeal."

The wisdom of the world spoke thus to the foolishness of a devoted heart. But the reply which the pope received did not fail entirely to impress his pontifical knowledge of life, less through the convincing logic of the words in which it was clothed than because of the childlike confidence with which it was uttered. "Dear Pope Innocent," said Francis, "I rely on my Lord Jesus Christ. He has promised us eternal life and heavenly bliss and will certainly not deny us so trifling a thing as what we need to support our lives on earth."

Less certain now of his own superior wisdom the pope replied quickly to bring this unusual audience to a close. "What you say, my son, is quite true. But human nature is frail and weak and will rarely persevere for long in one state. Go, therefore, and pray to Jesus Christ that He may show you His will, and when we know His will more certainly, we shall the more safely sanction your pious purpose."

Francis, who saw his purpose so clearly as the Lord had outlined it for him, did not quite understand for what additional revelation he should ask in his prayers. As an obedient son of the church he accepted, however, the pope's order and departed in all humility.

When the beggar had left, Innocent gave in to a sudden impulse and convoked a consistory of cardinals to have them examine the rules of the mendicant apostle.

The very next day six cardinal bishops convened as though a matter of the gravest importance for the church had to be decided. In their scarlet hats they gathered around Innocent who was seated on the papal throne. Most of these coolly rational and highly learned men were merely humoring a strange whim of the pontiff when they consented to listen to the new Christian rules of a man who was neither a monk nor a priest, who was neither trained in theology nor influential in the world, who was nothing but a simple vagabond and beggar in a ragged coat, accompanied by eleven uncouth fellows of about the same ilk. It was not quite easy for these high dignitaries of the church to muster enough patience to counter all the foolish talk of the beggar with serious arguments of

their own. For everything this man had to say was not only an absurd exaggeration of the evangelical rules of poverty but beyond that a dangerous innovation, which would bring insecurity and unrest over the established life of traditional Christianity.

Each one of them emphasized in turn that the holy church was after all complying in full with the Christian commandment of poverty in the form of the existing monastic orders. The individual monk owned nothing, which was exactly what the gospel prescribed, and the few things he needed to support himself were given him by his abbot. And then so they continued their argument, was it not of the greatest importance that the individual monk should remain exempt from the worries about material things? Only because of the monastic property was it possible for the individual monk to concentrate his entire life upon God. In the monastery he had his cell, his bed, his frugal but regular meals, and only this economic independence and safety emancipated him from the clutches of egotism so that all his work could be devoted to the welfare of the needy. Compared with the well-ordered communal life of the monks, the cardinals exclaimed, the proposed rules of poverty of these mendicant brethren would merely stipulate a life of uncertainty and adventure as the highest Christian ideal. After all, it could not possibly be in the interest of the church that the faithful be reduced to the status of vagabonds or day-laborers, who never know where they will find their next meal, and who spend their nights hiding behind a hedge, in a shed in the fields or even in a ditch by the side of the road. How could the proposed principle of poverty lead to the organization of a monastery? Where there is no home and haven, there is missing the first prerequisite as well for a permanent and durable life of piety and devotion as also for every form of constructive work for the betterment of the suffering and the poor.

One of the cardinal bishops arose and warned the twelve mendicant brethren against the foolish belief that they could realize their ideal of poverty in the life of the world, in constant intercourse with men, exclusively by means of their sermons. "He who is active in the world, falls victim to the world!" he exclaimed in a loud tone of voice. "Only the solitude of a monastic cell is a guarantee for a truly Christian life of humility, devotion, and poverty."

Then the others arose and suggested that the pope should ad-

vise the mendicant brethren, if their intentions were really sincere, to enter one of the existing brotherhoods of monks. The pope tried to do so. "You have heard," he said to Francis, "what the consistory has to recommend. If you and your followers are really intent upon living your lives in the spirit of the Lord, enter one of the existing orders. In the cells of a monastery you will attain the realization of your ideal."

But Francis, unmoved by either argument or advice, persisted stubbornly in his faith. "Dear Pope Innocent," he said, "we are not afraid of the world and of men. Wherever we are and walk, we may always have our cell with us. For Brother Body is our cell, and our soul is the hermit that remains within praying to God. If the soul does not remain quiet in the body, little profits the pious a cell made by the work of his hands."

Angered by such stubbornness the cardinals advised the pope to reject the dangerous innovations proposed by the beggar. Then the cardinal John of St. Paul arose. So far he had listened quietly to the objections of his colleagues, but now, when they advocated the rejection of Francis' rules, he said in a voice ringing with passion: "If we reject the petition of this poor man as something novel and too hard to fulfill, when all he asks is that the law of life of the gospel be confirmed unto him, let us beware lest we offend against the gospel of Christ. For if anyone shall say that in the observance of evangelical perfection and the vow to observe it, there is contained anything new or irrational or impossible of observance, such a one is convicted of blasphemy against Christ, the author of the gospel."

These words did not fail to make a deep impression upon the pope. Yet cardinal John was alone with his views, one voice against five. It was a difficult decision for Innocent. He adjourned the meeting and postponed his decision till the following day. But the conclusion he reached was not brought about by careful weighing of all the pros and cons. What decided him, were unexpected events which took place in spheres beyond the reality of everyday life, beyond the rational ponderings of a powerful pope. Dreams and the irrational cogency of a parable led to the decision, which was to be of such deep significance for the future development of Christianity, for the very survival of the Christian church.

After the interrupted session of the papal senate, Innocent with-

drew to his bedroom, harassed by indecision. During that night he dreamed that he was pacing up and down the terrace of his *palazzo*, deeply absorbed in thought. Suddenly he noticed that the great old basilica of St. John Lateran with all its spires and domes began to shake and totter and threatened to reel over to one side. At the same moment, however, he saw a man in ragged clothes hurry across the Lateran square toward the basilica to support and hold the endangered structure on his shoulders as a living caryatid. The sleeping pope heaved a deep sigh of relief. Then the man, who carried the cathedral church of Rome, the mother church of all churches in the Catholic world, turned his face toward Innocent, and Innocent recognized that it was none other than the friar minor Francis.

Francis spent that night in prayer. Toward morning he finally fell asleep and dreamed that he was standing before a giant tree. He stretched out his hands towards its crown, and through this ascending gesture he himself grew taller and taller. Then suddenly the treetop bent down toward him. As he awoke, he was filled with the deepest confidence, and it seemed to him, during those first few moments when he was still half asleep, that the pope was the tree that had bent down toward him.

Then the reality of everyday life resumed its rule, the reality of the Roman Curia, of the council rules of the consistory of the cardinals. The treetop of the dream and the human caryatid faced each other in broad daylight as a pope on his throne of gold and a poor petitioner in his tattered rags.

The cardinals went on with their objections and kept repeating the question: How is this brotherhood going to survive if it holds no earthly possessions whatever? How can it fail to become a burden and a disgrace to the Church?

Francis had nothing of practical importance to answer. He stood there silently for a while, and then the same thing happened again to him that had happened to him more than once before in his life. He said something of which a second before he himself had not thought at all. He told a parable which occurred to him at that very moment.

He spoke of a king who had gone out into the wilderness where he met a wondrously beautiful woman. He stayed with her for a long time, and she bore him many sons. Then he left her and re-

turned to his court. Meanwhile the boys grew up, and the poor woman did not know how she could feed and support them. She sent her sons to the king's court and said to them "Be not afraid, for you are the king's children. He will give you all you need." When the sons appeared before the king, he saw that they bore his features and asked "Who is your mother?" They answered and gave him the name of the poor woman. He embraced them and said "I shall feed you at my table. There are many strangers eating there, but you are my sons."

The cardinals looked surprised and shook their venerable heads. What a confused and simple-minded story! That was no answer to their practical objections.

But Francis paid them no heed and continued "Dear Pope, I am that poor woman. God in His infinite grace has known me, and I have borne him sons in Christ. And the king of kings has promised me to care for all my descendants, for He who feeds all strangers, will certainly feed the children of the house."

Spell-bound the pope had listened to these words. Francis' parable, which came from an irrational sphere, disrupted for him the factual realism of the session and conjured up the dreamed reality of the preceding night. Then he saw in the ragged petitioner at his feet the human caryatid holding on its shoulders the tottering church of St. John Lateran. And acting as though in the sphere of this dreamed reality, the pope arose and proclaimed to the great amazement of the cardinals "Verily, this is the man through whom the Church of God shall be erected anew." And turning to the friars minor, he added "Go forth with the Lord, brothers, and as the Lord shall deign to inspire you, do you preach unto all men. But when God Almighty shall have multiplied you in numbers, come again to me and I will grant more unto you than this and commit to you greater powers." Then he bent down to Francis who was kneeling before him and embraced him and blessed him. As in Francis' dream, the treetop bent down toward him.

This happened on the sixteenth of April, 1210. With joy in his heart Francis started on his way to Assisi, accompanied by his brothers and preaching henceforth his gospel of poverty with the pope's approval.

He who had left Assisi as a despised beggar, as a fool whom no

one was willing to take seriously, returned now as a man whose self-imposed poverty had been pronounced pleasing to God by the Pope himself, and whose strange and abstruse talk the Holy Father had confirmed by his blessing as the true gospel of Christ

The church of San Giorgio was assigned to him by the bishop for his sermons, but it was much too small and had room for only a small portion of the people who had come to hear him. For this reason Bishop Guido asked Francis to preach in the great cathedral of San Ruffino. It had recently been completed. In it there were neither pews nor benches. The congregation had to kneel or stand up. Every place was taken, and still there was not enough room for all those who had come. Many were crowded at the doors and filled the piazza in front of the cathedral. All of Assisi had come, rich and poor, noblemen and paupers, burghers and peasants, laymen and clerics. Those too had come who not so long ago had laughed at him and had turned him away from their doors. Francis' father was among the first to appear in the cathedral. The form of life his son had chosen remained strange and incomprehensible for him, but it filled him with pride that a Bernardone had been blessed by the Pope and was preaching from the pulpit of the cathedral to the people of Assisi. Near him stood Donna Pica, overflowing with motherly bliss. The miserly merchant that was John's father had come too, although with mixed feelings, for it had been his dream to leave his store to his son who had chosen to follow a preacher whom all of Assisi made ready to honor and revere. A storekeeper proposes, but God disposes.

However different the motives might be that brought these people together—worship, curiosity, indecision, remorse—all their emotions were submerged in the surging enthusiasm which emanated from the words spoken by that insignificant-looking little man in the pulpit. And still that man in the pulpit was none other than the beggar Francis who used to preach in the market square, the black sheep of the Bernardone family, the thief who robbed righteous fathers and mothers of their sons. And he really said nothing the fool in the market place had not proclaimed too. "Love one another, and forget that you are rich or poor, for a man is only what he represents in the eyes of God." Yet spoken from the pulpit, it sounded like a new gospel. The poor felt their souls filled with cheer by his words, for what he said to them, no one had

dared to say before. The rich felt remorse and a deep yearning for that state of bliss which no earthly possessions could give them.

When Francis left the cathedral, the people, in a tumult of joy and enthusiasm, barred his path, shouting and sobbing, pressing forward to touch him, and going down on their knees in his praise. Francis could hardly keep them off, and as though in despair, he kept repeating "Not I, but God, not I!"

As fast as he could, he hurried away from the scene of his triumph, back to his shed at Rivo Torto. His feet could not carry him as fast as his longing heart urged them to. Surely, at San Rufino and in the market place of Assisi, there were hundreds and thousands cheering and hailing him, but in the shed there were eleven, and they shared his life and followed him. In the cathedral he preached the gospel, but in the shed he could live it.

Since his return from Rome, since the day of his sermon from the pulpit of the cathedral, Francis' life appeared to the people more and more as what it really was: the life of a saint. His carefree disregard for worldly concerns, was trust in God, his self-imposed poverty, God-pleasing humility, his work a shining example in support of the things he taught. And when they began now to call him the little poor man, *il Poverello*, it was a title of nobility bestowed upon him by the people of Assisi.

The happiness of his humble home stayed with Francis. It was with him on that rainy Sunday when he was to enter the shed at Rivo Torto for the last time. He was kneeling in prayer, together with his brothers, to thank God for His great clemency, when suddenly loud shouts of "hoy!" and "gee up! gee ho!" from outside the shed mungled in strange concert with the words of their prayers. A short while later a donkey, followed by a driver who had never been seen in those parts before, came pushing in, walking right through and over the rows of kneeling worshippers.

The driver had thought he might find shelter from the pouring rain inside the little shed, but once he had settled down, he decided that the place was quite suitable as a permanent abode for himself and his beast. "Well, neddy," he said to the donkey, "Let's stay here." In this plan the friars were left out, and when the rain abated, he told them without mincing words "What are you loitering around here for? Get out! I need the shed for my poké."

Francis did not object. The shed belonged to him and his brothers as little as anything else on earth. God had allowed them to live there for a while. The days they had spent at Rivo Torto had been days of joy and happiness, but now the driver and his donkey had arrived, and the two of them had as much right to settle down in the shed as he and his brothers. "Come," he said to his men. "Let us go and look for another place."

A few drops were still falling when they left the shed, and the sun was trying to break through the dark clouds. The friars stood there for a while not knowing which way to turn. Then Francis discovered near the cross in front of the shed a cowslip, the first of that spring. Like a child he ran over to pick it and returned with it, filled with joy. "Look," he said, "how wonderful it is. God has created it for us that we may rejoice in it and be aware of the splendors of His creation." And so they could not help being cheerful again and they praised and thanked God who had given them Sister Cowslip to console them after they had lost their shed.

Meanwhile the sun had triumphed over the clouds and warmed the shivering friars. Ever since his recovery from illness, when he had entrusted himself for the first time to the guiding strength of sunlight, the sun had been for Francis a caller and helper and a strong brother of heavenly descent. When the sun shone, Francis' soul was filled with confidence. And this confidence was everything for him, it meant dispersal of darkness, victory over clouds, salvation from need, for in sun and confidence eternity triumphed over passing clouds in the sky and ephemeral sadness on earth.

"Wait here, brothers, and pray to the Father," he said to the eleven. "I must go on an important errand with Brother Sun." And he went the way of the sun, which took him from Rivo Torto in the direction of Mount Subasio, where the sun went down. There he came to an old Benedictine abbey to which belonged all the small chapels in the vicinity and among them also St. Mary of the Angels, the Portiuncula, together with the grove in which it was located. In his sun-given confidence Francis asked the abbot to permit him and his followers to settle down at the Portiuncula. He asked with the humility of a beggar submitting a major request to a high dignitary of the church. But the abbot saw in the petitioner the master builder to whose disinterested work he owed the restoration of the Benedictine chapels of San Damian and St. Mary

of the Angels. He was pleased to have finally a chance to repay an old debt and exclaimed "All we own around the Portiuncula, including the church itself, shall henceforth and for all times be your property."

"Our property? Oh no, God forbid!" Francis replied. "But we would like to rent the Portiuncula if we may pay for it with our work."

The abbot respected the spirit of this new form of piety that refused to have anything to do with earthly possessions. And it was agreed that the rent should be a basketful of fish, which the friars were to catch in the stream below the Portiuncula and which they were to deliver to the abbey once every twelve months.

The first night in their newly rented domain the twelve friars had to spend under the changing canopy of a night in early spring with heavy clouds of rain passing and giving way to a clear and starlit sky. In the morning they were aroused by the twitter of birds that seemed to urge them to start the work of building their new shelter.

God had helped them to find this piece of land, and God supplied them also with the building material for their new abode. They merely had to look around. There was everything there as though in readiness for the twelve huts they were going to build. There were posts and rocks, branches, leaves, and mud. And all they had to do was to drive in posts in twelve different places throughout the grove, to fasten the branches and cover them with a layer of mud and stones, to thatch the roofs with dry leaves, and to level the ground inside so that it could serve as table, chair, and bed. Before long their twelve little homes were finished. Nearby was the stream with an abundance of fish, the woods all around held an inexhaustible supply of herbs and roots, and nothing was lacking that these twelve men needed to be perfectly happy in their desire to serve God. In the center of their new settlement they even had a church.

Up to this time the Portiuncula—with its oblong barrel vault, its semicircular apse, and an altar with a picture of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary—had been merely a deserted little chapel tucked away in the woods. On rare occasions a Benedictine priest would come there to celebrate mass. But now the little church was going

to have its own priest, a priest of the new evangelical brotherhood.

The twelve friars were standing knee-deep in the stream below their huts, busily engaged in filling a basket with fishes to pay their first year's rent, when the missing Brother Priest for the chapel arrived. His name was Sylvester, and before he had exchanged his clerical robes for the beggar's cowl of the friars minor, he had been the priest of one of the most important churches of Assisi and had been one of those who ridiculed Francis and his followers. But Francis' sermon from the pulpit of the cathedral had made a deep impression on him, and his conscience told him that he was a false servant of Christ. Driven by remorse, he went out to the Portiuncula and became the priest of the friars' chapel in the woods. This happened in the early morning hours of the second day the friars spent in their new homes. That same day Sylvester could celebrate mass for them. And before night fell, a hut of branches and leaves was finished for him too.

As a gift of welcome the Benedictine monks of Subasio had sent the friars minor a few ounces of oil. Brother Hat had gone on a begging mission and had returned with a supply of bread. Brother Wood had supplied herbs and roots. Everything was set for the friars to assemble that night at a festive banquet. The moon provided the illumination. Sylvester took the bread, gave thanks and broke it in the name of the Lord. The brothers poured oil over the bread, they added roots and herbs—it was a delicious meal.

Francis intoned a new stanza of his song of homage to Lady Poverty. The brothers joined in. And when Sylvester wanted to say grace and pray the Lord's Prayer, Francis said: "Let us sing it and dance it. Our Father is the father of joy. He has given us speech that we may sing. He has created man that he may dance in happiness." Then Sylvester raised his voice of prayer to melody and song, and the others prayed with him, singing and moving their bodies in the rhythms of dance. They all were very happy, and the dedication banquet in the woods lasted far into the night.

The next time the group assembled for a meal of brotherly love, two new disciples had joined the round table in the forest. Shortly thereafter there was a third and then a fourth. They formed that first Franciscan circle whose members differed from each other as only brothers can differ and at the same time resembled each other as only brothers do. One with carefree and smiling features, the

other serious and thoughtful, one pair of eyes filled with burning passion, the other looking out into the world as through the haze of a quietly absorbing dream, and voices which demanded while others entreated in hesitant supplication. But still they all bore unmistakably the family traits of poverty, humility, and love. Each one of them sang the same song of Lady Poverty and lived in accordance with what he sang. The words and deeds of them all are woven into the most beautiful legends of St. Francis.

At this time Brother Ginepro or Brother Juniper had joined the group. It is of him that Francis once said "I wish I had a whole forest of such juniper shrubs." Then followed Brother Leone or Brother Lion. Because of his gentleness and in contrast to the significance of his name, Francis called him the little lamb of God and chose him as his secretary and confessor. The next one was the imposing Brother Masseo, whose impressive appearance and irresistible power of speech won over so many disciples for the new gospel. Another in this circle was Brother James, a plain farmer, whose speech was inarticulate but who was strong in faith and in deeds. Finally there was Brother Ruffino, a nobleman of the house of Sciffi, who abandoned his noble birthright in favor of the nobility of poverty and set an example for those numerous knights who exchanged at a later time their pride for humility and their palaces for a hut at the Portiuncula.

To crown their union, the brothers of poverty were given a sister in the person of St. Clara. She was the daughter of the powerful nobleman Favorino Sciffi. Noble of stature, with harmonious features, shining blue eyes and long blond hair, she was the most beautiful woman of Assisi.

After Francis' return from his missionary journey through Tuscany in 1212, he preached again in the cathedral of Assisi. It was at that time that Clara heard and saw him for the first time. The small, not at all impressive-looking man with his thin beard and disheveled hair stood in the pulpit, gesticulating wildly and hardly able to look over the parapet. Yet no sooner did he raise his voice to proclaim the message of Christ, than it emanated the greatest loveliness and beauty which came from a realm beyond the terrestrial sphere but rang so powerfully through the spacious aisles of the cathedral that under its impact everything seemed to be trans-

figured "The little black hen," as Francis liked to call himself, was preaching from the pulpit, but Clara saw only the figure that arose from the loveliness and beauty of his words. She knelt down in the front row of the great congregation that filled the cathedral to capacity. Before her, next to the altar, sat the bishop and the clerics in their festive robes. To her right and left stood the rest of her family and the young nobleman whom her father had chosen as her husband. But Clara did not see the crowd, nor the bishop, her parents, the young nobleman, the cathedral—nothing of all the things around her. She saw only what the speaking voice proclaimed: Christ the Eternal, who was sitting to the right of His Father in heaven and called His brothers and sisters to take part in His eternal feast of love and joy.

The sermon was finished, but the image, which the voice had conjured up, remained. The call of the Lord which Clara had heard rang on in her heart.

Francis came down from the pulpit and mingled with the crowd. Hundreds of people surrounded him, waiting to ask for his blessing and his advice. Clara's family grew impatient and wanted to leave. But she insisted on staying and waited till her turn came.

Then she stood face to face with Francis. Spell-bound she looked at the ugly little man in his beggar's coat. The voice of loveliness and beauty, the voice through which Christ had called His guests to His heavenly banquet, stood before her in corporeal shape. She asked Francis to show her the road leading to the Father in heaven, but in doing so, she merely obeyed the call that had reached her through his sermon.

The little beggar stood face to face with the tall noblewoman courted by knightly suitors. Her face was oval, her skin delicate and spotless, and her long golden hair fell down over her gown of white silk. But he did not see her as everybody else did, for a greater beauty than hers held him enthralled. Heavenly beauty stood before him incarnate and had arisen from the words she spoke to him. He only heard that she said to him, "Show me the road which leads to the Father," and these familiar sounds were like an echo of the language of his soul. He looked at her in silence as though he wanted to determine who she really was. His eyes met hers. Then she said, "Brother," and suddenly he recognized her. "Sister," he replied and found it difficult to control his voice so as

not to shout the word through the aisles of the cathedral His heart was overflowing with joy and jubilation

Clara's family refused to wait any longer, and she left with them But they were no longer her family She returned to the palace of her parents But it was no longer her home The young knight talked to her of love and marital bliss But the love and bliss he had in mind were no longer hers She sat down at a festively adorned table in the home of her parents But she was sitting among strangers in the home of people she no longer knew And when she went to bed in her room, it was no longer her room, it was no longer her bed In the morning she awoke in a strange house and spent the day in a strange environment The people around her spoke a strange language She lived in a strange world and endured this life only to prepare her escape the more carefully—her escape from the strange world of wealth and abundance to the homeland of poverty of her brother

After his sermons in the cathedral, Francis was always surrounded by innumerable people who wanted to talk to him about their personal troubles So it was possible for Clara, without attracting attention, to stay again after the next sermon she attended and have a brief conversation with Francis It was then that she told him about her decision and asked him to help her in carrying it out

What Francis did is reminiscent of the brother in a fairy tale, who frees his sister from bondage in a foreign land Clara's escape was planned for the night after Palm Sunday In the morning, dressed in a beautiful robe of white silk and adorned with precious stones,—accompanied by her parents and the young nobleman—she went once again to the cathedral, where the altar was being decked out with palm fronds The rest of the day and the evening she spent in the company of the guests whom her father had invited to a festive Palm-Sunday banquet All the while she wore her robe of white silk and her precious jewelry And she was still wearing them when, after the departure of the last guests and after her family and the servants had gone to bed, she left her father's mansion in the quiet darkness of night Cautiously she walked through the garden in back of the building, reached the street by way of a hidden gate in the high wall, hastened through the deserted town and across dark fields until she finally reached

the grove of the Portiuncula. At the edge of the grove she was welcomed by the friars whom Francis had sent out with torches to meet her and guide her the rest of the way to the chapel. Inside the chapel she knelt down before the image of the Virgin Mary and prayed. When she arose again, she took off her robe of white silk, her jewels and fine shoes of soft leather and put on the cowl of poverty which the friars had prepared for her. Then Francis came himself to rid her with his own hands of her last remaining worldly adornment. He cut off her beautiful golden hair. Thus shorn, barefoot, and dressed in the cowl of poverty, the sister stood face to face with the brother. Into his brotherly hand she promised solemnly to keep the vow of poverty.

That same night the friars took her to the nearby convent of San Bastian, and a few days later,—before her father, who had traced her to San Bastian, could do anything about it—she went to the convent of San Angelo in Panzo, which seemed to offer a better and more secure asylum. There she remained until Favorino Sciffi gave in because he finally understood that his paternal authority was powerless before the call of the Father in heaven.

Three weeks had gone by since Clara's flight when the wealthy and proud nobleman Sciffi lost also his younger daughter Agnes. She followed the example of her older sister and gave herself up to poverty and humility.

When Francis started on his way to spread the glad tidings among men, he merely obeyed an evangelical command. The brotherhood that arose from these beginnings had never been planned. It grew up and ripened like a harvest in the fields. Francis was merely the workman whom the Lord sent out to bring in the crop. But now it seemed that the Lord had decided that the brotherhood was too narrow, and he gave Francis a group of sisters so that all His children might be united by the ties of their common filiation. The sisterhood, too, had never been planned. It too had grown from the seeds of the word of God and was given to Francis as a divine trust. A little hut was provided at San Damian for Clara and Agnes who lived there, like the brothers, a life of poverty and devotion.

And just as the group of brothers at the Portiuncula kept increasing by a constant stream of new arrivals, so the poor sisters

at San Damian too were soon joined by other women from the most different walks of life. There were peasant women and servant girls and ladies from noble families. Among these was the lady of Sciffi, Clara's and Agnes' mother.

The "little garden of sisters of poverty" was the name Clara had for San Damian, and she thought of it as a complement to the great "forest of brothers of poverty" at the Portiuncula. Of herself she spoke as "the smallest plant that Francis raised in the garden of poverty." But Francis, in his minstrel's exuberance, gave her all the names of all the flowers he loved, for one of them would not have been enough to express the splendor and beauty which Clara signified in the garden of poverty and humbleness.

Dante may have elevated Beatrice to the ninth sphere of the heavens, Poe may have compared his love for Anabel Lee with the love of angels. Yet modern analysis with its delight in "peering close where very little is," has done its utmost to show up traces of repressed eroticism under what it sees fit to interpret as supersensual camouflage. Modern psychology has succeeded in tracing a phallic element as the fundamental theme in every myth and every fairy tale, in proving the presence of sensuousness in a sublimated form in the cult of the Holy Virgin as well as in the love of Christ. The dissecting scalpel of psychoanalysis uncovers in the same way an element of marked eroticism in the elective affinity of Brother Francis and Sister Clara. The poetic legends have a different story to tell, and in a way there is greater wisdom in their simple trust than in the skepticism of the learned, there is more truth in the legends with their contemporary origin than in all the attempts at hairsplitting interpretation of the analysts of modern times.

This is the story the legends have to tell. Once upon a time Francis invited Clara and one of her companions to eat with him and his brothers at the Portiuncula. They ate their meal of poverty from the ground which served them as banquet table. And while they were eating, Francis began to talk to Clara so beautifully about the love of God, that both of them and all their companions were inflamed in ecstatic ardor. The townspeople of Assisi saw that the sky over the Portiuncula was glowing red as though the chapel and the entire grove were on fire. They came out quickly with shovels and pails to fight the fire, but when they arrived at the Portiuncula,

they found Francis surrounded by the enraptured company of his brothers and sisters and talking to Clara about the love of God. Then they saw that what back in town had looked like a forest fire was merely the flame which leaped up from Francis' and Clara's saintly love in God.

The number of huts around the Portiuncula kept growing. In less than a year there were forty, and the grove itself had become too small to house the constant influx of new brothers. The hills around and the slopes of Mount Subasio were strewn with hermits' homes where the brothers of poverty lived the life that Francis taught them. Before long the brotherhood was to spread farther still. It was to spread over the entire world, for the "forest of brothers of the Portiuncula" was the beginning of the world-wide order of the Franciscan monks. By its side the sisterhood of St. Clara kept growing too. The little "garden of sisters of San Damiano" was the beginning of the world-wide order of Poor Clares.

In those years Francis' work among men was one continuous triumph of his apostleship. Every place he visited became a place of joyous proclamation. And the gospel of jubilation was so strong in him that it came pouring forth from the depth of his soul, not only in churches and market squares where large crowds gathered together to listen to his words, but at all times and everywhere he went. He gave his message to a servant girl he met at the well, to a rich burgher who handed him a charitable gift at his door, to boys and girls who interrupted their play in the street to listen to him, to a wrinkled old woman, or to a gamboling group of young people. Everything served him as pulpit, the well, the street, the city gate, or a road in the fields. And everywhere he found some who left all things behind and followed him as his disciples.

Numberless are the places throughout Umbria and Tuscany where Francis preached his sermons among men. But equally numberless are the caves and gorges where he stayed in deepest solitude and silence. For time and again an irresistible power drove him to seek out a lonely refuge, far away from the crowds of men and women listening attentively to his words, so that the preacher in him might abide in silence while the herald of Christ's message of joy gave all his thoughts in a spirit of penitence to the passion of our Lord. And at times this power overcame him so suddenly and

completely that he began to wonder in the midst of his most successful work as a messenger of Christ whether his true calling was not to withdraw to a life of solitude and contemplation of God

Francis lived through all his actions long before their meaning became clear to him, he walked along his paths before he knew about their goal, in his life the deed always preceded the conception of a purpose His doings seem inspired by the unknown attainment of a subsequent time

On Ash Wednesday, in the year 1213, when once again he felt overpowered by the yearning for solitude, he had a fisherman take him across Lake Trasimeno to the uninhabited Isola Maggiore, where he intended to spend the forty days of the Great Fast in prayer and repentance.

One night, when he looked up after long hours of contemplation and prayer, a hare was sitting next to him, watching him attentively and without signs of fear or distrust Francis stroked him gently, and the hare stayed with him He slept near him and awoke with him in the morning and sat quietly while Francis said his prayers When Francis walked around on the island, the hare came hopping along Francis gathered fine herbs and leaves for his new companion, and the hare ate them out of his hand A deep friendship grew up between the silent faster and the dumb animal—a friendship in silence

The man, whose words captivated the attention of jubilant crowds in churches and market places, spent forty days on Isola Maggiore in the company of a hare

On Maundy Thursday the fisherman's boat returned to take Francis back to his work among men "Good-by, Brother Twitching Lip," he said when he left the island

Francis and Brother Leone were out on the road, wandering in the direction of the Romagna where they wanted to preach the gospel They passed by the castle of Montefeltro where the young master was knighted under great ceremonies Flying banners, visible from afar, marked the solemnity of the occasion Knights on fiery steeds rode up to the gates of the castle, noble ladies, tightly laced and wearing towering headgears, followed in stately carriages, and busy servants and pages hurried back and forth across the drawbridge

When the merchant's son Francis Bernardone was still the young troubadour of Assisi, it was his most cherished dream to appear some day before a festive group of knights and noble ladies and to recite to them his songs in the manner of Divini, the admired singer of the Provence. This dream, which the worldly troubadour had been dreaming in vain, was now to come true for the troubadour of God. In the turmoil of the festive procession along the approaches to the castle, Francis succeeded in passing unnoticed across the bridge into the inner court.

A flourish of trumpets marked the beginning of the tournament. When the echo died away, a voice was heard from the top of the flight of stairs leading from the court into the castle building. It was the voice of a little man in a beggar's coat, who stood there and spoke and sang—spoke and sang of God, of poverty and love. The liveried servants hurried up the stairs, ready to chase away the self-invited guest. But the knights and the ladies called them back, for what the stranger sang and spoke was possessed of a fascination that enthralled them all. His sermon admonished the rich, the proud, and the worldly to repent and do penance. But it was a sermon that had the ring of a beautiful song the like of which they had never heard before. Down in the court the light flutter of the pennants and flags, moving gently in the summer breeze, could be heard distinctly, so quiet were the knights and ladies listening spell-bound to the words of the beggar.

The sermon was over. Francis had left Montefeltro. The noble count Orlando di Chiusi, however, was so deeply stirred by the sermon he had heard, that he had to find some way of expressing his thanks to the beggar. He left the company and followed the stranger. Money and wealth were not the things he could offer this apostle of frugality. But the extensive territory which belonged to him and his family included, high up in the Apennines, a mountain—Alverno it was called—which was a veritable symbol of barrenness and solitude. That he might offer as a token of his heartfelt admiration even to so convinced a pauper as this voluntary beggar.

When the count caught up with Francis, he said to him. "I am enmeshed in the sins of worldliness, but for the sake of my soul's salvation I would like to make you a present of Alverno that you may pray there in the proximity of God."

Because of the destitute barrenness of Alverno, the count's extraordinary offer brought about one of the most serious crises in Francis' life. His longing for solitude and communion with God, which conflicted in his soul with the desire to continue his apostolic work, seemed to assume the massive power of Alverno.

Francis continued on his way to preach the gospel in the towns and villages of the Romagna, but henceforth the temptation of final solitude was pressing down on his soul with the weight of a mountain.

After he completed his missionary journey and returned to the Portiuncula, the conflict between preaching and silence, between solitude in God and service among men, assumed ever greater dimensions. When he thought of Alverno, his apostolic activities appeared to him as mere patchwork compared with the bliss which the proximity of God held out to him on that barren Apennine peak.

Alverno was the place where later on St. Francis' imitation of Christ was to achieve a perfect mystical reunion with the Savior. As though in groping anticipation of his final destiny, he yearned to spend the rest of his life in absorption in God in the solitude of those mountainous wastes.

But the time had not arrived. His work on earth was not complete. The power of speech, which had been given to no one in such measure, had not attained its fullest development. The schism in his soul, which at this time had full sway over his life, did not permit him to distinguish between the demands of the day and the goal of tomorrow. The end was entangled in the middle, the fruit tried to precede the flower. He himself was unable to find a way out of this uncertainty. A loving sister and a loving brother, whom he asked for advice, had to assist him. Sister Clara, in whose unfailing feminine intuition he had full confidence, and Brother Sylvester, who lived now, after his previous work as a preacher and confessor, in a cave on Mount Subasio in penitential solitude,—these two, who had themselves been overcome and changed by the power of his word, advised him to remain in the world and to go on preaching the gospel so that the whole earth, like their individual lives, might be overcome and changed by it.

The vision of love is clear. They guided him wisely. For when Francis accepted their advice and went out again to preach the

word of God, the power of his sermons was to expand to such heights as were never attained, before or after, by the words of men

With two of his disciples, Masseo and Angelo, Francis had gone to the valley of Spoleto to preach in the town of Bavagna. They had passed through Cannara, from where a mountainous path led up to Cantalupo, and now they reached the road which went on to Bavagna.

Since the conflict in Francis' soul had been removed, his natural cheerfulness came to the fore again, that ecstatic exuberance which was a fundamental trait of his character and enabled him to burst forth in childlike delight for no other reason than that he was one of God's creatures. The road he pursued was just a straight and dusty white road with fields on either side. But he who walked on it was filled with ecstatic joy and able to see the beauty of all things, the delicate splendor of every leaf and blade of grass, and to sense the tender love of the Father who had created it all. And suddenly he grew aware of the oneness pervading all things through the oneness of their common Creator, and his soul overflowed with a feeling of brotherhood with all created things. A sensation of love overcame him, stronger than any he had ever sensed before, a sensation of brotherly love for earth and cloud, for leaf and blade of grass, for everything under the sun. And all along his way he sang and prayed, and it was always the same thanksgiving addressed to the Creator for the great gift of being part of Creation.

In the distance the towers and walls of Bavagna were visible, where Francis and his disciples were to preach on the market place. They reached a spot which has since become famous and is now called Pian d'Arca. There were some trees there, whose branches were heavily laden with a swarm of birds of many colors, and the ground under the trees too was densely covered with hundreds of fluttering birds. Their songs and their twittering filled the air, and every bird had its own call and its own song.

In his boundless joy Francis walked ahead of his companions, and as he approached the trees, the birds on their branches and on the ground below sensed the delight in his soul. They forgot their birds' shyness. They flew up from the ground and down from the branches and came over to meet him and to welcome him with

their many-voiced twitter and song When Francis stood in their midst, they gathered around him in a circle, on the ground at his feet and on the branches all around, from where they could see him better, as from the galleries of a concert hall A mere flock of birds for normal human eyes, the chirrup and twitter of ordinary birds for normal ears, yet in it the lover in his ecstasy saw and heard the tense expectation and jubilant welcome of an impatient congregation of brothers and sisters. He raised his hand, for he had understood that he was to preach to his feathered brothers and sisters, and it was his innate joy and his brotherly love for all things created that led him to such understanding

And he began "My little sisters and brothers the birds, you are much beholden to God your Creator, and you ought to praise Him because He has given you liberty to fly about in all places, and has given you double and triple raiment And again you are beholden to Him, that although you neither sow nor reap, God feeds you and gives you the brooks and the fountains for your drink, the mountains and valleys for your refuge, and the tall trees wherein to make your nests And since you know neither how to spin nor to stitch, He clothes you and your young ones Wherefore your Creator loves you much, since He has bestowed on you so many benefits And therefore take care, my little brothers and sisters, of the sin of ingratitude, and study always to please and praise God"

After these words the birds opened their beaks, beat their wings and bowed their little heads reverently down to the ground, singing and praising God, and showing that they had well understood what Francis had said to them And Francis raised his arms and sang with them Then he blessed his brothers and sisters the birds, and the whole feathered flock flew up and dispersed in the air

The joyous message of Christ has been heard by millions of men and women of all classes and races and nations on earth, by the rich and the poor, the lowly and exalted, the learned and simple in all parts of the globe Yet there is nothing that could be compared with the apostolic victory that was won by the word of God in the year 1213 on the country road between Assisi and Bavagna Birds interrupted their chirping and singing to listen to it, and birds raised their voices in praise of God to prove that they had heard it Never, before or after, has human speech exerted such power as then and there, when it broke the limits of the world of man and

became comprehensible and meaningful in the realm of birds. It was St. Francis' childlike love that achieved this miracle of miracles. His ecstatic love for his Creator and Father made him address the birds as though they were reasonable beings, and it was that same love that gave his voice the familiar ring which convinced the birds that a brother of theirs—Brother Man—was talking to them with a human voice about their common Father

Two disciples, Masseo and Angelo, were the only witnesses of Francis' sermon to the birds of Pian d'Arca, and they were the ones through whom the miraculous story was handed down to posterity

Shortly Francis reached the little town of Alviano not far from Orvieto. He was standing in the market square, ready to preach to the townspeople who had come in great numbers to listen to his words. It was toward nightfall, and hundreds of swallows, whose nests were hidden everywhere in the old walls and dilapidated towers of Alviano, kept circling over the square which resounded with their unceasing twitter. Francis and Masseo sang the *laude*, and the crowd waited in tense silence for the sermon to begin. But the swallows kept coming in ever greater numbers, circling closer and closer over the square and filling the air with their constant twitter that nothing else could be heard.

Francis waited a while, watching the swallows and wondering when they would finally go to rest. Finally he turned to them and said with his soft voice: "My brothers and sisters the swallows, it is now time for me to speak. You have been speaking enough all the time." And right away the swallows were silent as though they meant to heed the request of an older brother. They settled down on the cornices and roofs of the buildings, lowered their heads in worshipful respect and listened silently to the sermon as the people did down below in the square. Only when Francis had finished and the people sang a song of jubilation and praise, the swallows too raised their voices again and chuned in with the hymn of human joy.

All the inhabitants of Alviano, who had gathered that evening on the market square, witnessed this extraordinary occurrence. Hundreds of voices exclaimed with one voice: "A miracle! A miracle! A saint!"

The bells in the church tower began ringing. Who had set them going? The entire population of Alviano was in the market place.

No one had left. The bells were going all by themselves as a sign to men that the day and the hour had come to repent and begin a new life. And while the bells were ringing,—the bells which no one had set going—while the voices of men and swallows merged in one great song of jubilation and praise, one after the other, hundreds and hundreds, masters and laborers, noblemen and peasants, men and women, old people and children, came to Francis and asked him to admit them to the ranks of his disciples, and they confessed their sins and were willing to abandon their castles, their houses and fields to follow him henceforth in poverty, humbleness and love.

A whole town saw and believed the miracle of the swallows and acted in accordance with it. For a skeptical historian of modern times the testimonial of a little town of the credulous thirteenth century is naturally in no way more reliable than that of the two disciples telling about the sermon to the birds of Pian d'Arca. Such accounts can easily be disposed of by the simple term of "mass suggestion." Certainly, a miracle is no ascertainable historical event, and the most beautiful legend is no factual account exempt from all possible doubt. Yet one thing *is* an uncontested and uncontestable fact: the historical repercussions which the sermon to the birds and the miracle of the swallows had, the revolution they brought about in art and the decisive change they initiated in the social structure of the Middle Ages.

St. Francis' miracle of the birds marks the beginning of a new epoch in the cultural history of the Occident. In it the word of God had broken the isolation of the human world and had penetrated the world of nature. And through it and after it, art and poetry and finally science achieved a similar breaking down of the isolation and restriction of man's emotions and thought. The medieval rigidity, with which Byzantine painting represented its saints, disappeared entirely, and movement, breath, and life were introduced in its place. The solemn uniformity of a gold ground was dispensed with in favor of a natural background. Now the saints merged in color and line with sun and clouds, with trees and birds and all created things. The representation of the living and moving human figure, the portrayal of nature in Art, which were to lead at a later time to the great paintings of the Renaissance, had

their beginnings in the artistic portrayal and representation of the legend of the birds

Christian art, like all the other great arts of the past, had its origin in religion and was created for the edification of the faithful. The works of the painters constituted a great picture book in which medieval men and women beheld with their own eyes the earthly experiences and the heavenly glorification of holy personages of the Redeemer on the cross, the Holy Virgin and the martyrs, of penitent ascetics and the learned Church Fathers. With the representation in art of St. Francis, a new chapter opens, for this saint had spoken to the sun, the clouds, the flowers and animals. He had called them brother and sister, and even the birds had understood his words. All of creation, all of nature was thus drawn into the orbit of the life of a saint and became part and parcel of a devotional theme for the artist.

And since the mysteries of the Christian faith were thus placed right in the midst of natural phenomena, since the world of the senses came thus to be moved up into the sphere of supersensual piety, a young and joyous feeling for nature awoke in the human soul. With childlike amazement the artists discovered the beauties of the world surrounding them. And since clouds, flowers, trees, and animals had become for them objects of veneration, it was naturally part of the task for artists who wished to live and work in the full spirit of their faith, to copy all these things with the most meticulous precision. This, in turn, enriched art not only with a great fund of shapes and forms and scenes and colors, which were peculiar to nature, it also trained the artist's eyes and hand for his new problems, which included that of an entirely new representation of the figures of the saints. For now a saint could be a person who loved nature and life, and the artist had to depict him in the beautiful simplicity of human nature. Only now, when the artist could turn to man in order to depict the divine ideal, was it possible for a true representation of the human figure to come to the fore in the art of the Christian Occident. In the portraits of the saints, human faces took the place of stereotyped physiognomies. And it is certainly no accident that the first individualized portraits of the new trend in painting are portraits of St. Francis of Assisi, for in his case it was the artist's task to depict the saint faithfully as the man lived on in the memory of his admirers.

The endeavor to translate Francis' apostolic activities into colors and forms, led to the representation of scenes filled with movement and life, it engendered in the artist a worldly delight in fable and story and lent both charm and grace to the resulting works.

The first representatives of this entirely new trend in medieval art are Cimabue and Giotto, who were practically contemporaries of St Francis. Especially the vivid, lifelike frescoes in which Giotto and his school depicted the life of St Francis are the first magnificent products of a movement which marks the beginnings of early Renaissance painting.

Just as Francis' saintly life inspired painting with new colors and lines, so it enriched also poetry and literature with new means of expression, a new lyrical sensitivity, with new rhythms and tones, and with a new beauty. From it the *dolce stil nuovo* takes its start, leading on to the great art of Dante, the most intimate friend of Francis' passionate admirer, Giotto. It is in the spirit of the Franciscan brotherhood and at times through the mediation of Franciscan friars, such as Thomas of Celano and Jacopone da Todi, that the immortal literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was generated—the literature in which modern poetry and artistic prose have their earliest precursors.

The stimulating effect which emanated from St Francis was not, however, limited to art and literature, it influenced scientific thought as well.

In retrospect one is tempted to conclude that the example of Francis' life made people aware of the latent trend toward modernism in the spiritual development of their time and assisted that trend in its endeavor to become an historical reality.

Medieval piety before the time of St Francis had lost itself in supersensual speculations. Its life came dangerously close to being paralyzed in theological sophistry. Through Francis "the windows were opened, and the view was cleared into the open country, out into nature." It was as though the world in which men live had been canonized. The veneration of God in His supersensual essence could find expression now in the veneration of nature. And just as the artist could look at nature and derive his inspiration from it with a clear conscience and without harming his faith, so the medieval men of learning could indulge their craving for knowledge and look into nature to investigate its laws. It is no accident

that a Franciscan, Roger Bacon, was the first representative of the *mundus sensibilis*, the first naturalist in the modern sense of the term. This decisive turn in the history of Western thought led to a reconciliation of the spirit of Christianity with love of nature which had been incompatible with each other for so long. It was a reconciliation made possible through Francis' loving imitation of Christ. His sermon to the birds was the first blessing given to the new union, which led to the birth of a new Christian faith enriched by new beauty and knowledge of nature. The original joy and beauty of the Christian way of life, which had been forgotten for a thousand years, came to the fore again through Francis' example and message.

For the divinity of nature was present in the life of the Redeemer too. The story of His life on earth begins really in that sphere. On the borderline of the worlds of men and beast, in the stable of Bethlehem, the Saviour was born. And even before the three wise men arrived to worship Him, the animals in the stable had been the first witnesses of His birth, of God becoming man.

Christ, the "Redeemer of men," was a wanderer without house or home, and as he walked from place to place, he was always surrounded by the things of nature and nothing in it escaped His attention, for He was able to see in it the work of God. He saw the lily in the fields, and the fig tree and olive tree, he saw the sun rise and the fishes in the water and the birds in the air. And when He proclaimed the gospel of God among men, He spoke of all these things in His parables. When He admonished His disciples to put their trust in the infinite goodness of their heavenly Father, He reminded them of the lilies which the Father clothes and of the birds which the Father feeds.

The extraordinary occurrence that God sent His only-begotten son down to earth to redeem men, the story of His work among men, His miraculous cures, His promises of a future life, His passion and death—all this impressed His followers in His own time and later on with such stirring power that their thoughts and emotions had no room for anything else. The gospels dwell on nothing else. The stable with its animals forms merely the background for the great event of God being born as man. Christ's reference to the inclusion of lilies and birds in the family of God is taken as a mere parable pertaining to the rules of conduct he meant to formu-

late for the benefit of men. The ascetic hermits, who tried to live their lives in the spirit of the gospels, were solely concerned with emulating the example set by the son of God, the holy Church Fathers endeavored solely to fathom the mystery of the Incarnation of God and of His sacrificial death. It is for this Christ that the cathedrals were built. It is in His Memory that Mass was celebrated. Throughout the Middle Ages art and poetry knew only of Christ the Saviour. The man Jesus in His plain humanity, the wanderer and lover of nature, was lost sight of in the presence of Christ, the son of God and Redeemer of man. His human poverty was overshadowed by His divine sublimity and His cheerfulness by the mighty drama of His passion.

It had to come to pass that a lover chose to devote his life to the imitation of Christ before Christ the God and Christ the man, before divine greatness and human simplicity, before grace and sublimity could be conceived as one and could be lived as a unit. For only love possesses such all-inclusive vision, only love can survey in one unifying glance the small and the great, life within and without, nature and man. And finally, only love is wide and rich enough to enable men to follow Christ in all the facets of the example he set.

Francis received his Christ in a spirit of love. But love is more than penetration of a mystery, more than emulation of a model. Love is reproductive and creative. Through his loving imitation of Christ, Francis completed the poem of the gospels. The lilies of the parable began to bloom, the song of the birds joined in the praise of God. Through Francis' imitation of Christ, not only the thoughts, emotions, and deeds of a human being had become the vessel of a revitalized Christian spirit, in it all of nature—drawn into the orbit of this miracle—arose in a new spring, a divinely blissful harmony of colors and sounds, the like of which had not been seen in any other spring on earth. In Francis' own life, all the colors and lines, all the movement and grandeur which make a perfect work of art were indicated before the painters had begun to think of it as a theme for their composition. In his life were the rhythm and cadence of a great poem before the poets had begun to put it into meter and rhyme. His life was the new art before early Renaissance produced it.

An event that occurred shortly after the miracle of the birds is a typical example characteristic of the new and powerful inspiration emanating from Francis' personality. He stopped on his way at a convent where he preached with that beautiful simplicity which was characteristic of all his sermons. It happened that Divini, the most skillful poet and troubadour of the time, was at the same convent, where he had gone to pay a visit to his sister. Shortly before he had been crowned king of poetry in Rome, and at all courts, in all castles, he was celebrated as the greatest singer of his generation. When Francis began his sermon, Divini in his poet's arrogance thought to himself "What foolish raving!" But after a very few sentences precisely this foolish simplicity began to cast its spell over him, and from sentence to sentence, from word to word, he was utterly fascinated by it. Francis spoke about the peace of the soul, he spoke about something the famous troubadour had always and vainly longed to attain. When Francis finished, this greatest poet of the age sat there, a defeated man, convinced of the vanity of his art, of his elevated language and the formal beauty of his verse. How much greater, more poetic and more beautiful was the simplicity of this preacher's heartfelt words. In them Divini sensed the harmony he strove for in his poems, he heard in them a perfect consonance with peace of mind and soul which his most perfect rhymes had never managed to attain. Neither his coronation as king of poetry nor the fame he enjoyed far and wide throughout the land could help him to disprove the crushing recognition that all the sense and significance had been taken out of his life's work. There was but one thing that could impart new meaning to his life and lift his soul from the depths of despair into which it had fallen. He had to relinquish the crown of poetry given him in Rome, he had to forget his fame as a celebrated troubadour and practice the humility of a friar minor, the elevated language of his art he had to replace by the simple and plain talk of this beggar, instead of composing his poems for knights and noble ladies, he had to take life itself and make of it a poem of God, following the example of Francis, the greatest poet, the poet of life.

Divini went down on his knees before Francis and exclaimed "Peace! Oh give me peace!"

"Arise and come with us, brother of peace, Brother Pacificus," replied Francis and gave him his blessing. And it was only now

that Francis learned who the man was that had asked so humbly to be admitted into the brotherhood of beggars, that it was Divini, the king of the troubadours, the man whom Francis had admired and idolized at the time when he himself was still the troubadour of Assisi

Divini gave his horse to a poor farmer whom they met on their way, he left his guitar as a votive offering at the altar of a little chapel in the fields, he donned the cowl of the brethren of poverty and wandered through the land, like the other "jesters of God," to win men and women everywhere, through Francis' language of simplicity, to live their lives in the spirit of the gospel

The inspiration afforded by Francis' words and by his whole personality did not only influence the imagination of poets and artists, it not only brought about a revolutionary change in the artistic trend of the times, its irresistible force affected also the great masses of ordinary men and women and changed their habits of thought, their emotions and deeds so fundamentally that a far-reaching transformation of the social structure of the Middle Ages resulted from it

Here again it was the natural spontaneity and simple beauty of his demeanor which assured him the enthusiasm of individuals as of the masses. He was not a pantheist in whose thoughts all of creation merged with his own self. Such philosophical niceties would not have been understood by the common folk, they would not have been stirred by them. But that a lover—in the exuberance of his love, in the simplicity of his all-embracing ardor—should speak to a flower, a tree, or a bird, addressing them all as brothers and sisters, that he did not conceive of his ultimate identity with the abstract ideas of flowers, trees, and birds, but was moved by a warm sensation of brotherly love for one specific cowslip, for this or that specific tree in whose shade he happened to be resting, for the individual birds of Pian d'Arca and for the individual swallows of Alviano—this spontaneity and genuineness, which is found only in love and exuberance, were understood by all, for they affected them in the depth of their hearts.

When Francis quieted the swallows in the market place of Alviano, he was no magician whose words were a magic formula giving him power over the creatures of God. A magician would have elicited wonder and possibly fear, but he could not have

touched the hearts of those who heard him, he could not have induced the inhabitants of an entire village to abandon their homes and their fields, their fathers, mothers, wives or husbands and children to follow the precept of the gospel. This could be worked only by one whose overflowing love made him speak as Brother Man to Brother and Sister Swallow. His natural intimacy with all creatures in God's world stirred the people of Alviano and gave them the assurance that this preacher was sent by God and had received his power from God, it was a power for which nothing was impossible, and it could therefore lead men to the salvation of their souls.

Alviano was only the first little town whose inhabitants requested as a body to be admitted into the brotherhood of this saint whom no one but God had ordained. Just as the hamlets and towns and villages of Umbria and Tuscany and of all Italy line up on the map-like beads strung on a thread, so their inhabitants in the time of Francis lined up in an army of ecstatic admirers who had no other desire than to join the discipleship of this saint.

The rules of the brotherhood, which Francis had long ago written down under the cross of the Portiuncula, had been intended only for the "minstrels of Lady Poverty." Now the Portiuncula and San Damian, the caves and hermitages, the monasteries and convents of the Franciscans and Clarists that had sprung up everywhere throughout the land, proved much too narrow for all the applicants for admittance into the discipleship of the saint of poverty and love. The inhabitants of entire towns and villages and of extensive rural districts came in groups to follow Francis. Husbands and wives decided to separate, children wished to abandon their parents and parents their children in order to live henceforth in the spirit of the gospel as he proclaimed it.

Francis was no Pied Piper of Hamelin, no charmer of children and breaker of ties tied by love, he was no victor, no man of success, triumph and gain held no satisfaction for him. He was a humble messenger of the gospel, which for him was nothing but a joyful proclamation of love, and the hardest task he was ever called upon to solve was the one now before him: the task of harmonizing the gospel of love of God and devotion to God with earthly love and earthly obligations. A monkish follower of Christ could not have found a solution of this conflict. The loving follower of

Christ did find it, he found it through his own love in the idea of the "third order" which he established, the order of the Tertiaries.

The rules which Francis gave to this order were designed to make it possible for large masses of the population to join the Franciscan brotherhood without abandoning their towns and villages, their homes and families. They were "to stay in the world but not be of it."

None of the original ideals of the Portiuncula was lost or harmed through the translation of the Franciscan rules into the worldly language of this new brotherhood of laymen. Poverty remained the highest evangelical perfection for the Tertiaries as well. But here again, Francis, the founder of the third order, proved that he was no sullen ascetic but a "troubadour of Lady Poverty." His song of poverty revealed to the masses the secret that poverty is not renunciation and serfdom but emancipation from the tyranny of things, that it is not a disgrace and a thing to be despised but an honor and a thing of beauty. He taught them to get rid of "the burden of superfluities," to open their hearts to the delights of charity and to the blissful calm which frugal modesty can impart. With the enthralling power of a great poet he described for them the hellish torment which avarice and greed prepare for the soul. He taught them to love poverty and enjoined them to allow no oath of allegiance to a lord of warfare to force them to harm or kill others. He commanded them not to bear arms, to hate no one, and to see a brother in every man, friend or foe. His message was the gospel of love, because it is only through love that men can attain inalienable happiness.

No theoretical pacifist but a poet of love was here trying to make men forget all their feuds and live in peace with every one. This explains the effect which his words had on the masses. A chronicler, who witnessed one of Francis' sermons of peace at Bologna, has left us this account:

"He treated his theme so wisely that many learned men who were present, stood filled with admiration when they heard such words from the lips of an untutored friar. The whole matter of his discourse was directed to the quenching of hatred and the establishment of peace. His dress was mean, his person insignificant, his face without beauty. But with so much power did God inspire his

words that many noble families, sundered by ancient blood feuds, were reconciled forever "

As on that day, when he arose for the first time in the market square of Assisi and admonished the people to live in peace, so he was even now the "herald of the great king," and his message was still the same "The Lord give you peace!" And wherever he preached, ancient feuds found amicable settlements, lifelong adversaries were eager to be reconciled, and whole communities and cities that had been fighting each other buried the hatchet, laid down their arms, and set the example for a better world

His doctrine of love called up armies of lay brothers and sisters in the cities and towns and throughout the country, who followed him, without fear for the morrow, to the kingdom of peace of which he spoke.

It was the lay movement of the third order, conceived in the spirit of the Franciscan brotherhood, that brought about one of the most far-reaching social revolutions of the Middle Ages the fall of the feudal system The power of the feudal lords was mainly dependent upon the military allegiance of their vassals Admittance to the third order of the Franciscans, however, released these vassals of their oaths, for the members of this brotherhood were forbidden to participate in warlike ventures, which were not compatible with the doctrine of love of the gospel

The feudal lords tried, with the assistance of the established governmental machinery, by force of arms, through persecution and punishment, to force the objectors to warlike service into line But their might was helpless in the face of this unarmed mass rebellion of love No prison could weaken the resistance of those who, through Francis, had become "free men of the heart "

The time when a humble, loving beggar had power over the hearts and the minds of men, the time of Francis' life and work, was that marvelous era in the history of mankind, when the gospel became a true and living reality, when the power of peace triumphed over the spirit of warlike aggression, when love triumphed over enmity, and when the freedom of self-imposed poverty was honored more highly than the slavery of greed.

The beggar, who had achieved a victory which is unequalled in the history of the human race, whose message of love enlisted the

discipleship of men, women, and children, of laborers and lords, of paupers and princes, this beggar witnessed as the crowning of his life's work that the most powerful man of his century, Pope Innocent III, joined the ranks of his followers. And even though during his life this mightiest protagonist of secular power of the Roman pontificate did not bring himself to undergo such a radical conversion, through his death he did enter into the evangelical community of the friars minor of St. Francis.

The Portiuncula was the goal of innumerable sinners whom the impact of Francis' sermons had led to contrite repentance, who were eager to begin a new life and confessed their sins asking forgiveness. And Francis' brotherly love heard in the words of everyone some echo at least of the voice of God, and never once did he fail to lend a repentant sinner his help. As his brotherly love had room for the lepers of the leper house, so he loved also the "lepers of the soul," and none of them ever left him without encouragement and new hope.

A papal rule in force at the time made it impossible to obtain full absolution for anyone who had not undertaken a pilgrimage to the graves of the apostles at Rome, who had not participated in a crusade or supported the crusades by means of financial assistance. Francis, the brother of the poor, wished to see the basis of complete indulgence broadened in such a way that it could apply also to the poorest sinners of whom great numbers were driven by genuine repentance to seek his advice at the Portiuncula. He knew that Pope Innocent III was favorably inclined toward him, and in order to submit his request to him, he went, in July, 1216, to the papal summer residence of Perugia. In front of the palace he found an excited crowd of people and learned that the Pope was about to die. It was rumored that a poisonous fruit which he had eaten had caused his illness culminating in a fatal attack of sweating sickness.

Cardinals, bishops, and prelates were waiting in the court and the halls of the palace. No one dared to enter the Pope's room for there was also a rumor that his illness was the plague. One of the dignitaries of the church tried to look through a keyhole into the room where the Pope was dying. When Francis wanted to enter, he looked up and warned him: "God forbid! Do not go in! The physicians have advised us most urgently to stay away!"

"If the physicians of the body are courageous enough to be near

the Pope, the physicians of the soul must not be afraid either. A dying man is in greater need of our medicine than of the decoctions of the doctors." And with these words Francis entered the room that was shunned by all others

Innocent III, the master of princes and nations, had been deserted by all the church dignitaries, by his courtiers, flatterers, and "friends" Only his physicians were with him. He lay in his great bed of state, and the physicians tried to break his fever by changing every few minutes the cold compresses on his glowing forehead. Francis saw in him a brother whom everyone had forsaken in his last hour. He went over to the Pope's bed, took his hand which was feverish and moist, and kissed it. Innocent opened his eyes and looked in surprise at the man in his mended cowl, for throughout his life he had been accustomed to see himself surrounded by people dressed in velvet and silk. He recognized Francis and smiled. He tried to speak, but the burden of death weighed heavily upon him and prevented him from opening his lips.

"I have come to pray for you," said Francis, and the Pope smiled again. Then he closed his eyes. Death had come. In strange rigidity the Pope's smile lingered on. The hand of the most powerful man on the papal throne grew cold in the warm and brotherly hand of the poor beggar, who implored God to forgive the Pope his sins.

That same night the body of the Pope was carried by the light of torches into the church and laid out in state. The men who were to watch by the bier throughout the night were afraid of contagion and went away so that the one-time powerful pope lay alone and unguarded in the church of Perugia.

In the morning Innocent III was to be interred. A great tumult scared the town out of its sleep. Like wildfire the rumor spread that the body of the Pope had been desecrated. Thieves had removed his robes and jewels and even his shoes of red leather. He lay on the bier virtually naked, and all who saw him covered their faces in horror and awe.

But Francis, whom the general alarm had also called into the church, stepped up to the bier, took off his cowl, and covered with it the naked body of the Pope. Then he knelt down and prayed for the deceased. "God be merciful upon the soul of a poor friar

minor!" And thus Pope Innocent III, the "king of kings," was buried in a Franciscan cowl

In Francis doctrine and life were one, and no outer event, neither temptation nor intimidation, neither success nor failure, could disrupt this union. He praised modesty and humbleness as expressions of true nobility and practiced them accordingly. He had called himself the least among the friars minor when—living with the first disciples in the shed at Rivo Torto—he had had to endure the scorn of the people of Assisi. And later on, when whole towns and villages followed him, he still remained unaffected in his humbleness and modesty.

Even his most devoted disciples were at times amazed at the fascination his voice and demeanor had for the people with whom he came in contact. After one of his great triumphs Masseo once asked him "You are not handsome, not learned, why then does all the world run after you?" And Francis exclaimed, "That is precisely why!" It shows you that it is all the work of God. To prove the more strikingly that it is He who is at work, He has chosen me, the ugliest, the most wretched among his children, and the greatest sinner. Without God I am nothing."

With palm fronds in their hands the people came to meet him. The church bells were ringing, and the crowd exclaimed, "*Ecco il santo!*" Behold the saint!" They went down on their knees and kissed the hem of his garment and the earth which his foot had touched.

It happened that Francis fell ill, and his stomach caused him great pain. Brother Juniper went and caught a fieldfare and baked it carefully in olive oil to give it to the recovering patient. Francis ate the delicacy with great delight. Then suddenly he was overcome by remorse. "Brother Donkey," he exclaimed, "for that you will have to pay dearly!" And as soon as he was able to walk again, he, whom all of Assisi worshiped as a saint, had himself tied to a rope and led as a donkey through the streets of the town, and as he walked along he called out "Look here, you people, this is the man who asked you to fast and repent while he himself feasts on a tender bird just because his stomach hurts him a little. That glutton, that reveler, that hypocrite!"

He preached frugality and poverty and believed that the truest

imitation of Christ consists simply in the naive compliance with the commands of the gospels. This was what he taught in his simple words. Meanwhile the brotherhood of the Portiuncula had become the mighty Franciscan order. Twice every year the disciples came to the Portiuncula to hold a general chapter. A great many former noblemen, lawyers, students, and professors had joined the brotherhood and attended the chapter meetings. These more recent disciples of Francis wished to give their order a firmer and more dignified structure. They wanted to found houses of Franciscans and cultivate the arts and sciences to the greater glory of their brotherhood in the eyes of the world. Francis, however, sensed the danger of such a move. At the time of the Pentecost chapter he saw the learned brothers gather around him and listen attentively to his sermon. Yet he saw also his favorite brother, the swallow, perched on a tree nearby. "Brothers," he said to the congregation, "do you hear the swallow? Our bird? Our friar-minor bird? He is wearing a hood, as we do, and he lives modestly and finds his food by the roadside. But when he flies, he follows his burning desire and flies straight up into the heavens, he sings the praises of the Lord and is gentle and cheerful as good friars minor should be, for they must think of heaven and not of earth, and they must like nothing better than to sing the praises of God."

And when there were still many among the brothers who were not ready to abandon their desire for learning, he said at the next meeting of the chapter: "My brethren, my brethren! The Lord has called me by the way of simplicity and humility, and this way has He pointed out to me in truth for myself and for them who are willing to follow me. The Lord told me that He willed me to be poor and foolish in this world, and that He willed not to lead us by any way other than by that knowledge. But with this wisdom of yours you will not reach your goal and will return to your vocation for all your fault-finding, whether you want to or not."

In the meantime the order had found a new protector in the person of Cardinal Ugolino, the later Pope Gregory IX. Once he had Francis called before him and said to him, "Brother, the holy church needs good and strong and holy bishops, trustworthy shepherds of their flocks. I hope to succeed in placing some of your followers in the highest offices of the church." But Francis could not be led astray, and he exclaimed with great zeal: "My brothers

are called minors that they should not presume to become greater among their fellowmen ”

Francis proclaimed that men should worry no more about their physical well-being than is provided for in the Lord's Prayer. He taught trust in God, and with his “brothers of the round table” he lived in such trust. At the time when the pope had asked him in the presence of all the cardinals how he imagined his order could prosper in future times in spite of his utter lack of material forethought, he had replied by telling the pope his parable of the poor woman. At the Chapter of Mats, in the year 1219, five thousand friars foregathered at the Portiuncula where no lodgings were provided for them but straw mats under the open sky. Francis had remained the same, relying in carefree trust on the kindness of God. The affairs of the order had been discussed, the brothers had spent hours in prayer, and the time had come for their meal. Francis continued his prayer. St. Dominic, the practical organizer of the Dominican order, attended this chapter as a guest and was greatly amazed and shocked by the pious lack of responsibility on the part of his saintly Brother Francis, who had allowed such a large crowd to convene without giving any thought to the question of how to provide food for them all. But then, as unexpectedly for Francis as for all the others, great numbers of people came toward the Portiuncula from all directions, and without having been asked by anyone, they brought with them food enough to provide for all the five thousand friars. There were farmers with donkeys and carts, heavily laden with bread and wine, meat and fish, with jugs and jars and cups and dishes. And noblemen came riding along on horseback, eager to do servant's work in the camp of St. Francis' friars.

The apostle of love had taught that one's enemies too are one's brothers. He had preached the gospel of love for all creatures of God. He had called hatred the work of hell on earth and had forbidden all true disciples of Christ to draw their swords and to bear arms.

The new pope, Honorius III, had urged all Christians to wage a holy war against the Moslems, to convert the infidels to the doctrine of Christ and to win back the Holy Land for Christianity.

Francis in his great simplicity read the words of Christ as they

had been spoken, and he lived according to the gospel in which he believed. No end, however worthy or sacred, could obliterate in the mind of this simple servant of God the simple clarity of the evangelical doctrine of love

In the year 1219 a mighty armada carried the army of the crusaders to Egypt to crush the infidel foe by brutal force of arms. At the same time an unarmed crusader, a "fool in Christ," accompanied by a single disciple, traveled to Egypt to convert the infidels by the gentle force of the words of love which Christ had spoken for all men

Before Damietta the Christian armies had their headquarters. From there the crusaders swarmed out, thousands and thousands of them, to wage their bloody "holy war" against the Moslems

For the "fool in Christ," the crusader without sword and armor, the campaign against the enemy began in the Christian camp. Bloodthirst and blasphemy of the fanatical soldiery and greed and lust for booty of the rabble that had come along were rampant everywhere

"Brothers," Francis exclaimed, "wake up and think! Not the Moslems are holding you back but your own devil, your hatred and your greed. You forget that you wear a cross on your armor. Wear it also in your hearts. If you act in the spirit of love, the Moslems will break camp all by themselves. Now they fear your hatred and your evil intentions. Swords win blood, but love wins souls. I pray to God that you will not enter the Holy Land until your souls are worthy of it. Purify your souls! Purify your souls!" Many in the camp of the Christians ridiculed him. Many stopped to think, and a few repented and followed him.

In the battle of August 1219, more than six thousand Christians had fallen in a single day. The high command of the crusaders was obliged to ask for an armistice. The "fool in Christ" asked the papal representative accompanying the Christian army to give him permission to go to the enemy's camp to convert the sultan by force of the gospel of love. The papal officer tried to dissuade him. "Tomorrow your head, stuck on the point of a lance, will look out over the walls of Damietta," he warned.

But Francis had trust in God and did not heed the warning. With one brother he went to the tents of the Moslems. He could not speak their language and kept calling "Sultan! Sultan!" The

guards thought he was an emissary and took him to the sultan. Malik al Kamul, a man of dark complexion, was seated with crossed legs on his throne of cushions. He wore a magnificent silk garment, adorned with precious bead work and gold embroidery, and the turban on his head was topped by a tuft of costly plumes. The ruler of the Moslems spoke French which made things easier for Francis. He could at least deliver to the sultan the message of love of Christ, his commander in chief. The sultan understood what Francis said and was deeply impressed, for the Prophet too had respected Christ. But Malik al Kamul was first of all the lieutenant of Mohammed who ranked for him higher than Moses or Christ. Thus he did not abandon his throne to follow Francis, he did not abjure his faith. But he did sense that this crusader without a sword, this "fool in Christ," was serious in his endeavor to live according to the precepts of Christ's doctrine of love. With an undertone of brotherly warmth in his voice he said "My dear brother, go and pray for me, that Allah may reveal to me which faith he likes best." Then he called the grand vizier and had him write out a letter of safe-conduct which authorized Francis and his companion to travel unmolested through the Holy Land to visit the holy places of his faith.

The army of the crusaders at Damietta had received reinforcements and was ready for another attempt to force its entry into the Holy Land. The murderous struggle began again, and the earth was drenched with the blood of Christians and Moslems.

Francis, meanwhile, trod in Christ's footsteps quite at his leisure, and went to Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jerusalem, and prayed to Him whom he followed.

The man, who had such faith in the divinity of love, knew also in his wisdom as a "fool in Christ" that the force of love can vanquish everything, that it can change everything, even the powers of evil in man. For this reason he could not conceive of a "prodigal son" being lost to salvation, of a doer of evil deeds wicked enough to be unworthy of love and assistance. For him love was a cue in the language of the heart. It could recall the Father to those who had forgotten about the Father; it could arouse in them a yearning to return home and to accept the trust of a brother stretching out his hand toward them.

"Severity induces fear, punishment deepens the abyss of loneliness, and only brotherly love can unite all of creation as one great family of God." This he taught his brothers, and he led them to act as he acted to draw no distinction in their love for the worthy and the unworthy, but to receive everyone as a brother if he requested to be admitted into their group. For only those are acting in accordance with the Father's will, who meet the ungrateful and the wicked with kindness and warmth, as is written in the gospels according to St. Luke and St. Matthews. "For you should know, dear brethren," said Francis, "that courtesy is one of the properties of God, who of His courtesy gives His sun and rain to the just and the unjust, and courtesy is the sister of charity, by which hatred is extinguished and love is cherished."

In a letter to the brother, who was to take his place when the time had come, Francis wrote these words: "As sure as you love the Lord and me, His servant and your servant, see to it that no brother in the whole world, let him have sinned as he may in any way, is permitted to go from you without forgiveness, if he asks for it. And if he does not ask for forgiveness, then ask him if he does not want forgiveness. And if he comes a thousand times before you with his sin, then love him altogether more than you love me, that you may draw him back into well-doing."

It happened at one time that three foolhardy highwaymen infested the roads in the vicinity of Borgo San Sepolchro where Brother Angelo had established the Franciscan hermitage of Monte Casale. The people of the district gathered in self-defense and went out, armed with pitchforks and shovels, to catch and kill the bandits. The three men were frightened and hid in the woods where the farmers could not find them. When their supply of food gave out, they were driven by hunger out of their hiding-place, and one evening they appeared at the Franciscan hermitage, hoping that the good friars would have a few loaves of bread for them. This brazen request was too much even for the Franciscan friar Angelo. He replied with a barrage of reproaches and chased the three men away. The hungry bandits swore at God and the whole Franciscan brotherhood and left.

A little while later, Francis, who happened to be staying at the hermitage for a visit, returned from a begging expedition. Angelo told him excitedly about the impudence of the bandits and how he

had chased them away. But Francis showed greater amazement at the reaction of brother Angelo than at the behavior of the bandits. He looked at the bread and wine on the table of the hermitage and said "I command you by your obedience to take at once this loaf and this wine and to go and seek the robbers by hill and dell until you have found them, to offer them this as from me, and to kneel there before them and humbly ask their pardon and pray them in my name no longer to do wrong but to serve God, and if they do it, I promise to provide all their wants, to see that they always have enough to eat and to drink."

Angelo did as Francis had ordered him to do. After a while he returned to the hermitage. The three bandits came with him. "Brothers, dear brothers," Francis said to them, "why do you rob others of what they own? You do not profit by it, and it leaves your hearts restive. I know that you are not as the people judge you to be." And then Francis spoke of the splendors of love, of brotherliness and the Father in heaven. All this was not intermingled with exhortation and reproof. He spoke as a loving brother.

Francis believed in the power of love, and he possessed it. The bandits were accustomed to be judged after their misdeeds, and when Francis spoke to them, a new hope arose in their hearts. At first they listened distrustfully to the words of this man who seemed to assume that they were not totally wicked but capable of doing good. Then, still hesitantly and shyly, they tried to share his belief in their own goodness. And that was the beginning of their transformation. They regretted what they had done and decided to change their lives and to join the order of the Franciscans. Henceforth they lived the lives of devoted friars minor, and as such they finally died.

The order by now had thousands of members, but Francis continued to be each one's personal brother, he continued to love each one as an individual with all the warmth of his loving heart. For his love, too, had increased a thousandfold. And the more he gave of his love, the more abundant it grew. An inexhaustible well—it sufficed for all the brothers and sisters, for those within and for those outside the organization of the order.

He, whose mission it had become to be the leader of a great monastic order, could not conceive of anything so small or unimportant that it would not have been worthy of his most tender care.

and attention. Thousands and thousands of his followers came to ask his advice in matters of grave importance to them or the order, yet he was always ready to listen to the complaints of a child that had lost its toy and sympathize with it in its grief. He was overburdened with work, yet he had always time to help an old woman to carry her basket home from the market, to lend a helping hand to a farmer whose cart was stuck in the mud, to spend hours and days with sisters and brothers in need, to console them when they were discouraged and to nurse them when they were ill. His time was without limits, for he was a true lover and attended to a great thing while serving the little things around him.

This explains why his love could not be exhausted as a love of his human fellows. For him God was the father of all so that he could not help feeling himself the brother of all things created, of animals and plants, of the stars and the elements. His sensitive heart was not less concerned about the well-being of a sparrow, the fate of a flower or a tree than about the affairs of his order. He spoke with the same heartfelt fervor of love to animals, small and big, to the fields, vineyards and mountains, to the winds and the streams, to earth, water, fire, and air, and told them they must love the Father and asked them to join him in his cheerful praise of the glories of God.

The man, who had brought to other men the message of joy of the Lord's gospel, who had stretched out a helping hand to the poor and the infirm, who had not withheld his kiss of brotherly love from the untouchable leper, and who had dared to give freely of his abundance of love to the bandits and robbers, this man enveloped also with the tenderness of his brotherly feelings the least of God's non-human creatures.

Once he returned from a begging tour, heavily laden with all sorts of charitable gifts, when he met a woodcutter chopping down a tree. "Brother, do not chop off the whole tree, but give it a chance to grow up again," said Francis and offered the man his food by way of recompense. And he always insisted that Brother Gardener should reserve in his vegetable garden a place for flowers so that their beauty might bear witness to the splendors of the Lord.

If he was thus concerned about the well-being of plants and flowers, he certainly could not pass by without helping an animal

which he found in need. Once he saw a hare that was caught in a snare, and just as though it were a human being whom he had to free from a painful trap, he dropped everything and hastened to assist Brother Hare—It was early spring. The preceding summer had been very dry. The poor little bees had a very hard time. Their food was almost gone. Then Francis went out begging for honey and sweet wine and placed the gifts he obtained in a hollow tree where his sisters the bees would find them, and they would not have to die with hunger—At Siena he helped the turtledoves build their nests and made sure every day that their young ones had enough to eat. Whenever he ate, and however frugal his meal might be, he always left at least a few crumbs for the robins, and in winter time he shared all his food in equal parts with the animals he met—Once, when he and several of his brothers were eating their Christmas dinner by the roadside, a flock of cawing crows settled down in a clump of trees nearby. "Our black sisters want to share our meal," exclaimed Francis. "Quick, Leo, wait on them." Leo brought a loaf of bread. He had to trample down the snow to prepare a table for the crows while Francis was busy breaking up the bread. The crows came shooting down to get their prey, and sparrows joined them and hundreds of other birds too. All the while Francis was looking on with a cheerful mien. "If I ever went to see the emperor," he said, "I would ask him to issue a decree that everyone should broadcast at Christmas time a certain quantity of grain all over the countryside as a gift for the birds. Oh, my brothers, on such a day all of creation should rejoice in the birth of the child Jesus"—Once he met a farmer who was taking two sheep to market to have them slaughtered. He gave the farmer his coat to buy the sheep out and save their lives. And he took them along and decided to be their guardian—He was walking toward a town where he wanted to preach. On the way he saw an ugly caterpillar. He picked it up that nobody should step on it. He put it down in a patch of grass and said, "Some time you will be a beautiful butterfly, Sister Caterpillar, just as our ugly and sinful body will at one time release the soul which will fly up to heaven in lightness and beauty"—

And just as men and women of all classes were attracted by the power of his love and left their accustomed lives to join him and be always at his side—so also did the animals succumb to the spell

of his gospel of universal brotherhood. The dog by the roadside near Assisi, the hare of Isola Maggiore, and the birds of Pian d'Arca and Alviano that heeded his request to take part in his jubilant praises of the Father in heaven, all these were but the first of a great many brothers and sisters from the animal kingdom that gathered around him in a great discipleship of love.

Near Siena a whole flock of sheep left their pasture and followed St. Francis.—In Assisi a little lamb went with him wherever he was going. It accompanied him to chapel. It listened together with the other brothers and sisters to the Mass.—On Lake Rieti a fisherman gave Francis an exceptionally beautiful fish. Francis could not bring himself to eat Brother Fish and put him back in his element. The fish followed the boat in which Francis made the crossing. Then it waited in the shallow waters until Francis came back, just in order to be near him.—A pheasant that had been presented to Francis returned of its own free will to him when he turned it loose. Instead of the freedom of a bird it preferred to share the life of an earthbound friar minor.—In an olive tree not far from the cell where Francis lived for a while in solitude there was a cicada. "Come, Sister Cicada," said Francis, "and praise the Lord our creator with a joyful song!" And whenever Francis called, the cicada came, sat down on his hand and joined him softly in his songs of praise.

Francis' triumphant power of love, which had won over the hostile sultan and had transformed the desperate bandits into peaceful friars, did not fail in the face of the ravenous wolf of Gubbio. It was winter when Francis arrived there to preach in the market place. Outside the city gates he met a group of farmers, heavily armed with scythes and flails. "Where are you going?" asked Francis. "We are going to get the wolf," said the farmers. "He steals our sheep and attacks our dogs and even our horses." "Let me go with you," said Francis. When they reached the forest where the wolf had his lair they saw in the distance a huge animal crossing the white snow of a clearing. "Let me talk to him," said Francis and went all by himself to meet the wolf. The farmers stayed behind, and to their great amazement they saw how the ravenous beast put his paw into the hand that Francis had stretched out toward him. Francis bent down and talked to the wolf. Then the wolf stretched out on the ground and began to lick Francis'

feet Francis stroked the beast and made him understand that he should follow him. Like a dog the wolf came trotting after him, all along the road, looking up to him in trustful obedience. Together they reached the market place of Gubbio, where Francis preached the gospel of love to the crowd that had gathered to hear his message and see the wolf sitting reverently by his side. From now on the wolf was the pet of the entire town. He was fed by the people, and when he died he was buried in state. Over his grave a church was erected, and the people called it San Francesco della Pace.

When Henry David Thoreau lived in the solitude of the woods in his hut beside Walden Pond, the birds, he relates, would come without fear and sit down on his shoulder, and snakes would curl around his legs without doing him any harm. He lived there happily as the first man in Paradise—More than one sober-minded explorer of the nineteenth century returned from the uncharted wilds and deserts of Africa to relate that a man who goes unarmed and free from fear to meet the wild beasts in a spirit of love, is welcomed by them as a trusted friend. The legends of St. Francis depict a man whose fearlessness and love are sublimated to the perfection of saintliness. In his life, harmony with all creation was again a reality as it had been in Paradise.

Though fortune had favored the *Poverello* of Assisi in all his ventures, the humbleness of his heart was in no way affected. And likewise later on, when misfortune and grief descended upon him, they too could not weaken the unchangeable essence of his life. Sorrow and pain proved the full extent of his greatness. Secular harm revealed the divinity of his being. The shadows of life on earth, which mingled finally with the brightness of the life of his soul, brought out in clear relief the splendor of his transfiguration.

The trouble grew up almost undistinguishably as a part of his success. Francis himself, however, was not deceived. All his thoughts and feelings were concentrated on God, and he recognized that the growing power of his order as an institution for men and women of this world would signify the decline and end of his evangelical brotherhood. He alone, who had called his brotherhood an order of friars minor, who conceived of himself as the least among his brethren, could understand that greatness within the world must mean a break with the ideal of perfection which it

had been possible to realize on a small scale. He thought of his disciples as "minstrels of God" and "free larks of the Creator", their caves and wattle huts were "nests of the gospel," and so he could not help feeling that the rigid organization to which his brotherhood of love had been reduced, that its hierarchy of officials, its learned pursuits and its monastic discipline were no longer fully compatible with the true imitation of Christ of the days of the Portiuncula

There were many reasons to justify the changes that had taken place. An order with thousands of members in all parts of the world could not be administered by a single individual, especially not by a roving wanderer without a fixed abode. What was needed was an organizational setup with clearly defined administrative units, with provincials and ministers upon whom full authority in matters of local importance could be devolved. There had to be lists of members and minutes and files which could not be kept in order in the woods or in caves and which it was impossible to preserve in a hollow tree. For that, archives were needed and offices and organized headquarters. Strict rules were required, a prescribed monastic discipline, and a novitiate to precede admission into the order, if thousands of members were to be guided in the same spirit.

At first the friars minor, who went as Franciscan missionaries to distant parts, were often accused of heresy. They were imprisoned and put to death, and the number of martyrs kept increasing. The carefree fervor which was all that Francis could give his missionaries on their way, was not enough to assure the success of their mission. They were in need of official letters of safe-conduct and of sufficient funds to guarantee them protection and safety in foreign lands.

At a time when learning and culture were expanding, the simple friars were an easy prey to all sorts of cunning sophistry. The Franciscan order was just as much in need of men of learning as the order of the Dominicans, if it wanted to uphold its evangelical doctrine in the world. But learning depends on books, and books can only be gathered in libraries. Houses had to be built for the order. Fixed monastic establishments—that was the constant refrain if the work of the order was to succeed. And for the building and

maintenance of such homes, the order needed considerable financial means

Brother Elias, who gave the order a clear administrative organization, who introduced discipline and learning and was responsible for the establishment of monasteries with libraries and beautiful churches, had been a notary at Bologna. He was a devout Christian, he loved Francis and venerated him as a saint. And when he tried to give the order a strict organization, he did so in order to prove to the world that Francis was a saint and to assure his brotherhood everywhere of the respect it deserved.

But the devoted friar Elias, the loving admirer of Francis, was not a genuinely Christian soul in the sense of the gospel of his master. He was guilty of treason against the one he loved and admired, a Judas at the table of the true disciples of Christ.

Impressed by Francis' sermons, Elias Bombarone had given up his office in order to join the ranks of the friars minor. Equipped with a cowl, he was waiting for Francis on the road to Cortona. When Francis approached in the midst of a group of singing disciples, the notary threw himself down at his feet and asked to be taken into the brotherhood. After Francis had granted his request, the friars continued their journey. Their cheerful singing, however, had suddenly come to an end. They could not quite understand it themselves. It was just because a man had joined them, who did not sing but talked with great learning about the motives of his conversion.

And in the order at large, of which Elias became the mouthpiece and organizer, the simple delight in song and melody was soon to vanish too. A man was now at the helm who talked in learned words about the motives of piety and devotion.

And then another man of great faith, a mighty dignitary of the church, Cardinal Ugolino, who loved Francis too and wanted to do his best to further the interests of his brotherhood, came to the fore and lent Elias a helping hand, trying to build up the power and fame of the order before the entire world and to make of it one of the pillars of the church. He was deeply convinced of Francis' saintliness, and it was he who canonized the *Poverello* after he had ascended the papal throne as Pope Gregory IX. Yet his work for the order affected the spirit of the evangelical brotherhood in what Francis conceived to be its very essence.

The strict organization triumphed over the informal gathering. Rational deductions killed song and melody, and cheerfulness fell a victim to austerity. The ideal of the saint was vanquished by the practical needs of the world. To be sure, the "little pauper" of Assisi continued to be the rallying point, his gospel of poverty remained the doctrine which was advocated by the ever increasing army of his disciples. But Francis was now the image of a saint adorning the walls of pompous monasteries, and the brotherhood of love had become through the influence of Elias a well-organized agency which made it its business to distribute the gospel of Francis all over the world. A dreamer that has been cheated out of his dream, sees more clearly than a mere realist, his cheated dreamer's vision is able to look through the deception of rational deductions.

When Francis returned in the year 1220 from his journey to Egypt and Syria, he found his brotherhood a rigidly organized order of friars. It was no longer the brotherhood which he formed at the Portiuncula after the model of the gospel of Christ.

"Alas," he complained, "my free larks are imprisoned in the cages of their monasteries—Did the Saviour insist on a novitiate for his disciples?—I do not want my brethren to exchange the gospel for learned books. To state a truth in genuine faith is worth more than to parry misleading queries with learned skill. He who wants to spread the message of Christ must be consumed by an inner fire and not speak coldly the wise words of reason. Yet that you cannot learn from books but only in direct communion with God."

At Bologna the magnificent home of the order which the brothers had built during his absence was being consecrated. In the midst of the ceremonies the founder of the order arose, for the first time not to pray and sing but to condemn. It was for the first and last time that he spoke angrily to his brothers. What flared up in him was the anger of the Lord who cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple and overthrew the tables of the money-changers.

The brothers tried to calm him. They explained that the magnificent home of the order was not their property, that it belonged to the church and that they lived in it merely as tenants. Francis remained adamant. "The gospel states clearly what it wants," he said bitterly. "Shame on you! You have insulted our Lady Poverty and have expelled her from your midst. I and my brothers have no

business in Babylon." And he turned his back on the festive gathering and left

At the Portuuncula he found another imposing building of the Franciscan order, right in the place where his little hut had been. And when he was told that this was where he was expected to dwell henceforth, the angry mason, who had not only learned how to build but also how to dismantle, climbed onto the roof and began to throw down the tiles

All his exhortations and pleadings could not, however, eliminate the element of worldliness in the development of the ever expanding order. The power of Francis, the power of humbleness and love, was not made to rule, to organize, to exercise authority over others. Francis did not have the kind of energy that is necessary for a man who must order, prohibit, and enforce. In his loving humility he knew but one form of guidance to influence others by the force of his example. "What I can do now for the brothers," he said, "is merely to live before them as a model and to convince them of the truth of the gospel by redoubled devotion to the Lord."

Francis resigned from his post in the administration of the order. His place was taken by one of his earliest disciples, Pietro dei Catani, and when Pietro died a short time later, the direction of the order's business was entrusted—at the request of Cardinal Ugolino—to brother Elias.

Francis himself remained connected with the order only as one of a group of brothers who kept faith with the ideals of the Portuuncula.

The works of the poets, once completed, remain unchanged in the power of their authors. But the work of an author, whose poems are living human beings, escapes the power of him who made them, for they are made of the stuff of life which is eternally in flux. The world changes them, they change as people, times, and environments change, they change by force or seduction until nothing is left of the original rhythm, rhyme, and melody.

The poem of Francis, the troubadour of God, was an evangelical brotherhood. And when that brotherhood assumed the shape of the organization of the Franciscan order, Francis could no longer feel that it was his. When he saw his work again in its new guise,

he was frightened. Yet the evangelical fervor, which cannot ever resign, which must try to win back what has been lost, continued to be active in him and urged him to compose his work anew, time and again. His indefatigable effort to redraft and revise his Rules bears witness to this fact.

Between the Rule which the "troubadour of God" had at one time drawn up under the cross at the Portiuncula and the soberly formulated prescriptions which the friars had to heed since Elias had been given authority over their conduct, there was a break which virtually endangered the structure of the entire order.

"The free larks of God" beat their wings desperately against the bars of their monastic cages. "The knights of Lady Poverty," who had withdrawn to caves in the mountains and huts in the woods, rebelled openly against the friars who had entrenched themselves in their palatial monastic homes. "The fools of the Lord" accused the learned librarians and students of their order of having "betrayed the gospel of the Redeemer of fishermen and the poor in spirit." Many who did not want to accept the new order of things threatened to leave the brotherhood altogether.

The unity of the order was at stake, its success, its reputation and fame in the world.

- To be sure, the supreme authority within the order was nominally in the hands of Elias, but Francis, "the least among the brethren," was still their father and lord. Despite his humbleness, the order existed exclusively in his name. He was the flame that attracted newcomers like moths, he was the magic tie that held the order together. Francis alone could restore the lost unity.

Cardinal Ugolino, an experienced diplomat, took charge of the delicate task of trying to convince Francis that his order needed a new Rule if it was not to fall victim to internal dissension.

"The Rule," Ugolino told Francis, "that you drew up at the Portiuncula was right for a dozen men, perhaps for sixteen, all living under your direct supervision. But it is no longer right for an order of thousands that live dispersed over the face of the earth. If you want your holy work to benefit mankind and the church, you will have to redraft the Rule with greater sobriety and circumspection, so that all the brethren can accept it as a basis for restoring peace within the order."

"I shall do all I can and more than I can," said Francis and withdrew with three of his most faithful disciples to the solitude of a cave near Fonte Colombo in order to prepare the draft of a new Rule which was to be ready in time for the next general spring chapter of the Franciscan order

He had promised to do more than is humanly possible. For days and nights he lay on the bare ground in the darkness of his cave, waiting and listening in his soul until God began to speak, until he understood the will of the Lord, word for word, woven of stillness, sentence for sentence—the entire Rule from beginning to end

Then he left the cave. His disciples had been waiting outside for weeks. "Lamb of God," said Francis to Leo, who was used to acting as the friars' scribe, "write!" But it was entirely as it had been under the cross at the Portiuncula where he had drawn up the first Rule. He did not really dictate the text, he sang it. And this time the song and its melody were still fuller of passion and deep conviction. And Leo the lamb hummed with him as he wrote, just as one does in trying to jot down the words of a song one hears.

At the spring chapter for the year 1221 the new version of the Rule was to be read to the assembled friars. More than three thousand of them had come to the Portiuncula. When they heard the new Rule, most of them were so disappointed, they could hardly speak. Was that a new Rule, drawn up for a mighty religious order? It was a dithyrambic appeal to the friars, interspersed with prayers and incantations, admonishing them to remain faithful to poverty, simplicity, and humbleness. It was an ecstatic poem with the refrain "But on their journey through the world the friars are to take neither satchel nor money nor bread, let them have trust in the Lord in all things."

Again Elias had the cardinal speak on his behalf. "Brother," said Ugolino, "your Rule is wonderful, but a Rule should be something by which men and women can abide. You ought to modify it."

"It is God who dictated it to me," replied Francis. "How can I, a frail creature of the Lord, change anything in it?"

This reply put the cardinal in a rather awkward position. But he was an experienced diplomat, whose task it was to mediate between heaven and earth. And so he did find a way out.

"You certainly must not do anything but what God bids you do. It is God's main concern that the brethren understand His will so

that they can live in accordance with it. After all, it is only the wording that needs improvement. For the sake of your brethren I ask you to write the Rule once more."

"For the sake of peace among the brethren I shall try again and ask God to help me find the best form."

He returned to the cave of Fonte Colombo, and God heard his prayer. After a while the Rule was finished in its newest form, and Francis had one of his disciples take it to Elias.

Elias was greatly irritated when he read the new text. The ecstatic prayers, appeals, and incantations were left out, but the refrain about Lady Poverty was still there, and it was just that which interfered with the desired spread of the order's fame and power. The formulation of a rule was obviously not the business of a poet depending on divine inspiration.

When Elias went to see Francis again, he was asked whether the new Rule had satisfied him and whether it had finally been submitted to the Pope for approval. Elias explained hesitantly: "I had meant not to tell you. But since you ask now—I must admit that the Rule—I really do not know where and how—has been lost."

It would not have been hard for Francis to rewrite the Rule sentence for sentence and word for word. It was inscribed in his heart. Elias and Ugolino, however, had forestalled this possibility. They had compiled the sort of rule that is needed for a great order. The refrain about Lady Poverty was not in it.

"Why did you let the power slip out of your hands?" complained the faithful at the Portiuncula. "Now you see what has become of it!"

"I am not my brothers' keeper," said Francis and went away, firmly resolved to work henceforth only through his example."

This great disappointment hit Francis at a time when he was physically ill. During his stay in the East he had contracted trachoma, a disease of the eyes endemic in Egypt. Both his eyes were painfully inflamed and swollen. The light of day—which he had loved so much because in it he saw men and trees and flowers and birds and all the other things of beauty in God's creation—lost its splendor and vanished at times in dim diffusion. At times, when he opened his eyes, he saw nothing but impenetrable darkness. Now and then his condition improved but never for very long. He tried

to soothe the burning pain by applying little cushions of moist moss, and he had to wear his cowl pulled far down over his eyes. He, who had loved Brother Sun ever since the day of his first walk after his illness in those early days at Assisi, could no longer endure the light of day. A lover of light threatened by blindness! How jubilantly he had greeted the sun every morning when it rose! And now he had to seek shelter from its rays. Only after the sun had gone down at night, could he dare to remove his cowl and to look around freely again. Then Sister Moon and his brothers and sisters the stars would come to console him about the loss of his dearest brother the sun. And so he did not complain or quarrel with God, who had sent him this visitation. Neither did he complain about the grief which the schism in his order had caused him, a grief which had broken into the cheerfulness of his life as unexpectedly, as brutally and fatally as the Egyptian eye disease, for it had darkened the brightness of his life's work, the sun of his brotherhood.

Yet Francis accepted all this without a trace of bitterness. His love and his trust in God remained unshaken, and he bore willingly the cross that was imposed upon him. For all this grief came from the same Creator that had favored him for so long with an abundance of joy and happiness. It came from God who had not seen fit to save his only begotten son from the bitterest grief, the most painful sorrow from treason and death, for the final fruit of such abasement was elevation, the fruit of such pain was joyful consolation, and death and martyrdom were the beginning of the miracle of resurrection. How small, how pitifully small was Francis' grief compared with the passion of Christ!

Francis had dedicated his life to the imitation of Christ. The purpose of all his endeavor was to spread the Lord's message of joy. If he really meant to live his life after the model of Christ, he had to follow Him also on the Way of the Cross.

All his misfortunes and all his suffering appeared to him now as an exhortation to be steadfast. They showed him the way that would lead to final perfection of his *imitatio Christi*.

For Francis there was only one approach to all things. All his relationships meant love. It was love that taught him to accept pain. And he did not endure it, he embraced it with brotherly tenderness.

Since sorrow and pain had been the destiny of the son of God,

his Lord and Master and the center of his devotion, he saw henceforth no other object for the power of his love but to have it chasten and purify his grief and sorrow to such a degree that they would finally resemble the passion of Christ

Real love—this Francis had learned through his love for the poor, the despised, and the lepers—implies the ability to suffer the sufferings of others, to endure the pain of others as one's own. Inspired by such love, he wanted to follow his Saviour on the way to Golgotha. "O Lord," he prayed, "grant me the joy of enduring your grief"

The time for Alverno had come. Late in the summer of the year 1224 Francis started on his way in the company of a few of his oldest disciples. Together with Angelo, Rufino, Masseo, and the lamb Leo he wanted to spend the forty days of the Lent of St Michael on the lonely Apennine mountain. His frail body was not equal to the hardships of the journey. On the way he broke down. The disciples had to borrow a donkey for him, and thus they continued the ascent. Before reaching the last plateau they had to stop again and build a little hut where Francis might rest and recover from his attack. They themselves lay down a short distance away.

As soon as he felt strong enough, Francis decided to withdraw still farther into the wilderness and to be alone with God, far away from his disciples. Under a towering peak, the Spicco Sasso, he found a ravine where he decided to remain. The only friend with whom he shared his alpine solitude was Brother Falcon whose nest was in a weather-beaten beech tree near by. Faithfully Brother Falcon called him when it was time for his midnight prayer and again in the morning when his day began, which he spent entirely in absorption and contemplation and the emotional imitation of the passion of Christ.

Thus arrived the morning of the 14th of September. "O Lord, my Savior," Francis prayed, "I ask two favors before I die. Let me feel in my soul, in my body even, all the bitter pain which you have felt. And in my heart let me feel that immeasurable love which made you, Son of God, endure such sufferings for us, poor sinners."

No sooner had he finished his prayer, than—as though the fervor of his words had broken the power of the laws of this world—the distance between heaven and earth vanished, and the abyss between

human yearning and divine fulfillment was bridged. The things of the earth gave way to a supernatural vision. His feeble eyes saw the abode of the blessed in such glorious splendor as no mortal eyes had ever seen before. His soul looked into a mirror which reflected its divine image.

To describe what happened to Francis in this rapturous state cannot be the task of history. It is the task of the legend, which alone is able to draw on an adequate fund of means of expression, for in it divine meaning and the images of the world are interwoven in naive harmony.

Francis saw a gigantic being with wings, a hovering seraph that bore the features of the Saviour. Its arms were stretched out, its feet tied together, and it was fastened to a cross of light. Two of its wings were raised over its head, two were spread out, and two covered the body.

Deeply moved and verily transfixed by the radiant suffering of the seraph, Francis uttered a piercing cry of pain and bliss. For suddenly he felt the five wounds of the crucified body of Christ with such unspeakable force that he could not endure the pain and fell to the ground in a state of unconsciousness. When he recovered, he saw on his body the five wounds of Christ on the cross. And as his body bore the stigmata of physical pain, so his heart was pierced by the stigma of the Redeemer's superhuman love. Francis' prayer had been heard.

The legend of St. Francis tells us that his body bore the wounds of the cross to the time of his death. All those who saw him during the last two years of his life bear out the truth of the legend. They also speak about the divinity of the Redeemer's love, the power of which lived on in Francis' heart after the vision of the seraph.

The "troubadour of God" had received the highest prize. The wounds of the crucified Son of God had been impressed upon his body, and he took leave of the mountain of his destiny. "Farewell Sasso Spicco," he said, "farewell dearest Brother Falcon, thank you for the love you bore me." And then he continued, "Farewell Brother Masseo, Brother Angelo, Brother Rufino, peace be with you, adio, adio. Adio holy mountain, I am going with Brother Little Sheep, farewell mountain, I will never see you again."

Ailing and weak, his eyes shielded against the painful light of the

sun, but his soul still fully absorbed in the vision he had seen, thus he arrived in the company of the lamb Leo at the Portiuncula

There his suffering grew worse, and the brothers took him to San Damian where the loving care of St. Clara might give him some relief. At his request Clara had built for him a wattle hut not far from the house of the sisters. There he spent days and weeks of great torment. It was a sore trial, for to the painful tribulations of his illness was added the annoyance of rats and mice and of swarms of gnats and flies that found the wattle hut an ideal breeding ground.

Yet the "loving brother of all of God's creatures," who had picked up the rainworms on the road to save them from being crushed, remained steadfast in his superhuman love. "Sister Gnat, have a heart," he said. "Sister Rat, I am tired and would like to sleep. Please let me rest."

His Egyptian trachoma had grown so bad that every ray of light caused him the most piercing pain. It was summer, and day in and day out the bright Italian sun shone from a pitilessly radiant sky.

Soon after Francis' arrival at San Damian Donkey Body refused to obey in other respects too. Francis no longer had to remind him that he should be modest and live frugally, he had to beg him to take at least some of the food Sister Clara so carefully prepared for him. Donkey Body grew more and more stubborn. He even refused to be refreshed by the sparkling spring water which Clara brought him. There was no longer anything he enjoyed. Donkey Body was seriously ill. His stomach, liver, spleen, and kidneys, all his organs were impaired. Donkey Body stretched out on the ground as though he were getting ready to die.

Yet the patient in the wattle hut at San Damian, visited by all ills, tortured by all pains, remained strong in his divine trust and in his love of all things created, and no physical pain, no bodily torture could really affect him. Brother Francis, "the least among the friars minor" was no longer able to see the sun, but that did not mean that "Brother Sun" was no longer shining, as bright and wonderful as on the first day. Donkey Body refused to carry Francis out of his hut, to where he could see the trees and flowers, and the moon and the stars at night, but that did not mean that the trees were no longer in bloom, that they did not bear fruit anymore, and that the brothers and sisters of eternity, the moon and the stars were no longer adorning the firmament. The springs went on flowing with

life-giving water, and the water continued on its course through streams and mighty rivers down to the ocean, even though Donkey Body could no longer enjoy a refreshing drink. For weeks Francis' lungs had inhaled no fresh air, but the world lived on, enlivened and refreshed by the bracing vigor of the atmosphere. And Brother Fire, the giver of light against darkness, of warmth against cold, would continue to delight men, even though Francis was no longer able to stare forlornly into the flames as he had always loved to do. The days of "little Brother Francis" were numbered, but the big brothers, the brothers and sisters of eternity, the stars and elements, would go on proclaiming the splendors of the Father to the end of all days.

While his eyesight faded away, while his life faded out, he thought of nothing but the brotherhood of all things and of the Father, their Creator. And the bliss of these thoughts could have absorbed a hundredfold the grief in his heart and the frailty of his body.

From one night of sorrow to the next night of pain his brotherly happiness grew only the more powerful and jubilant until it finally burst forth in a song that had to be sung because its jubilant inspiration could no longer be contained.

"Donkey Body," exclaimed Francis one morning, "dearest brother of my soul, please try and pull yourself together again. The Father has given me a song that I must teach the minstrels of God, for I want them to sing it before the people so that they will not forget the Father."

Every morning Sister Clara and the friars who cared for him during his illness, came to visit him in his hut. This morning they found him to their greatest amazement standing outside the hut, leaning against the trunk of a tree with his cowl pulled down over his eyes.

"Sister Clara and you, my brothers, listen to the song that was given me in my trials to the greater glory of the Father and as consolation for all men," he said cheerfully. And then he began to sing the song in which he, who was about to leave the world, thanked his God once again for the splendor of his creation.

Altissimo omnipotente bon signore

Tue son le laude, la gloria et l'honore et ogni benedictione

A te solo se confano

Et nullo homo è degno de nominar te

Laudato sia Dio mio signore cum tutte le tue creature, specialmente
messer lo frate sole

La quale giorno et illumina nui per lui

Et ello è bello et radiante cum grande splendore

De te signore porta significatione

Laudato sia mio signore per sor luna et per le stelle

In celo le hai formate clare et belle

Laudato sia mio signore per frate vento et per l'aire et nuuolo et sereno
et omne tempo

Per le quale dai a le tue creature sustentamento

Laudato sia mio signore per sor aqua

La quale è multo utile et humile et pretiosa et casta

Laudato sia mio signore per frate foco, per lo quale tu allumini la nocte

Et ello è bello et jucundo et robustissimo et forte

Laudato sia mio signore per nostra matre terra

La quale ne sustenta et guberna et produce diuersi fructi et coloriti
fiori et herbe

Laudate et benedicite mio signore et regratiare

Et seruite a lui cum grande humilitate

Most high, omnipotent, good Lord,

To Thee be praise and glory, honor and blessing

Only to Thee, most high, do they belong,

And no man is great enough to speak of Thee

Be praised, my Lord, with all Thy creatures,

And most of all for Monsignor Brother Sun,

Who makes the day for us, and the light

Fair is he, and radiant, and very splendid

A semblance, Lord most high, of Thee

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon and all the stars

In heaven Thou hast made them, precious, bright and fair

Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Wind

And for air and cloud and every weather

By which Thou givest sustenance to all Thy creatures

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water,
Useful, humble, precious and chaste

Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire
By whom Thou dost light up the night
Beautiful is he, and joyous, robust, and strong

Be praised, my Lord, for our mother, Sister Earth
Who doth support and keep us, and produce for us
Her varied fruits and colored flowers and grass

Oh, praise and bless my Lord, and thankful be,
And serve Him all, with great humility

In this song of praise of the Creator and His creation, the enthusiasm of Francis the troubadour of God flared up once more. When he finished, he thought neither of the illness of donkey Body nor of the dissension of Brother Elias and exclaimed with great fervor: "Let us travel through the world, free as the birds, and sing this song which is ours as they sing theirs. Brothers, wherever you go, you shall first preach your sermon and then you shall sing this song, and to the people you shall say: 'We are the minstrels of God and want no other reward from you but that you repent so that in your purified souls you may participate in the divine joy of creation.'"

Historians of literature regard this canticle, "The Praises of the Creatures,"—more generally known under the name of "Cantico de lo Frate Sole" or "Canticum Fratris Solis,"—as the first poem in the Italian language, the source of inspiration and a direct model for the immortal poems of Dante, Petrarca, and Tasso, and as an early precursor of the rhapsodic poetry of nature down to Herder and Walt Whitman. Historians of art perceive in the frescoes of Cimabue and Giotto and the subsequent tradition of realism in the painting of nature an echo—crystallized in color and contour—of the melody of the canticle of Brother Sun. Social historians speak of the great effect which this poem, sung in the vernacular, had on the religious feelings of the great masses during the later Middle Ages, especially during the time of the ecstatic processions of penitents, when it became for thousands and thousands of Christians an inspiring song of revolt.

More important, however, than all these facts is the phenomenon

—not equalled by anything in the history of world literature—that the verbal creation of the poet Francis was realized by him as a saint in the most literal sense of the word in the hour of his worst tribulation. This poem was not only the fruit of an hour of sublime poetic inspiration, it was the rhythm of Francis' life, the tenor of his soul translated into verse and tune.

For now it came to pass that Francis—at the request of cardinal Ugolino, who worried about the eyesight of the saint—was taken from San Damiano to Rieti. There were several famous eye specialists there, and it was hoped that they might at least be able to save Francis from total blindness. Yet all their endeavors to cure him with ointments and plasters and tinctures failed. When Francis' condition grew even worse, one of the doctors decided to try cauterization as a last and desperate attempt to check the disease. There were no anesthetics, and the preparations for the operation were almost worse than the disease itself. A charcoal fire was built. The doctor placed a long iron bar with a flattened point into the fire. When it was red-hot, he took it out in order to use it to cauterize Francis' face from the eyebrows back to the ears.

In his poem Francis had hailed the fire as a beloved brother. Now this brother appeared before him in the shape of a horrible instrument of torture. The friars minor that were present could not bear the sight and went away. Francis remained steadfast. He welcomed Brother Fire in a friendly tone of voice. "Brother Fire," he said, "God made you beautiful and strong and useful, I pray you deal cautiously with me, for I have always loved you."

The art of the physicians could not do much for poor donkey Body. The cauterization was of no avail, and when Francis began now to cough up clods of blood, the hope to see him recover was further reduced.

The brothers had taken him—again at the behest of cardinal Ugolino—to Siena, because it was hoped that the milder climate of that part of Italy might have a beneficial effect upon the new symptom. But no change of climate could stop the approach of death. A hemorrhage made the brothers fear that the end had come. The worried tone of their voices told Francis what they did not say, would not have dared to utter. "In case I shall soon be no longer among you," he said with a great effort, "I want to tell you my last wishes." Turning to Leo, he added, "Write, lamb of God!" And he dictated

his testament of love. "I bless my brethren who are in the order, and all those who shall come into it, even to the end of the world. And since, because of my weakness, I may not speak much, I make plain my desire to all my brethren, present and to come, in these brief words that they shall always love one another, as I have loved them, that they shall always love and observe our Lady Poverty, and that they shall remain faithful servants of our holy Mother Church."

Six more months of suffering lay before him. But as he had borne poverty and the vicissitudes of life not merely with courage but—much more than that—with cheer and love, good humor and a song on his lips, so he also accepted the slow torture of his death.

His most ardent wish was to be taken home to Assisi. In August, 1226, the brothers carried him on a litter over mountains and through valleys back to his native city. The whole town came to meet him in a solemn procession. It was led by the same bishop Guido who long ago had given his coat to the lost son of merchant Bernardone. Now he knelt down before the returning saint and kissed the hem of his garment with great reverence.

In the bishop's palace Francis was given the room where years ago Guido had presided over the court scene with Bernardone and his son Francis as plaintiff and defendant. There he learned that the bishop and the podesta as heads of the ecclesiastic and municipal administrations were involved in a bitter dispute of jurisdictional competence. Francis was sick unto death, but to the very last he remained a herald of the Prince of Peace. He decided to bring about a reconciliation between the two contestants.

He sent two of his disciples to the podesta, asking him to come to his bedside at a certain hour because he did not wish to die without having told him something that might prove to be of great importance to the welfare of the people of Assisi. He then invited the bishop to come to see him at precisely the same time. No sooner had the two irreconcilable enemies met in Francis' room, than two of his disciples began to sing the canticle of Brother Sun. All this had been carefully planned in advance. What had *not* been planned was a spontaneous inspiration of the moment. When the disciples had ended, Francis went on singing, adding one more stanza to his song.

Laudato sia mio signore per quelli que perdonano per lo tuo amore et sosteneno infirmitate et tribulatione

Beati quelli que sostenerano in pace che da ti altissimo serano incoronati

Be praised my Lord, for those who pardon for Thy love,
Who bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are they who keep themselves in peace,
For thou shalt crown them, Lord most high

As he sang the last words of the new stanza, the wish it implied was fulfilled. The podesta stepped forward and said "I say to you all, if anyone should have slain my blood brother, nay, if anyone should have slain my son, I would forgive him." And turning to the bishop, he continued "I am ready, your lordship, to make satisfaction for everything as it shall please you, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of his good servant Francis." Then the bishop went up to him and said "My office bids me be humble, but alas, I am quick to wrath! It is my part to ask pardon of you." So it happened that the bishop, who at one time had passed judgment on the son of Pietro Bernardone, submitted here in the same room to the verdict of love of St. Francis.

- * Caused by the hardships of the journey to Assisi, Francis' condition had grown worse, and the bishop called the most famous physician of Umbria to his bedside. After the physician had completed his examination, Francis asked him "How much longer can I live?" The simple clarity of this question permitted only the same kind of answer. "Only a very short time," said the physician.

Francis remained silent for a moment. His life had come to an end. Seeing death so close by, he recognized in it a sister, the sister of man since the beginning of time, the sister of man till judgment day, the most reliable and faithful sister, the sister of man's last hour and his only companion on his last journey back to the Father. And the same more-than-human love, with which Francis had at all times welcomed the gifts of God, made him now also embrace this last one in cheerful readiness.

The bishop and Francis' disciples, who were waiting outside from where they had been listening to the doctor's verdict, heard suddenly inside the patient's room a steady voice singing a song of

joy Francis had completed the last stanza of his song, the song of his life in praise of God

Laudato sia mio signore per sor nostra morte corporale
Da la quale nullo homo viuento pò scampare
Guai a quelli que more in peccato mortale
Beati quelli que se trouano ne le tue sanctissime voluntate
Che la morte secunda non li porà far male

Be praised my Lord, for Sister Death
From whom no man living can escape
Alas for those who die in mortal sin,
But happy they who find themselves within Thine will,
On them the second death can work no harm

The news that Francis was about to die spread like wildfire. Thousands of people gathered in front of the bishop's mansion. A fear-inspired crowd looked up at the windows behind which Francis was dying. Their silence was so intense, it seemed to transform the whole piazza into a vast hall of death. Then suddenly the silence was broken by a jubilant song coming from Francis' room. "Be praised, my Lord, with all Thy creatures . . ." The men and women in the square looked at each other in surprise. Was it possible that a human being should sing so jubilantly in the hour of his death? Then the singing stopped. But it began again a little while later, and so it went on all day till dusk.

For the night a special guard had been ordered to the bishop's palace. The monotonous echo of the guardsmen's footfall was drowned out at regular intervals by the hymn of joy, "Be praised, my Lord . . .," ringing from the death room out into the silence of the night.

When the morning came, it was greeted by the song of praise of Brother Sun. And the townspeople who gathered again with fearful hearts in front of the bishop's palace, heard the singing voice of their saint bid them farewell in a song of exhortation, urging them to thank God for all the splendors of His creation, thanking Him also for man's last sister on earth—for Sister Death

In the course of the morning Elias, the leader of the great Franciscan order, appeared at his master's bedside with a very delicate request. As he entered, Francis was once again singing the "Praises of the Creatures." This made his task only the more difficult. But

Elias was a clear-headed and forceful thinker who would not endanger the future of his order by sentimental qualms. Tactful or not—when Francis had finished his song, Elias told his dying master what he considered necessary in the interest of the order. "Brother," he said, "what will the faithful out there think of your sainthood, if you do nothing but sing? Forgive me, but such demeanor is not befitting the death of a holy person like you. It may arouse doubt in the minds of the people regarding the genuineness of your holiness."

Francis—a troubadour of God, in death as in life—answered the superior of his order candidly. "Suffer me, Brother, to rejoice in my Lord, both in His glory and in my infirmities, since by the grace of His Spirit, I feel so united to Him, that I needs must sing."

As Elias left the room, he heard—to his dismay but in confirmation of the message of joy for all mankind—the song of the sun which Francis had begun singing again.

With this song on his lips and accompanied by a crowd of people joining in, Francis was carried from the bishop's mansion to the *Portiuncula* where he wanted to receive Sister Death and where he wished to be buried.

On the way he asked his disciples to stop for a while on the top of a hill from where he could see once again the town of Assisi in the valley below. He was not strong enough to move his head by himself. "Please," he said to his disciples, "turn my face toward Assisi. I would like to bless my town which I shall not see again, my good town, my beautiful town." They complied with his request. His eyes were almost blind and unable to see Assisi, but he could see it once more with the eyes of his soul. Slowly he raised his hand and made the sign of the cross over the town.

In the grove at the *Portiuncula* the brothers took him at his request to an isolated hut which lay hidden behind the chapel. When his friends and faithful had gathered at his side and he felt that he had only a few hours to live, he turned to the lamb of God and said, "Add this to what I asked you to write at Siena. 'I request the brothers, laymen as well as priests, not to interpret my words and not to say, "This is what he meant." And just as the Lord helped me to state and write the Rules and these words simply and plainly, so you must understand them simply and plainly without interpretation and follow them to the end in holy observation.'"

Then he asked "Lay my naked body on the bare ground, for thus, in the arms of my dear Lady Poverty, do I wish to die."

Shortly thereafter, at sundown on the third of October in the year 1226, his last hour arrived. The brother of life and the brother of death, the brother of all creation and its immortal poet passed away. His last words were the words of the one hundred and forty-second psalm of king David: *Voce mea ad dominum clamavi*! I cried unto the Lord with my voice, with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.

When his voice grew weak and finally vanished in death, there came from the grove a loud twitter of birds. Francis' sisters, the larks, had arrived to bid his soul farewell on its last journey to heaven.

SAINT IGNATIUS

IGNATIUS *The Saint of Will Power*

A BILL OF INDICTMENT, forwarded in 1515 by the corregidor of Guipúzcoa to the episcopal court at Pamplona, contains the earliest description of St Ignatius

The delinquent Íñigo de Oñez y Loyola, the bill says, is "bold and defiant, he wears a leather cuirass and is armed with sword and pistol, his long hair flows out from under his velvet cap" The charge against him is one of brawling and knavish attacks on defenseless women To sum up, he is described in three words as "perfidious, brutal, vindictive"

A character whom no passion could taint, a master of self-discipline whom the last vestiges of selfishness had left, a man who lived exclusively in the service of God—thus runs a description of the general of the Society of Jesus, St Ignatius of Loyola, at the time of his death

This amazing transformation was the result of an astonishing exertion of will power

In his youth Ignatius showed many traits which remind one of St Augustine They both belonged to the same type of young man whom sensuousness and ambition keep enthralled Only the setting was different The middle-class atmosphere of Augustine's early life was turned, in the case of Ignatius, into the romantic at-

mosphere of late medieval knighthood Augustine was the son of a poorly paid official, Ignatius the descendant of impoverished nobles. Augustine gave in to a lusty animal instinct and took a mistress, Ignatius pursued a high-flown romantic dream and idolized a ruling queen. In Augustine's case we have the excesses of a young student of rhetoric, in the case of Ignatius the reckless feats of a courtier.

Looking back on his past, Ignatius of Loyola, the saintly general of the Society of Jesus, confessed with as much candor as his precursor in sainthood, St. Augustine the bishop of Hippo: "Up to my twenty-sixth year, I was entirely given up to the vanities of the world and felt a keen and empty craving to excel." To illustrate the depravity of his youth, he admitted remorsefully that, as a young knight, he had not been ashamed of committing a theft and of looking on calmly when an innocent man was punished in his stead.

From his earliest childhood Ignatius' soul was poisoned by boundless ambition. His boyhood passed without deep or moving experiences, and until he came of age, he wasted his life at the court of king Ferdinand the Catholic in frivolous, meaningless mischief.

Íñigo's parents, blessed with a greater abundance of children than of wealth and possessions, were delighted when their relative Don Juan Velásquez de Cuellar, the governor of the royal summer residence of Arevalo, offered to take the boy at the age of seven into his service as a page. Don Juan's wife was one of the queen's ladies in waiting, and the only topics of conversation which Ignatius heard discussed in his new home, were the greater and lesser tokens of benevolence, bestowed by the ruling couple on this or that person, and the ambitious hopes occasioned by them. Gradually the firm belief struck root in the child's mind that the only thing on earth worth striving for was the favor of kings and queens.

This attitude of the members of the Cuellar household reached a new high when the king, after the death of queen Isabella of Castile, married the young French princess Germaine de Foix. Hardly a year had passed since the body of Isabella, in accordance with her last wishes,—without pomp and ceremony and wrapped in a coarse Franciscan cowl,—had been lowered into the royal vault at Granada, when the arrival at the port of Valencia of a fleet of thirty ships,

laden with clothes and linen, hats and shoes, perfumes and powders, proclaimed the presence of a new queen.

Before Isabella's death, the wife of the governor had distinguished herself in studied deference to the wishes of the queen, by the austerity of her religious views and the intensity of her dislike of feminine finery and worldly conversation. Under the new regime she had to maintain her position as first lady of the court, and this implied that she had to adapt her views, her likes and dislikes to an entirely new set of wonts and whims, for queen Germaine, in contrast to her predecessor, was a pleasure-loving, gay and cheerful young lady.

Doña María Velásquez de Cuellar was very ambitious, and her skill and experience in dealing with the problems of courtly life enabled her to develop a character conformable to that of the new queen. At the side of Isabella she had listened with deep devotion to the hymns sung in church by the choir of the royal household. Now she was delighted with the most frivolous French madrigals and applauded enthusiastically when she saw the new dances which the queen wished to introduce.

Soon Doña María had established herself as a trusted and indispensable friend of her young mistress. And when Doña Germaine came into the habit of calling more and more frequently at the home of Doña María for a friendly and undisturbed chat, it happened often enough that the page Íñigo de Loyola had to wait on her at table or carry her train or walk in front of her with a torch when she left.

At this time Íñigo was fourteen years old. The influence of the house in which he was living, its atmosphere of boundless ambition, caused his first boyish love to be consecrated to the queen. For him love came to be synonymous with courtly service. His dreams about women were inspired by the vain desire to acquire distinction in the eyes of the queen.

When, in due course, he was knighted and in agreement with the prevailing custom had to choose his "queen of hearts," he chose the queen of Spain. On festive occasions he wore henceforth her colors, and the highest reward he could hope for was a lace kerchief, received from her hand, as prize in a tournament.

This love was no genuine passion but merely an outgrowth of the vain endeavor to excel before the highest lady of the land, and

somehow he managed to combine the romantic worship of an unattainable "queen of hearts" with the most perfect contempt for those women whom he sacrificed to his lusts. For, like other young knights of his time, Íñigo was always involved in doubtful adventures, was always pursuing the most crudely sensual pleasures.

At the time when Íñigo lived at the Spanish court, the knights, used to a life of leisure and idleness in the environment of their sovereign, had lost the valor and pride of their ancestors. The young knight of Loyola was no exception. In him, too, the warlike spirit of his forebears had degenerated into a shallow delight in all sorts of knavish pranks perpetrated against defenseless men and women of the lower classes. He spent his days in vulgar drinking bouts and brawls.

Some court gossip led unexpectedly to an estrangement between the queen and Doña María. Don Juan and his wife fell in disgrace and had to leave the court in great haste. Íñigo, who was a member of their household, had to go with them.

For the moment his easy life and his ambitious hopes for a brilliant career under the eyes of the queen had come to an end. He was forced to look for some other engagement, and soon he decided to join the guards of the duke of Najera, a relative of his, who had recently been appointed viceroy of Navarra.

Once again it was his insatiable ambition that induced him to take this step. Navarra was frequently threatened by hostile incursions of the neighboring French, and Íñigo was hoping for a chance to distinguish himself in this restive border province by some special feat of valor.

The kind of military service which awaited him at Pamplona must have come as a very unpleasant surprise for him. Within the safe precincts of the residence at Arevalo, the knights had confined their warlike exercises to harmless tournaments. In shining armor, with golden vambrace and gorgeous plumes, they had tried, encouraged by the cheers of beautiful ladies, to unhorse their opponent by skillful thrusts with a blunted lance. But here, in the frontier fortress of Pamplona, things had a rather different look.

Far away from the town, on a barren and desolate plateau, the foot soldiers were drilling, to the monotonous commands of their officers, in endless repetition, the same manual of arms, the same

wheels and deployments. There were no beautiful women to watch and admire what the men were doing.

Even after he had gotten halfway used to these new conditions, Íñigo lost none of his burning ambition. It rather grew more burning still. It had to grow, for to excel was much harder now than it had been at Arevalo. There it had been enough to show one's skill in a tournament against one single opponent, but here it was necessary to distinguish oneself among thousands of men and dozens of officers. Feverishly he waited for an opportunity to perform some special feat, for a while in vain, for to his great displeasure the country enjoyed perfect peace.

Finally a popular revolt broke out in the town of Najera. Íñigo was commissioned to participate as a company commander in the expedition against the rebels, but at the very last moment a malevolent fate deprived him of the expected laurels. His saber drawn, he was about to charge at the head of his company across the old seven-arched bridge into the enemy positions on the other side of the river, when the insurgents surrendered to the viceroy whose troops, arriving from a different direction, had already entered the town.

After four long years, Íñigo was finally given another chance. A real war broke out. French troops, encouraged by a serious popular revolt in Castile, crossed the Spanish border. Navarra became one of the theaters of war, albeit a subordinate one, in the first great global conflict between emperor Charles V and king Francis I of France.

The Spanish governor did not try to repel the vastly superior enemy forces, and the French advanced without encountering more than token resistance.

In May, 1521, the French army arrived at the gates of Pamplona. The viceroy had fled, the local authorities were ready to let the enemy move in, and the small Spanish garrison had to withdraw to the citadel, which, however, was not prepared for a determined attack. The bastions were unfinished, there was a shortage of cannon, munitions, and food. The commander called a meeting of his officers. All agreed that resistance was hopeless and resolved to capitulate without giving fight.

This was the moment for Íñigo's heroic career to be launched. At first he listened silently to the arguments of his comrades, but

then he jumped up and delivered a flaming speech. He, the youngest among the officers, appealed to the hidalgo honor of his comrades and told them that it was their duty to accept certain death rather than to lay down their arms in disgrace. For a moment his enthusiasm carried the other officers with it. They forgot their reasoned arguments and decided to make a stand.

Glowing in warlike ardor, Iñigo hastened to the most gravely threatened point in the defense works, where the enemy was concentrating a major attack, and brandishing his sword he encouraged his men to stand firm. But after a short struggle the French entered the captured citadel. The times of knightly heroism were past. The flaming courage of a single individual fought in vain when success had come to depend on superior numbers and the well-organized work of anonymous canoneers.

Iñigo de Loyola was lying in his blood, with a shattered leg, on the bastions of Pamplona, where he was found and picked up by French soldiers. The irony of fate had caused him, the valorous knight, to be felled by an impersonal instrument of modern warfare, a cannon ball, which had come blindly from somewhere and nowhere, and against which all personal heroism was senseless and futile.

After a painful journey he was deposited at his ancestral castle of Loyola. There it was discovered that the fractured bones of his leg had been badly set and would have to be broken again. But the result of this operation was again a complete failure. The bones would not knit right, and now there was even a horrible stump of bone sticking out from the side of his leg.

The doctors told the patient that this hideous thing could be removed only by a very painful operation, but Loyola agreed immediately that it should be sawed off. Without a murmur of pain he put his leg under the surgeon's instrument.

Now the leg was too short, and for many weeks he underwent the dreadful torture of a racklike orthopedic stretcher in which he had to lie without moving. All this he endured only to escape being crippled. To him, whose sole ideal in life was to excel in a tournament before the eyes of the queen, a physical deformity was the greatest of all misfortunes. For in a tournament it was the rhythmic play of shapely limbs that attracted the admiring glances of beautiful ladies and induced them to throw precious rings and

plumes and perfumed gloves and kerchiefs down to the knights in the field.

Whatever the pain, Íñigo had to avoid at all costs a deformity of his leg, which might make it impossible for him to wear fashionably tight-fitting top boots. His boundless ambition and vanity made him endure the most horrible torment without groaning or complaint.

Even after his leg was in fairly good shape again, he still had to lie motionless for many weeks. Now he was free from pain, but instead the tedious burden of endless hours of boredom weighed heavily upon him. He tried to fill them with romantic thoughts of the queen and imagined what he might do to be near her again and attract her notice by all sorts of heroic feats.

He visualized himself again on the tilting ground, brandishing his sword and galloping along with charm and grace and skill. But after that the imagery of his fancy faded away. However much he tried to spur on his imagination, he never got beyond his vision of the tilting ground and himself on a spirited courser. At this point his imagination gave out, however colorful it had been before.

Then it occurred to him that he might bolster up his imagination by allowing it to feed on borrowed imagery. He asked for the *Amadis de Gaula*, the book which since his days as a page at court he had been used to consult in all troubles of love. But in the castle of the Loyolas it was not customary to read books, and the entire library there consisted of two works: the four folio volumes of Ludolphus of Saxony's *Life of Christ* and a collection of more or less authentic legends of the saints with the title *Flos Sanctorum*. Instead of the *Amadis* he longed for, Íñigo finally turned to the holy books. At first he felt a keen dislike for all those penances, castigations, and works of humility in which these stories of the saints abounded. He often put the heavy tomes away, utterly bored, but quite mechanically he took them up again, and little by little the deeds of the saints appeared to him in the familiar light of chivalry.

He read the stories of St. Dominic and St. Francis, and after a while he began to discover in these stories the most exciting adventures, and he read them with the same devoted interest as formerly the miraculous journeys of Amadis, the "darkly beautiful" knight.

It did not take him long to discover that many of the deeds of the saints could rival the boldest adventures of knightly heroes. One thing that struck him as particularly strange was the fact that these knights of the faith were always wearing plain and shabby cowls, that they went in quest of adventures without armor and plumage, and that they attained nevertheless the highest honor and glory. Many a great hero of the faith had seen the queen of heaven bow down to him to give him courage and endurance with her kind smile and sweet words. Compared with such rewards, the lace kerchief of the queen of Spain lost much of its value, and so it came to pass that Iñigo's thoughts dwelt less and less often on his shortened leg.

An irresistible longing grew up in Iñigo's heart. His ambition had found a new goal: he wanted to enter the circle of the great saints and together with them, clad in the armor of cowl and girdle, conquer the kingdom of Christ.

He took great pains to adapt his thoughts and feelings to this entirely new and unaccustomed sphere. Since he had not learned to think abstractedly in any sense of the word, he clothed his desires in the imagery which was familiar to him from his life as a knight. The spirits of good and evil appeared to him in the shape of knights who were divided in two great camps and fought continuously for the soul of man. The standard of Christ, the commander-in-chief of the righteous, was the rallying center of warlike angels and saints, whose aim it was to lead the soul to heaven, while devils and demons gathered under the banner of Satan and endeavored to drag man down into hell. What a sublime and proud feeling it must be to fight for the king of heaven and to earn the good graces of the heavenly queen!

One night Iñigo arose from his bed, knelt down in prayer before the image of the mother of God in the corner of his room and vowed to serve henceforth as a faithful soldier under the royal banner of Christ.

Thus he had decided to renounce the glories of this world, but his "conversion" and the resolution it implied to begin a new life were conceived entirely in terms of his notions of knighthood and chivalry. After his recovery he left the castle of his ancestors to go out into the world as a warrior of God, but he thought of this

step exclusively as a knightly venture. He wanted to become a saint in order to bring honor to his family, and when his brother asked him where he was planning to go, he answered that he was fully aware of his obligations toward the name of the Loyolas and that he would show himself worthy of his ancestors.

Like a crusader he had himself escorted to the first stopping place by his servants and by his brothers and sisters. Then he mounted his mule and started on his way to the church of Our Lady of Montserrat.

If Iñigo's service as "a warrior for the heavenly kingdom" was thus begun quite in the spirit of worldly chivalry, his consecration as a spiritual knight was consummated in precisely the same way. As the place for it he chose Montserrat, for it was there that according to legend the castle of the grail had been. On his way he met a beggar and changed clothes with him. The beggar went on wearing a cuirass and breeches of leather and a cap of fine velvet, while Iñigo continued on his way to Montserrat bareheaded and in a shabby and threadbare beggar's coat.

Before the image of Our Lady of Montserrat he kept his vigils exactly in accordance with a description he had once seen in *Amadis de Gaula*. The following morning, clad in the "beggar's garb of a warrior of God," equipped with a calabash and a pilgrim's staff, he came down the mountain and set out to conquer the kingdom of heaven.

With impatient enthusiasm the new convert concentrated his thoughts on the problem of what might be the most efficient way of establishing himself as a knight of the Lord, and his ignorant and inexperienced mind conceived readily of a plan which seemed to offer an excellent chance of winning distinction through special feats of heroism performed in the service of heaven. It was the adventurous idea of going to the Holy Land and of conquering it back for Christianity. He intended to liberate the Christian shrines in Palestine from the rule of the false prophet and to accomplish, all by himself, what the proud armies of the crusaders had not been able to achieve in spite of their great numbers. Poor and barefoot, defying all dangers, he meant to go to Jerusalem as a militant knight of the faith and to bring the infidels into the fold of the true church by the sword of his sermons and the example of heroic martyrdom.

The goal of his new career was clear to him now. But before he could start on his way he had to equip himself as a saint. So far he had only changed his costume, but the heart that beat under the beggar's garb was still the heart of a proud and stubborn knight. Something had to be done about this. The knight had to be changed into a saint. As for the means he might employ to achieve his purpose, Íñigo foresaw no trouble. On his sickbed he had read up about this sort of thing, in great detail, in the stories of the saints. There he had found his model, and all he had to do was to copy it faithfully. The money he had taken along on his trip was enough to purchase all the instruments of mortification and penitence which the saints had used. Thus equipped he went on his way to Manresa, a little hamlet in Catalonia where he remembered from earlier excursions a lonely cave at the foot of a cliff. This he chose as his future abode, there he would practice the most austere mortification of body and soul.

For seven hours every day he knelt in prayer, castigating his body the rest of his time and spending the short while, which he permitted himself for sleep, lying on the damp floor with a stone or a piece of wood as pillow. He often fasted for three or four days in a row, and when he decided finally to eat something, he took the stalest crusts of bread and a few herbs which he sprinkled carefully, with ashes to make them still less palatable.

From time to time he went to Manresa, begging alms and mingling with the poor and the sick in order to become, as far as possible, their equal in clothes and speech and manner. He neglected his body, let grow his hair and beard, he did not wash and wore the dirtiest rags. When he came limping down the street, in his wretched cowl, a bread bag over his shoulder and a great big rosary around his neck, the street urchins called after him "Father Sack."

But such mockery affected him little. "I shall do as St. Francis and St. Dominic have done," he decided. Yet if his aim was like theirs, his motives were different. His saintly models had practiced self-mortification in shame and contrition as a penance for their earlier sins, that the body might henceforth obey the soul in its aspiration toward God. But when Ignatius decided to do penance, it was not for the sake of his sins but because he wanted to please God. At a later date he confessed that during the time he spent in

the cave at Manresa, his desire to excel in the service of Christ had been so keen that in his penitential exercises his thoughts were not particularly concerned with his sins. It was his desire to surpass even the saintliest among the saints that led him to such merciless self-torture.

In the pursuit of his new ambition he profited greatly from his experiences on the drill ground at Pamplona. There he had observed what relentless training can do to make an inert and awkward body quick and skillful. This knowledge he now employed to the opposite end—the mortification of his body. He subjected the recruit body to the severest military drill until he had broken its will and could rely on its absolute slavish obedience.

He scourged himself systematically and often beat his breast with a stone until it was sore. At one time he carried his exercises so far that he fell seriously ill and had to be taken, in a state of unconsciousness, to the home of his patroness Doña Angélica de Amigant. The doctors that were called in had no hope for his life, and a few devout ladies decided that the moment had come to ask Doña Angélica for pieces of clothing which Ignatius had worn, for they wanted to keep them as relics of the saintly hermit. To comply with the request of her friends, Doña Angélica went to Ignatius' cave to get the martyr's belongings. She came back in a great fright, for in the cave she had found the most dreadful instruments of torture—a girdle of penitence made of wire, heavy chains, nails arranged in the form of a cross, and a shirt interwoven with iron barbs. All that Ignatius had worn on his body!

No sooner had the devoted care of Doña Angélica succeeded in bringing Ignatius back to life, than the stubborn penitent rebelled against her kindness and hospitality and returned to his damp cave in order to resume his scourgings with increased severity. The drill sergeant was not through yet with the basic training of his recruit. And when the body was finally harnessed in all its needs and drives and urges, the soul began to speak up. The good knight was utterly inexperienced in the affairs of the soul, and now, when he found himself for the first time face to face with its immense power, he was totally confused by the irregularity of its many-sided life.

At first he experienced a feeling of bliss which he had never known before. Then he fell into a strange state, an "illumination"

or "great light of reason," as he called it. One day he saw a white substance, "not very large and not very small," in which he thought he could recognize the humanity of Christ. On another occasion he was sure he saw the Virgin Mary. Then again he observed "the soul of a disciple enter into heaven." And all this he perceived as vividly as though it were happening before him in the flesh.

After a while he was troubled by doubts as to whether these apparitions were really of divine origin or whether they were inspired by evil spirits. In such a state of fearful uncertainty he once saw a light which resembled a serpent and the presence of which, in spite of its great beauty, was oppressive to him. When he noticed that the serpent "seemed to lose some of its beauty when it came close to the cross," he concluded that this must be an apparition not of God but the devil.

It was in vain that he tried to master the confusing abundance of his visions and emotions. At one time heaven opened its resplendent gates to him, and then again he felt threatened by the yawning abyss of hell. The face of the Lord, hovering in light, gave way to the distorted grimace of the devil. At one time the heavenly hosts were singing their jubilant hymns, and then again their song was drowned out by the hellish howling of demons and devils.

Discouraged and exhausted by the incessant conflict in his soul, he fell victim to utter despair, and finally he decided to abandon the hopeless struggle and to put an end to his life. But from the purgatory of his deepest despair, his ambition arose to new life, chastened now and assuming the form of a will of steel, the will to tame the chaos within and to force his way through to the attainment of sainthood which had become his sole goal and endeavor.

The saints before him had left it to the grace of God to guide their souls to the fulfillment of their yearning. Many of them, like St. Anthony, had had to wait for a lifetime until God had finally had mercy upon them. For Ignatius, however, sainthood was a career. It was something which he had made up his mind to attain. He was not at all prepared to wait around until God's slow-moving grace would come to him of its own volition, but instead he sent out his will to meet God's grace halfway or more. He strove to shorten the process by an exertion of his will.

Thus he ceased being a mere imitator of earlier saints. With him

the history of the saints is enriched by an entirely new type the saint of will power.

To tame his unbridled soul by an effort of volition, he used the technique which he had employed on the drill ground. As he had trained the body, so he tried now to train the soul as a drill sergeant trains a soldier. To attain his end, it was first of all necessary to submit his recruit the soul to a careful examination. And this was the idea which led him to develop his system of self-observation.

In a secluded and dark cave there was a man who beat himself with a pointed stone in cruel self-castigation, he prayed fervently, he was visited by supersensual illuminations, he saw the radiant countenance of Christ, saw a soul enter through the gates of heaven, observed the devil in the form of a serpent and looked down into the pit of hell, he was frightened to death and fell victim to the deepest despair. And while all this was going on, an interested ear listened attentively to the cries of pain of the suffering victim. A curious eye watched every move of the praying penitent. A keen experimenter made painstaking observations of the psychic reactions of his elated or frightened subject and recorded with absolute objectivity the kind, course, and intensity of the apparitions of Christ and the devil.

Nothing that happened to the man in the cave escaped the notice of his alert observer who was none other than the man himself.

Long before the time of Ignatius, St. Augustine had investigated the life of the soul. But the motive which induced the learned bishop of Hippo to practice introspection was the desire to find God in the soul of man. What he discovered were the unknown realms of the soul which extend to the horizon of egohood where the divine kingdom of grace has its beginning. The motive of the pragmatist Ignatius was to discover in the soul the spot where it might be possible to intervene in its affairs through a planned exertion of will power. What Ignatius strove to achieve was simply to expose to the bright light of consciousness the laws of the soul which determine the "voluntary" actions of man.

The basic law of all human activity seemed to him connected with the observation that every act is preceded by a decision. The penitent in the cave at Manresa, torn between contradictory emotions, harassed by incompatible notions, found that he was always confronted with two possibilities: right or wrong, moral or un-

moral, Christ or Satan yet it was not possible for him in all cases to come to a correct decision So he tried to trace the mechanism by which such decisions are determined He found that discrimination on the basis of reason is not enough Reason always calls in the emotions for advice But the emotions are subject to man's imagination, which must therefore be recognized as an indispensable link in the dynamic give and take of mind and soul. It follows then that the will, if it wants to control man's reactions, his behavior and conduct, must make itself master not only of man's reason and emotion but also of his imagination

Indeed, only a drill officer with a profound faith in the omnipotence of discipline could hit upon the idea that the soul, exactly like the body, can be forced by an exertion of one's will to unfold all its potentialities

As soon as Ignatius had made this discovery, he began to drill his reason, his emotions, and his imagination until all three were subjected to his will In the end he was able to control his onetime unbridled imagination as completely as his feelings and thoughts

When his basic training was over and the time had come for him to leave the cave at Manresa in order to begin his career as a saint, the unrestrained knight had become the absolute master of his impulses Now he felt ready to carry out his plan of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land

The voyage of this belated crusader, the experiences he had on the way, remind one of the young prince in the fairy tale, who gets involved in the gravest dangers but always manages to escape unscathed In the same way Ignatius got involved with pirates, warlike Turks, with cheats, swindlers, and highwaymen, but he always managed to escape without suffering serious harm A strange and touching serenity adheres to this extraordinary crusader, transfiguring all that happened to him in the course of his journey to Jerusalem

After his arrival in Palestine, Ignatius spoke to the provincial Fra Angelo about his plan of converting the infidels He got a gentle but definite rebuke Tactfully but with the matter-of-fact finality of an experienced official, Fra Angelo explained that the project was quite impracticable The Turks permitted pilgrims to pass to and from the Holy Land, but they tolerated no sort of Christian

proselytism Those who had tried something of the sort, the provincial explained, had either been killed or taken prisoner by the Mohammedans. He, Fra Angelo, was responsible for the maintenance of peaceful relations between Christians and Turks and could neither approve of nor countenance a venture such as Ignatius had in mind

Sadly Ignatius limped away through the Jaffa gate,—in his hempen shoes, with his pilgrim's staff and calabash Every step took him farther away from the Holy Land, brought him back closer to his native Spain

But just this failure in the Holy Land was to be instrumental in Ignatius' discovery of his real mission as a soldier of God He had not succeeded in converting the infidels, but that induced him only to turn to a still more glorious venture He decided to enlist his Christian brethren, who were enmeshed in the things of this world, in the armies of the Lord, and to conquer the world for Christ the king at the head of a host of heavenly fighters So Ignatius merely transposed the object of his campaign of conquest from without to within, from Palestine to the land of the human soul Even before he got back to Spain, he had his strategy all mapped out in his mind, for all of its elements could simply be derived from his own experience

At one time his life as a knight had been entirely given up to worldly joys and vanities, and then, simply through the determined resolution to become a saint, he had been able to change his character and his conduct and had demonstrated that every human being possesses a free will and complete freedom of choice and that it depends only on him in what direction he will move, what he will do with his life, and what he will make of himself What Ignatius had fought for in his own life, what he had finally achieved in his own personal way, that constituted at the same time a promise of triumph and a ptoof of the possibility of victory for anyone else, for all men of good will

The pilgrim, who had left Jerusalem downhearted and sad, arrived at the port of Barcelona in Spain full of courage and eager to fight

He began his work without delay. The exercises which he had tried on himself with so much success at Manresa, he now put to-

gether in a clear system, a sort of primer for the use of his future disciples. The result of these efforts was a little book which he called the *Spiritual Exercises*. In it he showed that it is possible, through will power alone, to get emancipated from all worldly bonds and to act exclusively in accordance with the will of God, and he gave precise directions on how to lead thoughts, emotions, and conduct into predetermined channels. His main concern was to discipline the imagination by evolving specific conceptual images, all of which were designed to develop a keener sense of discrimination between ethical and unethical actions.

The novice undergoing Ignatius' exercises is made to experience heaven and hell, with all his senses, in blessed delight and burning pain, so that the difference between good and evil remains indelibly impressed upon his soul. Thus prepared, the recruit is confronted with the great choice. Images are the means by which Ignatius wants to assist men in their quest for the road to perfection. For every day, for every hour of every day, his exercises prescribe in minute detail what fancies are to be conjured up and by what means it can be done.

In order to achieve the desired psychological effect, Ignatius employed the most amazing tricks. All the different senses were enlisted and made to heighten the intensity of one's mental vision to a degree comparable with that of a real experience.

In order to produce a more vivid visualization of evil, the exercises make use of the most horrible stagecraft of hell. The pupil must force his imagination to conjure up hell with all its terrors and the wailing hosts of the condemned. He must see it clearly enough to be able to measure its breadth and depth. All the other senses must come into play too. The ears of fancy must hear the howls and screams of the victims of hell, the nose of fancy must smell sulphur and all the putrid things of hell, the tongue of fancy must taste the bitterness of hell, and the sense of touch must feel the scorching flames which seize and devour the souls of the sinners. All five senses must participate in the experience of hell. The pupil must see, hear, smell, taste, and touch it, until he is finally overwhelmed by the horrors he has undergone. The purpose of all this is to shake the pupil's soul to its deepest depth so that, when at any time later on he is confronted with the necessity of choosing between good and evil, he is so fully aware of his own

sinfulness and the consequent danger of eternal damnation, that he can only decide in favor of good and a complete change of life

When this has been achieved, the novice is shown the ideal which he must strive to attain. He is asked to visualize Christ's life on earth and to live it again as a sort of realistic passion play covering all the stations of the Way of the Cross

In the exercise dealing with the birth of Christ, Ignatius demands of the novice that he "see with the eyes of fancy the road which leads from Nazareth to Bethlehem," to pay attention to its length and width and to determine whether it is smooth and even or passes through valleys and over mountains. Time and again the pupil is admonished to see with the eyes of fancy the persons acting in the drama, to hear with the ears of fancy what they are saying and to touch the things which Christ touched

The novice must taste the bread and fish that Jesus gave to the people, he must smell the oil which the sinful woman brought to Jesus, and with her he must anoint His feet and dry them and kiss them

The Last Supper must be experienced with all the vividness of a present event, the novice must feel that he is himself sitting at the table among the disciples and must see their gestures and hear their conversation

A puditantly exact visualization of the place—a *compositio loci*—is prescribed even for the meditation dealing with the night in the garden of Gethsemane. Here it is necessary to visualize clearly the road leading from Mount Zion to the Valley of Jehoshaphat and the garden, its length, breadth and exact location. Together with Christ the pupil must feel the pains of being scourged and nailed to the cross, together with Him he must go down into the tomb and finally ascend with Him to heaven

The climax of these exercises is the "meditation on the two banners." To produce the keenest possible impression, Ignatius presents his pupil with the idea of two contending armies. In the vicinity of Babylon the militant hordes of Satan encounter the knights of Christ. The pupil is asked once again to employ all his senses to produce a realistic conception of the forces in both camps. Jesus is not to be visualized as the king of the angels, serenely enthroned in the glory of heaven. He is a warlike leader, engaged in the fight for His kingdom on earth. He comes up to the novice.

He speaks to him and demands that he make his decision. And now the pupil must hear the challenging words of Christ demanding the active support of all the faithful in His great campaign against evil.

The emotional reactions of the pupil, just as his imagination, must conform to a stipulated pattern. Pain and joy, despair and jubilation are placed under the control of a purposeful will, nothing is left to the arbitrary moods of the moment.

The novice is told in great detail what emotions go with the various exercises. In one place Ignatius states characteristically "The fifth point is an exclamation of wonder accompanied by a great shock affecting the soul." For the student this is no statement but a command.

Conscience too must be disciplined and controlled by means of mechanical rules. For this purpose Ignatius prescribes the use of a graphic checking device. From day to day the novice must keep a record of the sins he commits by entering the corresponding number of dots on a sheet of graph paper, so that a comparison of the rows of dots at the beginning of the exercises with the shorter rows at a later stage measures the progress achieved in the eradication of bad habits and reprehensible character traits.

It is remarkable that Benjamin Franklin developed quite independently a system of moral checks which is the exact counterpart of Ignatius' *examen particulare*. "I made myself a little book," says Franklin in his autobiography, "and ruled each page so as to have seven columns, one for each day of the week. In these columns I marked with a little black spot every fault which I had committed. I was surprised to find myself so much fuller of faults than I had imagined, but I had the satisfaction of seeing them diminish. It may be well my posterity should be informed that to this little artifice, with the blessing of God, their ancestor owed the constant felicity of his life."

In his book Ignatius also puts down rules for the bearing and demeanor the novice should exhibit during the period of the exercises. He prescribes for instance in what way one should breathe in and out during prayer and points out that one posture of the body is better than another. Nothing whatever is left to free intuition, uncontrolled thought, to playful fancy, or spontaneous emotion.

To insure the most faultless performance possible, Ignatius

provides the "spiritual recruit" during the four weeks allotted to the exercises with an experienced supervisor and guide. It is the task of this drillmaster to adapt the exercises to the peculiarities of the individual pupils and to make sure that the desired effect, the complete regimentation of will and emotions, is achieved in each and every case.

The bold juxtaposition of factors, as obviously incompatible with each other as the free human soul and strict military drill, has resulted in what is certainly one of the most extraordinary products in the history of human thought. When one takes up the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius for the first time, one is struck by the strange fact that the entire book consists of rules and directions, of notes, and lists and summations. Even if one refrains from comparing this unique work with the inspired writings of the great mystics or the skillful rhetoric of the humanists, it still impresses one, through its lack of style and the obsolescent medievalism of its imagery, as uncommonly dry and lifeless.

But this verdict holds good only as long as the exercises are considered as a work of literature. Their practical application reveals immediately the deep significance of all these numerous directions and enables the student to see the various rules with their numberless notes as a coherent whole. This book was not written for those who are content with reading but for those who must act.

Within the church the exercises met at first with violent opposition. Ignatius' doctrine of the will could not fail to impress his contemporaries as a revolutionary innovation, for the later Middle Ages and also the beginning of modern times were still completely under the spell of Augustine's doctrine of salvation. According to it man could attain perfection only through the intervention of divine grace. And divine grace came as a favor of God, not as man's just desert, no labor or toil, no effort or endeavor could bring it about. It was an extraordinary gift, a *donum extraordinarium*, bestowed by God upon the chosen. Thus an unbridgeable gulf separated the host of the average faithful from the few distinguished by grace.

Ignatius bridged this gulf when he asserted, "I can find God at all times, whenever I wish, and any man of good will can do the same. As the body can be exercised by going, walking, and running, so the will of man can be trained by exercises to find the will of God."

But not only the orthodox exponents of the late medieval doctrine of grace rejected Ignatius' principle of free will as the main factor in man's spiritual and ethical rebirth. Stronger still was the opposition of the young movement of reform, which not only upheld all the tenets of the Augustinian tradition with extreme vigor but was rather inclined to deny the freedom of human will altogether.

Luther had rejected the idea of free will orally and in writing. He declared emphatically that man was "unfree like a block of wood, a rock, a lump of clay, or a pillar of salt." Grace did everything, will nothing. "Our own judgment tells us," Luther proclaimed, "that neither in man nor in angels nor elsewhere in any created being can there be a free will."

And Calvin, the reformer of Geneva, went even a step farther and denied that there was any merit in good works at all or even in faith and religious devotion. His doctrine of predestination excluded all hope of self-improvement. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* he stated that "inasmuch as the human will is fettered by sin and a slave, it can achieve no manner of good."

Ignatius' activity and the beginning of the Reformation coincide in time. When Luther had completed his translation of the Old Testament, Loyola brought out the first Latin edition of his *Spiritual Exercises*. His revision of it was completed in the year of Luther's death. And while Ignatius set out to use the exercises in his endeavor to make of his followers a well-disciplined little army of "masters of self-control," qualified to establish the kingdom of God by means of their will, his counterpart in the camp of the reform, John Calvin, attempted to establish in Geneva the kingdom of God for the chosen few.

In opposition to the rigid doctrine of grace as taught by the reformers, Ignatius of Loyola set up his principle of the saving power of will and good works as a veritable war cry of the Counter Reformation. But this basic disagreement in the evaluation of the importance of will power, did not only concern the struggle between traditional catholicism and the various movements of reform, it also divided the catholic church itself in two camps. One of the greatest intellectual and spiritual conflicts in the history of human thought was touched off by Ignatius' doctrine of the freedom of will. Protestants, Dominicans, and Jansenists,—they all fought

against that doctrine tooth and nail and accused Ignatius of having attempted "to replace the omnipotence of the Creator by an alleged omnipotence of His creature"

A hundred years after Ignatius' death the fight was still raging with undiminished violence, transcending at times the purely religious domain and affecting politics and society at large. During the rule of Louis XIV, the Sun King, the entire French court at Versailles was drawn into the conflict. Ministers, courtiers, the king's mistresses, politicians, men of science, noblemen and members of the bourgeoisie,—people of all classes and occupations, who had never before been interested in "divine grace," discovered suddenly that it was their solemn personal duty to make their influence felt in support of one or the other of the contending parties.

And still later people arose time and again to level the most caustic criticism at Ignatius' doctrine. Even in the nineteenth century the great catholic historian Edgar Quinet condemned his training of the will, because it led, as he put it, to an "abasement of faith," and branded the spiritual exercises as a system which produced "ecstasy by the yoke of method."

But all the theological objections, all the critical attacks, with which Ignatius' exercises have had to contend, are more than made up for by the practical effects the book has produced. It has been called a "book of destiny," and rightly so, for there is indeed no second work in all the literature of catholicism that might be compared with Loyola's pamphlet in historical importance and impact. It was not long before the publicity value of the exercises began to make itself felt and recruits were won by it everywhere in the catholic world. Not only members of Ignatius' order but numberless secular priests, high dignitaries of the church, scholars and laymen of all classes have undergone those exercises. Time and again they have had the deepest effect on all types of characters. Skeptics rediscovered through them their faith, children of the world, famous scholars, influential personages were induced by them to repent and reform, and in the most distant lands they educated natives to become apostles of Christianity.

Yet these exercises—the basis, on which the entire structure of the Jesuit order with its glorification of discipline and will power is built—proved a pitiful failure when Ignatius began to try their

effect on others. His first practical experiments were made in a circle of noble, frivolous and more or less hypocritical ladies at Barcelona. What attracted these women was mainly the strange and mysterious figure of the apostle himself, who walked barefoot through the town, clad in a light gray coat which reached down to his feet. In spite of his uncouth appearance, the noble features of his haggard face exercised an irresistible fascination.

Ignatius had hardly gone beyond the introductory lesson with his charming disciples when his projected soul-saving venture turned suddenly into a full-fledged society scandal. The beaux of the young ladies sensed in the limping apostle a dangerous rival, they stopped him in the street, showered him with an avalanche of unpleasant epithets and beat him so brutally that it was almost the end of him.

After this mishap in Barcelona, Ignatius went to the famous university city of Alcalá, for he felt more and more clearly that his plan of conquering the world was seriously handicapped by the lacunae in his education. At the age of thirty-three he returned to school with a class of young children and memorized with iron determination lists of Latin words and the elements of grammar.

But even at Alcalá, where he spent so much time and energy on his studies, his main interest was again devoted to the attempt to save souls by means of his newly discovered system of mental drills. Here again his audience was mostly composed of women who were fascinated by his strange appearance. But while his first demonstration in Barcelona had taken place in the elegant salons of wealthy ladies, he now confined them to the poorhouse or the back room in a baker's shop.

Poor downtrodden women of the people were now the ones who gathered around him and followed his lessons: working women and girls, disappointed wives, servants and prostitutes. His following kept increasing all the while and began to attract a good deal of displeased attention.

"I have seen many women and girls visit Ignatius," declared the caretaker of the house in which Ignatius lived. "So many came each day that I am unable to recall their names. Sometimes they came early in the morning but occasionally at any hour till night-fall."

A suspicious priest, who had tracked down the extraordinary

stranger to his home, returned with this account "I arrived at the house behind the church of St Francis, where Beata Isabella Sanchez lives. When I looked in at the door I noticed several people in the courtyard on a straw mat. A barefoot young man was sitting on a chair. Before him two or three people were kneeling as in prayer. Later the same evening Beata Sanchez came to me and said 'Father do not take exception to what you have seen today, the young man is a saint'."

Even in his first attempts at spiritual guidance, Ignatius mastered already the art of influencing the souls of his fellow-men, of inducing them to bring up to the light of consciousness the evil hidden below, and to experience hell through the action of all their senses. But he did not as yet possess the power and especially not the experience of laying the ghosts he had called, of leading back again to a normal state the souls he had forced to experience the last depths of the pit of hell. It was only at a much later stage in his mental development that he succeeded in giving his followers the peace of mind he had promised them.

Thus the results of his activity were at first limited to ecstatic convulsions and raptures, at times with extremely deleterious after effects.

"He told me himself," said the reformed prostitute María de la Flor, "that I should feel depressed after the second week without knowing why. When after that a profound melancholy kept coming over me, and when I learned that the other women suffered still greater dejection, I asked Ignatius 'What is it? Where do these moods come from?' Thereupon he answered 'The devil does these things to us when we enter the service of God.' One of our number even maintains that she has seen the devil incarnate in the shape of an enormous black body. When this happened to her, I saw her fall to the ground in a state of unconsciousness."

Many of the women among Ignatius' disciples suffered severe fainting spells. One of them lost her ability to speak when she saw the devil. Girls that had formerly lived their lives in the thoughtless pursuit of worldly pleasures, were writhing in mental agonies as soon as they had been made to look down into the darkness of the hidden depths of their souls.

No less confused and motley a group were the first male recruits of the army of heaven which Ignatius gathered around himself at

Alcalá A number of youthful enthusiasts, eccentrics and dreamers were the only ones willing to place themselves at Ignatius' disposal for his experiments in the science and technique of saving souls

It was only natural that this circle of unbalanced young men and women should attract the suspicious attention of the authorities of the church The vicinity of Alcalá had the doubtful reputation of being the center of the movement of the *alumbrados*, that strange sect of Spanish mystics against whom the Inquisition was just then contemplating the use of sterner measures Very soon rumors were abroad to the effect that Ignatius was an *alumbrado* As a result a painstaking investigation of his case was instituted and more than once he and his followers were arrested and thrown into the prisons of the Inquisition

But at all times the defendant insisted on his loyalty to the church and denied having had any sort of illumination, so that there was no evidence whatever to support the accusation of heresy All that was left was the fact that this man, though untrained in theological matters, had dared to practice the things that were by right the privilege of priests and theologians He was warned not to continue his soul-saving ventures, and his case was dismissed

Not especially discouraged, Ignatius left Alcalá in order to try his luck at Salamanca But there too the Inquisition caught up with him A cunning member of the Holy Office invited him to a banquet in order to observe him unhampered by the formalities and the tenseness of an official hearing After the meal he had him arrested and thrown into prison But again Ignatius succeeded in proving to his judges that he was not guilty of heresy The verdict at Salamanca was like that at Alcalá His case was dismissed but he was warned not to continue his apostolic activities

Yet his soul-saving urge was hard to restrain, and so he decided to leave Spain altogether Toward the end of the year 1527 he started out on foot for Paris, driving before him a donkey heavily packed with books.

At first it seemed as though his bad luck would stay with him in Paris too One of his Spanish patronesses had given him twenty-five ducats on which he could have lived for a while But he lent the entire sum to a "friend" who promptly disappeared When Ignatius' landlord found that he was penniless, he threw him out

He was forced to seek shelter in the poorhouse of St Jacques and to scrape together the money he needed by begging in the streets.

He was registered as a student of the Collège Montaigne, and when he went to his lectures, limping down Dog's Alley from St Jacques' to the college, the other students greeted this weird-looking gaunt Spaniard with his haggard face of unhealthy complexion, his dark and unkempt beard, and his dirty black coat, with unconcealed contempt and volleys of laughter. Yet after a while the much-derided beggar Ignatius was seen in the company of several of his fellow students,—they were not the worst to be found in the Latin quarter—who looked up to him with devoted admiration.

Now the students lined up in two opposing camps, one for and the other against Ignatius. He became their most engrossing topic for discussion, and once he was even the immediate cause of a bloody brawl.

One night the Basque student Amador, who was the pride of the Collège Sainte-Barbe, disappeared together with two of his friends who belonged to the circle that had gathered around Ignatius. It was found that the three had been induced by Ignatius to leave their college and that they resided now together with him at the poorhouse of St Jacques.

Their enraged fellows, several hundred strong, drew up in front of the poorhouse, armed with swords and sabers, to free the "victims" from the fangs of their dangerous mentor. At the height of a tumultuous demonstration the "victims" appeared at one of the windows of St Jacques' and explained that they owed the salvation of their souls to Ignatius and that they were not inclined to return to a life amidst worldly vanities. Thereupon the infuriated student body stormed the building and under loud shouts of triumph escorted Amador and his two companions back to the Collège Sainte-Barbe. This done, they decided that the time had come to settle their account with Ignatius himself. But Ignatius could not be found anywhere. Even the officers of the Inquisition, whom the excited students had set at the mysterious apostle, were unable to track him down. Meanwhile Ignatius, without an inkling of all the excitement he had caused, was on his way to Rouen to help a friend, who was ill and in need—the same friend, by the way, who less than a year ago had cheated him out of his money.

After his return to Paris Ignatius learned about the charges pend-

ing against him, and without hesitation he presented himself to the chief officer of the Inquisition. He demanded that proceedings be instituted against him. The inquisitor, however, was disarmed by such brazen boldness. He acquitted the accused of whose innocence he was absolutely convinced. This triumph encouraged Ignatius, and he went straightway to the Collège Sainte-Barbe, where the movement against him had taken its start, and registered there as a student.

Again he succeeded in winning a following, and before long the Masters at Sainte-Barbe could not help being struck by the fact that the Sunday debates on philosophical questions, which the students were nominally required to attend, had lost a good deal of their popularity. Under the spell of the Spanish apostle, ever-increasing numbers of students, instead of taking part in the college debates, preferred to prepare themselves by confession and communion in the near-by Carthusian church for participation in Ignatius' spiritual exercises.

Finally Ignatius' enemies among the Masters at Sainte-Barbe succeeded in winning over the college rector, Jacques Gouvea, who was known and feared for his strictness. On the basis of their charges the rector sentenced Ignatius, for having misled his fellows, to the dreaded "assembly punishment" which consisted in flogging in the presence of the entire student body. It was to be administered in the school refectory at the time of the next meal, and all preparations were completed in great haste.

The college bell rang for the first time. The doors of the refectory were closed. The Masters, with rods in their hands, formed two lines, ready to receive the culprit who, according to the rules of Sainte-Barbe, would have to run the gauntlet, stripped to his waist. The bell rang for a second time. The door, through which the rector would enter to witness the administration of the punishment imposed by his authority, was thrown open, and—to the greatest amazement of everyone present—the judge and rector came in, arm in arm with the limping defendant. The bell rang for a third time, and the rector announced that Ignatius had been acquitted. He explained, that the accused had appeared before him and that, after a careful examination of the entire case, he had not been able to detect anything reprehensible in the devotional gatherings of Ignatius and his friends. Furthermore, the defendant had promised

of his own volition to make sure that henceforth his activities would not interfere with the college debates

Sorely disappointed the Masters put away their rods. When the rector sat down to eat, Ignatius sat down at his side and calmly ate his herring and the crust of bread which made up his entire meal

At the college Ignatius shared a room with two students who were busily reading for their examinations. At first he was careful to convey the impression that he meant to adapt himself quietly to his fellows' habits, but from the moment he set eyes upon them for the first time, his mind was made up that he had to gain power over their souls. Never before had he had such a splendid opportunity of submitting the objects of his proselytizer's zeal to the most painstaking observation in the intimacy of common quarters and of making careful preliminary tests of their reactions to every word uttered by him.

In the case of one of his roommates, Pierre Le Fèvre, a more intimate relationship came about quite naturally as a result of their having to work together. This twenty-year-old student, who had succeeded by dint of hard work in rising from lowly beginnings as a poor farm boy to great learning and expertship in Aristotelian philosophy, had been assigned the task of instructing Ignatius, who was his elder by thirteen years, in the intricacies of classical syllogisms.

In the beginning Ignatius played the part of a humble and grateful pupil. He seemed to submit willingly to the guidance of his young teacher. All the while, however, the keen observer, the determined soul-catcher in him was merely biding his time. Nothing in the behavior of his teacher, no gesture and no grimace, no chance remark, no change in tone or tenor of voice escaped Ignatius' vigilance. From early in the morning till late at night he watched Le Fèvre uninterruptedly until he succeeded finally in discovering the well-kept secret of his tutor's soul and knew that the disciplined demeanor of this Savoyard farmer's son was merely a mask behind which a confused and troubled soul was hiding. He recognized how deeply Le Fèvre's mind was affected by the superstitions of the former cowherd, how the fear of evil and dangerous powers, which had beset the boy while guarding his father's cattle on lonely

alpine pastures, could not be dispelled completely by the force of Aristotelian logic

Cautiously Ignatius dropped now and then a personal remark in the course of their discussions, trying to arouse in his teacher a feeling of human confidence. The learned Le Fèvre had at first nothing but contempt for this man who was so far ahead of him in age, yet so far behind in knowledge. But Ignatius' casual remarks of a more personal nature did not miss their aim, even though Le Fèvre did not realize it for quite a while. Step by step Ignatius induced this reserved peasant to talk to him about his former life, and finally the whole repressed contents of Le Fèvre's soul burst forth with elemental directness. What Ignatius saw was simultaneously the twelve-year-old shepherd Pierre, up in the loneliness of an alpine pasture, whom a sudden panic of pangs of conscience frightened into taking a solemn vow of chastity, and the man Le Fèvre struggling in desperate anguish to keep himself pure in the chaos of a thousand desires and temptations.

Now, when he was in possession of the secret of Le Fèvre's soul, Ignatius began his work of conversion, still cautiously and slowly but certain of victory.

On the cover of the notebook in which Le Fèvre entered his comments on Aristotelian propositions, Ignatius, one day, drew casually seven parallel lines, the schema of his *examen particulare*. When Le Fèvre inquired what these lines stood for, Ignatius explained that it was possible with the help of this practical device to keep a clear account of one's inner development. All one had to do was to enter one's daily sins by means of small dots on the lines corresponding to each day. At the end of a week it was then quite easy to see at a glance what ethical progress one had achieved and how often one had relapsed into old errors.

When Ignatius had completed his explanation, he added without any particular emphasis that he himself had started out with his soul in a state of indescribable chaos but that owing to these simple lines he was now able to keep his inner life in perfect order. At first the teacher had merely a condescending smile for the naive simplicity of his student. Yet that same night he could not refrain from sketching seven parallel lines on a piece of paper and from indicating the sinful deeds of the past day by little marks on the first of the lines. After that he let no evening go by without having en-

tered point by point his ethical failures and victories. And when the week was over and he looked again at his seven lines, they showed him like a magic mirror the ups and downs of the struggle in his soul.

In all the years which Le Fèvre had spent studying Aristotle's syllogisms and his definitions of the categories of good and evil, he had not succeeded in solving the conflicts in his conscience. And now an absolutely unlearned simpleton came along from Spain and showed him a ridiculously simple scheme by means of which his whole inner life began suddenly to grow clear.

At the beginning of the second week, the teacher tried to finish the day's assignment as quickly as possible in order to be able to discuss with his pupil this strange device of self-scrutiny. Now he no longer smiled condescendingly but listened with great attention when Ignatius explained to him the advantages of his spiritual exercises.

"But how is it possible," Le Fèvre wanted to know, "to choose always the correct course, when one's own nature tends always in the opposite direction?"

"Through one's will!" was the reply which the pupil made to his eager teacher.

"And what enables men to exert this kind of will?"

"You have that will within yourself. It is the same power that also drove you from your lonely pastures to this city of Paris and made of you, the former shepherd boy who could hardly read and write, a master of Aristotelian philosophy. You must merely take your will away from Aristotle's logic and let it work on your own inner perfection."

"But life is full of entanglements! How is it possible to preserve at all times the integrity of one's will?"

"By drill and training!" replied the pupil. "Just as you have taught me by drill and training to draw the correct conclusions in Aristotle's logic."

"What sort of practice?" asked the teacher.

"I shall show you," answered the pupil.

"Let us begin at once," requested Le Fèvre.

After this conversation Ignatius introduced Le Fèvre to the principles of his exercises, and from then on they no longer practiced Aristotelian conclusions, but instead they practiced their will.

Before Ignatius took up the exercises themselves, he advised Le Fèvre to train his body, as he himself had done in the cave at Manresa, so that physical foibles and appetites might not disturb the spiritual training. In order to rid himself of his natural delight in strong and wholesome food, Le Fèvre underwent a very severe fast. For an entire day, then for two days, for four and finally even six days in a row he did not eat a bite and drank only a minimum of water. It was winter. For fourteen nights Le Fèvre slept in a flimsy shirt and without cover on the floor of an unheated room in order to harden his body. He scourged himself three times every day and three times every night in order to free himself of the fear of pain which is so easily induced to betray an ideal. And only when his body had learned to obey his mind as a slave must obey his master, did the real training start with the purpose of leading his soul to its heavenly home.

The drill ground chosen by Ignatius was the snow-covered backyard of a deserted house. Night after night Le Fèvre stood out there, barefoot in the icy cold, his emaciated body covered with nothing but a thin shirt, practicing in faithful adherence to the instructions given him by his master the control of his will over thoughts, emotions, and imagination. He practiced until the snow-covered ground under his feet seemed to change into the ethereal and matterless base of the universe, until the night in which this occurred was merged in that timelessness in which day and night and seasons and years dissolve in one single eternity. And then all of a sudden his eye, which Ignatius had trained, beheld all the things which the master commanded him to see.

He looked up into heaven and deep down into the beginning of all things, and his ear, which was trained to hear all, was able to hear the words of the Creator, "Let there be life." And he saw how the world was created, he saw how the first man was created, and he saw Paradise. He heard Satan's appeal for action addressed to the demons in hell. He underwent the Fall, he was cast out from Paradise, and he endured all the suffering that had thus come over humanity. His soul had suddenly become the vessel of all that is done and happens. With the shepherds he saw the star that shone over Bethlehem, with Christ he walked among the lilies in the fields, and with Him he ascended the steep path of Golgatha. He saw the Lord endure death on the cross, and in his soul he arose

with the Lord to a new life. In shining glory the Lord appeared to him at the head of the host of His saints, and he saw too the hordes of Satan come up to contend with the Lord for his soul. Precisely as Ignatius had ordered him to do, he went through the ordeal of being engulfed in the clash of two mighty armies. And then he heard the voice of Him who had arisen from the dead, speaking to him and enjoining him to make the great choice. And he made the choice which Ignatius' exercises prescribed. "I am coming, my Lord," he said, "and henceforth I shall only fight for you and your kingdom."

"Here on earth! Now!" added the imperious voice of his drill-master, calling him back from the universe of eternity to the cold reality of a winter night in Paris. "Now you know what is at stake. So act accordingly." And that was the end of another exercise.

As Ignatius had guided Le Fèvre from image to image until he had become able to see the Lord, so he taught him now how he should keep, in his everyday life, the oath of allegiance which he had sworn to the Lord in his vision. And the recruit obeyed his master blindly.

After his many failures, Ignatius saw in the conversion of Le Fèvre his first great success but also—and that was more important still—a final demonstration of the practical efficacy of his exercises.

At first it seemed a hopeless venture to try to win over the second roommate too. Francis Xavier was a well-built youth of handsome features, twenty-one years old, the dream and idol of all the girls. He was a gifted student. His studies were mere child's play for him. He spent the greater part of his days in the company of other young men, fencing, carousing and enjoying life. Nights he returned rarely to his little room at the Collège Sainte-Barbe, for his gay expeditions through all sorts of more or less unrespectable taverns of the Latin quarter kept him away as a rule till the small hours of dawn. When he stayed home for a change, he would draw up all sorts of petitions to the authorities back in his home town in Spain or write long letters to influential people in order to get corroboration for his somewhat doubtful claim to a title of nobility. That title, he felt, was indispensable for the attainment of his one great ambition in life—to be given a profitable sinecure which would permit him to lead the sort of life he liked. In his

conversations with his roommates he talked of nothing but his prowess as a swordsman, of his success with women, and of his ambitious plans for a future of comfort and ease. It was no mean thing to try to induce so frivolous a man about town to start on a journey through hell and to devote himself to a task of other-worldly importance. To make matters worse, Xavier had an instinctive dislike for Ignatius and let no opportunity pass of making his feelings known. The sportsman in him despised the limping apostle, the man of the world made fun of the ascetic faster, and the would-be nobleman envied the destitute pauper his hereditary title.

But Ignatius' missionary zeal was not to be discouraged. All these obstacles caused him merely to proceed with greater circumspection. At first he confined himself to the most painstaking observation of his new victim. While doing that, he noticed that this seemingly carefree young man had at times moments of hesitation and uncertainty, that he would suddenly lose himself in a vacant stare as though he had grown tired of the monotonous round of his dissolute feats, that an expression of fear would flash up in his eyes when he saw himself unexpectedly face to face with one of those wretched creatures whose limbs and faces bore the devastating marks of the Gallic disease, the newest venereal plague.

Ignatius had learned to wait for the right moment. And the right moment was not long in coming.

Xavier had passed his examinations and held now the master's degree. For his projected career he needed also the doctor's degree, which he could not get except by gathering around himself a specified number of students. His roommate Ignatius, whom he disliked so much, found the required number for him. A little later Xavier's extravagant style of life got him into trouble, and again his despised roommate helped him out by raising for him the money of which he was in such desperate need. Xavier's scorn subsided visibly and before long he saw in Ignatius an indispensable and reliable friend.

One day, when Xavier was once again raving about all the things he was going to do, Ignatius cited in a vague and casual sort of way the words from the gospel according to St. Matthew, "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

This Bible passage, thrust in the middle of his high-flown rav-

ings, had an almost malicious ring in Xavier's ears, and for the moment he resented it as an utterly uncalled-for interruption. But afterwards he was unable to bar it from his mind, it kept haunting him whenever his amusements and distractions came to a halt and left him for a moment all to himself. It was in vain that he tried to struggle against the growing power of his conscience, that he tried to spite it and to cling the more tenaciously to the worldly tenor of his life. The words of the Bible grew on him and derived new strength from all his hours of bleak dejection, from all his disappointments, his exhaustion and fatigue, and from every little mishap and cause for dissatisfaction with himself.

With growing interest Xavier listened now to Ignatius' discourses on spiritual matters, and after a while he actually asked him to accept him as a disciple and follower.

In the year 1531, after having completed the spiritual exercises of his master Ignatius, Xavier too saw one night in a vision the leader of the heavenly hosts and swore allegiance to His cause as Le Fèvre had done before him. He too, when he was called back to earth, vowed, for the sake of the Lord, to submit henceforth to Ignatius' rules and orders and to fight here below for the final victory of heaven.

The students of Sainte-Barbe witnessed with amazement and, after a while, with anger and scorn the strange transformation of their comrades Le Fèvre and Xavier. And when Ignatius was defiant enough to attach a picture of Jesus on the door outside the room he shared with his disciples, the scoffers wrote underneath as a fitting expression of their contempt, "*Societas Jesu*."

One day on his way to church Ignatius saw two young men in Castilian clothes dismount at an inn and discuss the rent with the landlord. He introduced himself as a countryman of theirs and offered them his services as a translator. One of them, a frail youth of twenty-one with intelligent features held already the master's degree. His name was Lavnez. His companion, Salmevon, was a bright youngster of eighteen with all the exuberance and receptivity of his years. Ignatius learned that the two had come from the university of Alcalá and intended to complete their studies at Paris. They were total strangers in the big city, and Ignatius became their guide first in Paris and then—to heaven. It was comparatively easy

for him to win over these newcomers. With the same trust with which they followed his advice to matriculate at the Collège Sainte-Barbe they also took up his suggestion to become members of the *Societas Jesu*.

A fifth recruit was drawn in by Ignatius' growing reputation from the local student body. His name was Rodrigo. He was a Portuguese nobleman, and his natural leaning toward religious emotionalism made him an ideally devoted disciple. Through him the sixth disciple by the name of Bobadilla was enlisted. He was a young Spanish nobleman and had distinguished himself by both great learning and reckless temerity. His unbalanced and somewhat aimless temper found in Ignatius with his clear-headed determination its natural master and guide. Bobadilla obeyed Ignatius unconditionally, especially since he was promised earthly honors and heavenly favors as well.

Ignatius instructed all these men in his spiritual exercises, and his success was extraordinary. An Aristotelian logician, a man about town, a keen-minded master of arts, an unaffected boy, a religious enthusiast, and a hothead—six individuals of basically different temperament and talent were transformed by his guidance into one smoothly functioning body, without the sacrifice of the individual peculiarities of anyone of them. The logician remained a logician, the enthusiast an enthusiast, the man about town kept his worldly skill, the master of arts his keenness of mind, the hothead lost none of his courage and the boy none of his youthful ardor. Only the guiding will was the same for all of them, it held up the same goal to these protagonists of thought and enthusiasm, perspicacity and skill, courage and youthful trust, it led them all in a common course of action.

The initiation of these early disciples gave Ignatius a chance to establish a set of tactical principles governing the decision between failure and success in the practice of human psychology. The knowledge he gained at this time led, later on, to the formulation of the famous pragmatic principles of the Society of Jesus: "To be all things to all men," and "The end justifies the means."

On Ascension Day of the year 1534 the six disciples and their master met in St. Mary's chapel on Montmartre to reaffirm by a solemn oath their militant allegiance to the kingdom of Christ. "On

earth! Now!" Ignatius added as he had done at the end of each course of exercises before

The union of these seven men was the nucleus of the *Societas Jesu*, that powerful organization, whose ideas and actions were to become one of the most potent factors determining the course of world history in future centuries.

Everything in Ignatius' life, all his achievements, his own personal conversion as well as the formulation of his spiritual exercises, grew out of insignificant beginnings, developing gradually the final form in which they assumed such great importance. This holds true also for his greatest accomplishment, the organization of the *Societas Jesu*. To transform a loosely knit group of enthusiastic students into an order of world-conquering power was indeed a venture which required much time, much effort, and all the experience of many trials and errors. Progress was arduous, slow and step by step, from one task to the next, from error to correction, from failure to success. And strangely enough, Ignatius' brothers-in-arms repeated all the mistakes and false starts of his own beginnings.

After the solemn oath of allegiance at St. Mary's on Montmartre, when Ignatius and his disciples walked down again to the Latin quarter, he himself had no very clear conception of the first assignment he might give his zealous knights. For lack of a better plan he fell back on his old idea of a crusade against the Turks. But the expedition of the little squadron of heaven, increased to ten by the initiation of three Frenchmen, came to a premature end in Venice.

After many hardships and adventures, struggling through rain, wind, and snow, at times reduced to crawling along on all fours over exposed Alpine passes, they finally reached the republic of the lagoons in January. There they learned to their great disappointment that no ships should sail before Easter.

To make at least some use of the intervening time, Ignatius sent Laynez and Le Fèvre to Rome where they were to ask the Pope for safe-conducts to Jerusalem. The aged pontiff, Paul III of the house of Farnese, liked to indulge during his meals in philosophical and theological discussions. Ignatius' emissaries were invited to one of these theological banquets. Here the youthful masters of the Paris faculty had a chance to exhibit their sound learning, and the

Pope, impressed by the keenness of their argumentation, promised them graciously to do everything in his power to facilitate their pilgrimage. But since he was fully informed of the Venetians' preparations for a war against the Turks, he remarked in conclusion "I give you my blessing freely, but I do not believe it will be possible for you to make an early departure."

His prediction came true. In spring 1537, when Ignatius and his little band were ready to start on their way to Jerusalem, war was declared against the Turks. When Ignatius saw that his plans were thwarted, he went to Rome in the company of Laynez and Le Fèvre to offer the Holy See the services of his fraternity as a sort of militant shock troop in the fight for the kingdom of Christ on earth.

His audience with the Pope came at the most inopportune time. Paul III was just trying to mediate peace between the two most powerful Christian rulers, emperor Charles V and king Francis I of France. In the midst of this affair of high diplomacy he was approached by three enthusiastic students from Paris and had to endure an effusion of mediocre Latin in which their leader presented to him his highly nebulous offer. Yet Paul was impressed by so much naive enthusiasm and particularly by the fact that these young men had come with an offer and not, as all his other visitors, with a request. He accepted the offer, however vague it was, and since he happened to be in need of additional teachers for the Sapienza, the newly established University of Rome, he gave a professorship to Laynez and another to Le Fèvre, for he had not forgotten the impression which their philosophical learning had made upon him at table.

The other members of the little auxiliary corps had to shift for themselves in trying to find tasks commensurate with their enthusiasm for action. It was their endeavor to give the world a great example of work and sacrifice in the service of Christ's poor brethren, and so they went out to offer their services as nurses in hospitals for the incurable, as voluntary workers in homes for the poor and aged, or as grave diggers burying the poorest of the poor about whom no one else would have bothered. In all this they tried to outdo the other monastic fraternities in the dramatic appeal of their feats of self-abnegation. They walked around in rags and lived in

dilapidated old houses without doors or windows where they were in no way protected against malaria-carrying mosquitoes

Yet the mere fact that these enthusiasts began at all to be interested in the ills of their time and tried to think of ways and means for improvement and reform, marked an important turning point in their own development. Slowly their immature enthusiasm came to settle down in the clear forms of the Jesuitic organization which concerned itself with the solution of sober and realistic problems.

This was the sixteenth century, a much-vaunted period of flowering in art and literature, when thinkers and poets and beautiful ladies celebrated in the most jubilant terms the liberation of the individual, but also a period when great numbers of men and women fell victim to the Black Death, when thousands died of hunger and privation, when numberless children perished in destitution and utter neglect.

In 1538, when Ignatius moved from Venice to Rome, he and his followers had the opportunity of proving that they had learned meanwhile how to apply practical means to the correction of practical ills. It was a year of famine, and during the cold months of fall and winter people by the hundreds collapsed from exhaustion in the streets of the city. Night after night Ignatius and his disciples went out with torches and stretchers to rescue the starving whom they took to a house which one of their patrons had placed at their disposal. They mapped out and carried through systematic collections and went from house to house asking for money, food, clothing, fire wood, and straw in order to be able to feed the needy, to clothe and warm and bed them.

But it did not take Ignatius long to realize how necessarily futile all individual help, however devoted and unselfish it might be, had to remain in the face of those social ills which were deeply rooted in the basic structure of society and had been what they were since time immemorial. Then he knew that it was not enough if he and his men just went to assist a few starving people here and a few sick ones there. What occupied him now was the idea of tackling evil as a whole, and the object on which he wanted to try the forces of his followers and himself was all of human society. And the needs of human society at large could be met only by a large-scale organization of planned relief.

The vast impulsive enthusiasm, the unreserved devotion to a

spiritual goal, both of which had been such characteristic expressions of the medieval mentality, took on new forms now and came to survive in the guise of a strictly rational organization of compelling force. The motives behind all these endeavors reveal clearly the new form of social-minded thought the growth and clarification of which was destined to go on to modern times

The ills on which Ignatius and his men decided to concentrate their attention resembled in many respects the ills which are still characteristic of the modern present—unemployment, pauperism, juvenile delinquency, prostitution. Ignatius drew up a plan which provided for the establishment, in all the most populous centers, of offices for the coordination of begging and alms-giving, for the organization of an efficient employment service for those able to work, and finally for the building of homes for the aged and sick out of public funds. He also paid considerable attention to the evil of prostitution and tried to combat it with all his might. To be sure, in this his religious conception of carnal lust as one of the mortal sins played an important part. Still, his wish to see prostitution disappear altogether shows clearly that he had a sensitive ear for the social complaints of his age.

For in those days the so-called Gallic disease, which had been brought in from France and Spain, began to claim numerous victims from all strata of Roman society. In the upper classes people were still trying to conceal the prevailing alarm behind a façade of nonchalance and gallantry, but the less favored made no bones about the poignancy of their despair. Thus Ignatius' rescue work for fallen girls and women was a decisive step in the direction of mitigating a burning social need. Ignatius collected funds from rich people and founded a home for the reform of prostitutes which was called the House of Martha. Here the women and girls lived under strict supervision, did various kinds of useful work, and were allowed to leave only after they had promised to return to a life of orderly respectability.

Social needs, however, were only one side of the decline of the Christian world at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The other was the time's total religious decadence.

The clergy was completely under the spell of worldly thought and worldly pleasures and had lost all its former influence upon the

masses of the people. The bishops lived far away from their sees where they were replaced by paid deputies, and the priests considered their office as an easy job and lived a life of merriment and comfort in the company of their concubines without paying the slightest attention to the spiritual welfare of their parishes. The convents and monasteries, with the exception of a few notable but rare instances, had lost their moral and ethical stamina. And the few distinguished orders which had kept aloof from the general decline were completely out of touch with the people. Their learned members were entirely absorbed by a life of refined culture and contemplation and lacked all influence on the people as a whole. Thus the common man was left entirely to himself and was about to lose all respect for the authority of the church. The people, who were still animated by a spirit of real piety, turned in increasing numbers more or less openly to the Protestant confession.

Among all the spiritual fraternities, only the Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and Theatines maintained a certain contact with the masses of the people. They alone spoke to and preached for common ordinary men and women.

Planned guidance of the people in terms of truly Christian ideals began only when Ignatius, the man of will power, together with his well-disciplined followers, whose numbers kept increasing from day to day, determined on influencing the masses through sermons and spiritual propaganda. Proceeding according to a well-thought-out plan which made provision for all contingencies and every detail, he sent his disciples to all the various cities of Italy to win over the people by their sermons to the cause of a stricter form of piety.

In the beginning the methods they used, exactly as in the case of their social work, were not entirely free from romantic exaggerations. They would appear in the most populous places, climb on a stone or a bench and, waving their hats, invite idlers and passers-by to come up and listen to what they had to say, and then, without letting scorn and loud laughter interrupt them, they would deliver their sermon. This they repeated until their fiery pathos gripped the audience and attracted ever greater numbers of listeners.

At this time their strategy could still be described as consisting in swooping down upon the souls of their prospective victims to overpower them in a sudden surprise attack. Soon they realized

that a lasting change of mind, a permanent change of life could hardly ever be achieved by such unrefined methods. In order to build up a circle of reliable, strong, and faithful adherents, they had to give up their tactics of emotional stage effects, and next to their sermons they began to be on the lookout for other means enabling them to guide the souls of men. In this connection they came to look upon auricular confession as a particularly promising device. At all times it had been held to be one of the strongest means of influencing the faithful. And Ignatius with his keen psychological insight had recognized all along that it afforded an ideal means of lasting and systematic control. In the *examen conscientiae* which had to precede absolution in all cases, the penitent was obliged to open the deepest depths of his soul to the scrutiny of the confessor and to enumerate all the sins he had committed against the laws of Christ. In this state of more or less complete contrition he naturally looked upon the confessor as an almighty judge who held the power of binding and unbinding, so that it was easy for the confessor to gain full control over the penitent's soul.

Thus Ignatius and his disciples began to consecrate all their energies to a vigorous agitation in favor of auricular confession. In all their sermons they were primarily concerned with urging the greatest possible number of men and women to return to the confessional.

But to the extent that the Jesuits won over increasing numbers of penitents whose confessions they heard, they also came to the conclusion that power over the souls of the masses was not the only important thing. What counted as much or more was power over the souls of the few in influential positions, for it was on them that the destiny of whole peoples depended.

As their tasks and methods changed in the sphere of social work as well as of spiritual cure, their whole demeanor had to change naturally too, their form of life and even their external appearance. The organizers of social welfare on a modern scale, the confessors of influential personalities were no longer the romantically enthusiastic beggars of the early years, walking around in ostentatiously dirty rags and living in dilapidated shacks. In keeping with their new, more practical and modern work they had changed their entire style of life, their living quarters, their clothes and all their demeanor.

Adaptable and flexible as they were, they soon managed to become the best social workers, the most influential confessors, the shrewdest diplomats and the most efficient emissaries. At first the Pope had felt a little embarrassed because he did not quite know what to do with his "auxiliary corps," but now it turned out to be a most useful tool, the importance of which could not be overrated at a time when the Reformation threatened the very foundations of the power of church and pontiff.

Pope Paul's decision to fill two vacancies on the teaching staff of the Roman university with disciples of Ignatius proved to have been a lucky choice. Laynez and Le Fèvre recognized immediately that the posts assigned to them more or less accidentally were of great strategic importance for their leader's plan of world conquest. They were alive to the fact that he who is in charge of the education of youth can mold the future after the pattern of his own will. Their sound instinct for the needs of the hour made them adopt the most helpful strategy. Humanism and Renaissance had brought about an increasingly pronounced emancipation of thought from the letter of orthodox faith. The principles of medieval pedagogy were not elastic enough to offer effective resistance to the onslaught of modernism. Laynez and Le Fèvre, the two youngest professors at the "Sapienza," were the first to succeed in maintaining the authority of the church in matters of faith without denying the liberal tendencies of the age. A certain latitude, they were the first to bring about an organic fusion of scholasticism and scientific thought.

At first the new educational ideas prevailed only with two professors at the University of Rome, but before long disciples of Ignatius held teaching positions at innumerable universities of all countries, they founded colleges, seminaries and schools on all levels. And finally Ignatius had his own educational center at Rome, the "Collegium Romanum," a sort of headquarters from where he directed his educational campaigns in all theaters of the world.

Although the number of Ignatius' followers had meanwhile increased to a considerable body, he was hardly able to answer all requests for help. For in all places the pope and the rulers of the catholic world were in need now of the zeal and urbane adroitness of the Company of Jesus.

King John III of Portugal, who had extended his Christian rule over India, was deeply impressed with the extraordinary talents of Bobadilla, one of the first members of the Society of Jesus. He asked Ignatius to send Bobadilla to India and to have him organize the work of the Christian missionaries in the newly acquired Portuguese colony. Ignatius was delighted to comply with the king's wishes. But Bobadilla fell ill one day before he was to leave for India in the company of the Portuguese ambassador. The only member of the old guard who happened to be available at the moment, Francis Xavier, had to take his place.

Xavier spent his last night in Rome mending a torn cassock. The following morning he left by the overland route for Lisbon. The clothes he wore, a breviary, and some provisions for the trip were all his possessions. At Lisbon he boarded a sailing vessel which was to take him around the Cape of Good Hope to India. The frivolous worldling of former times, who had become one of Ignatius' most faithful disciples, found himself suddenly transferred to the fantastic new world of Goa in Portuguese India.

With amazement he watched the motley crowd milling through the streets, shouting and singing and trying to make way for huge elephants and sacred cows, white and brown and black figures in long robes and caftans, peasants and traders, Arabs, Persians, and Hindus from Gujarat and Ormuzd, and among them, walking along under huge parasols, the foreign conquerors, Portuguese hidalgos in precious garments of taffeta and silk, accompanied by numberless pages and black Kaffir slaves. Walking farther through the town, Xavier discovered that the natives worshiped idols in their temples of elephants and apes. The Europeans he met were almost without exception greedy speculators and adventurers whose unscrupulous thoughts were concerned with nothing but how to get rich in the shortest possible time.

Thus Xavier had to report back to the king. "It is torture to have to look on patiently when your captains and other officials ill-treat our new converts."

Xavier had come to this strange world by sheer accident, but Ignatius' determined will, which he had made his own, taught him how to solve his difficult task with skill and success. He started out by learning the languages and even the various dialects of the natives that were to be won over, for he wanted to familiarize himself

perfectly with their style of life and manner of thought. He occupied the rank of a papal legate, but he refused to move into the palace prepared for him and lived instead in a little room of the municipal hospital.

He could hardly have found quarters more suitable for his purpose, for here he came in contact, right from the start, with all classes of the population and met people under conditions which made them most receptive for spiritual guidance. They all, brutal soldiers, greedy officials, superstitious idolaters, haughty merchants, and wretched slaves, were eager—here at the hospital—to talk to the affable priest and to let him help them to forget their troubles. And when they were cured and could go back to their homes, there remained in their hearts almost always a memory of Xavier's edifying words.

For the humiliated and maltreated slaves, the spiritual conversations they had had with the missionary became often the mainstay of their entire future life. And Xavier, who had come to them in his plain cassock, who had talked to them in mild and simple language and had patiently listened to all their little troubles and worries, was soon accepted by them as though he had always been their equal. They helped him as best they could in all his endeavors and reported to him in secret about the habits and foibles, the deeds and misdeeds of their masters. Here Xavier had an excellent chance to obtain detailed information about the character and interests, the weaknesses and vices of those whom he wanted to convert.

When one or the other of those men entertained him as a guest, it always seemed as though Xavier were passionately devoted to the same interests as his host. If it was a merchant that had invited him, he discussed with him the current trends in business and trade and seemed to have no other concern but to think of new ways of making money. At the home of a usurer he displayed an amazing familiarity with all kinds of credit transactions and handled the most complex problems of interest compounding with ease. If he was the guest of a sea captain, he talked about nautical and astronomical questions and again succeeded immediately in winning the confidence of his host. The military men were surprised to find that this simple priest was quite conversant with the principles of warfare so that he could have confounded many an expert with his intelligent questions. The servants were not forgotten by him either. He

would never leave without stopping for a few moments at the door to inquire into the personal affairs, the hopes and complaints of the maid or footman that was showing him the way

Only after a long time, when master or servant had come to feel thoroughly attached to him, he would finally begin to talk about his real aims in a casual and pleasantly unobtrusive way. He would then try to convince the usurer that there are other ways of making money, less objectionable but equally profitable ones. He convinced the brutal exploiter that slaves are more eager to work, that they work better, when they are treated not quite so inhumanely. He alluded cautiously to the disadvantages of polygamy and drew a pleasant picture of the comforts and pleasures of a well-ordered family life.

What a thundering fanatic could never have achieved with these crude people, Xavier achieved without any trouble at all. Soon they were so used to telling him about their worries and desires that it was only a small step farther to accept him also as their father confessor. So he did his missionary work, in accordance with the teachings of Ignatius, by being "all things to all men" in order to win them all.

From Goa Xavier continued his missionary journey to Southern India along the coast of the pearl fishers. The natives there, the Paravas, lived in miserable palm-thatched huts and worshiped fire demons, serpents and bulls.

One day Xavier appeared among them, barefoot, dressed in a threadbare cassock that was mended a hundredfold and wearing on his head an old cowl of black wool. He held a bell in one of his hands, and ringing it incessantly he called out in strange pronunciation some words in Tamil which the natives took to mean, "Come, come! I have good news for you!"

Back in Goa Xavier had had some prayers and sermons translated into Tamil. He had taken great pains to learn them by heart, and now, when in some native village the sound of his bell had induced a crowd of curious children to gather around him, he taught them the catechism and showed them how to pray and sing the Ave Maria. And the little ones were in it heart and soul, as though they had been asked to learn a new game.

Soon the children's enthusiasm for the strange man affected their parents too, and what had happened to the Portuguese masters and

their slaves in the city, happened in the same way to the pearl fishers along the coast they grew fond of Xavier, they trusted him blindly and came to regard him as a superior being.

The same skillful regard for the mentality of the natives enabled Xavier a little later to win over the souls of the people and rulers of Ceylon. From there he went on and advanced as far as Japan which until then had remained a totally unknown realm. Before starting on his way he learned Japanese and gathered some information about the personality of the emperor and also about the Japanese cast of priests, the so-called bonzes. When he arrived in Japan he could discuss the problems of government with the ruler, religious problems with the bonzes, and with the Japanese of the lower classes he could talk understandingly about their daily cares so that he could win the affections of all and be extremely successful in his missionary work.

Xavier's highest ambition, however, was to carry the Christian faith to China. Not far from his goal he was forced to wait from day to day for the Chinese vessel that was to take him across the sea to Canton. He stayed in a wretched little hut. The weather was cold. And one day Xavier fell ill. A prey to ague and nausea, he was no longer able to take food. His condition grew steadily worse. Still he was waiting for the ship that would take him to China.

One morning he became delirious. Suddenly he raised his eyes to heaven and with a cheerful expression in his face he began to preach in many languages—in Tamil, Malay, Japanese, Basque. Then the end came.

Xavier, whose career as a missionary had begun through an unusual concatenation of circumstances, was canonized by the church in recognition of his extraordinary achievements. But these achievements were not really due to the extraordinary capacities of a single individual. They were brought about by that determined will power with which Ignatius had imbued all his disciples.

Although Xavier's death prevented him from carrying out his great plan, the work he had begun was nevertheless continued with amazing success. The place of the deceased was taken up by others. Dozens and even hundreds of Jesuit missionaries were now endeavoring to complete the work that Xavier had been forced to leave behind unfinished. Each one of them was inspired by the same

enthusiastic zeal, and each one possessed in the same degree the ability to be a merchant among merchants, a soldier among soldiers, to become the advisor of princes, the friend of slaves, to face the haughty Japanese with commensurate pride and to defeat the learned bonzes in dialectic arguments

Ignatius' disciples were dispersed all over the globe. Their tasks were of many different kinds. To hold them together in a homogeneous body of superior striking power, in full regard for their local dispersion and the varied nature of their work, was no mean problem, but it was solved by Ignatius in the *Constitutions* which he set up for his order. Their contents can be summed up in a single word: Obedience. "As a staff in the hand of an old man, thus the subordinate must follow the lead of his superior." This famous sentence of Ignatius expresses clearly the unconditional strictness of his insistence on obedience. As postulated by Ignatius, the rule of obedience differed from that enforced by all other monastic orders in that it was not meant for men and women leading a passive life within the walls of a secluded cell but for men who went out into the world to engage in practical work. Thus it becomes possible to compare the Jesuitic conception of obedience with the military conception of it.

The *Constitutions* represent a logical development of the military principles laid down in the *Exercises*. They fix the structure of the order as a whole in such a way that its striking power depends in the last analysis on the exercises of its individual members just as the operations of an army are basically conditioned by the drill of individual soldiers.

Ignatius' idea of his order was fundamentally, as he put it himself, the idea of a military corps in excellent fighting trim. A general with unlimited authority stood at its head. He appointed his deputy commanders, drew up his plans of grand strategy and ordered, as the case might be, a vanguard skirmish here, a decoy maneuver there, now the most cautious advance and then a sudden attack or strategic retreat.

Yet all these principles of military commandership and subordination are applied in the *Constitutions* to an activity of spiritual orientation, exactly as had been the case in the military drill of the *Exercises*. The strategic purpose of the armies of the world is to

conquer territory; that of Ignatius' army of the spirit is to conquer souls. In one case brute force triumphs, in the other humility. The pay of the soldiers of the kingdom of Christ is disbursed in heavenly comage, their booty is the pleasure of God. Not the destruction of the enemy but his conversion is the goal.

Although this singular organization of the army of Christ presupposed the strictest discipline, its successes would not have been possible without far-reaching independence on the part of every individual member, for the individual member of the order found himself ever so often totally cut off from the administrative center on vanguard duty where he had to reach quick decisions and was obliged to rely entirely on his own initiative.

It is this combination of discipline with personal initiative that constitutes an essentially new and unique feature of Ignatius' foundation. The subordinate Jesuit might well be "a staff in the hand of an old man" when his superior assigned to him a specific mission and gave him the necessary directions, but within the limits of these instructions his personal initiative was given ample elbow-room. Yet in granting so much freedom to the individual member of his order, Ignatius incurred no risk whatever. The thoughts, the emotions, and the imagination of his individual soldiers had undergone the drill of the exercises which imposed upon every disciple the same uniform frame of mind and this to such an extent that it was quite impossible to suppose that the decisions and actions of an individual Jesuit might clash with the basic principles and aims of the order.

Ignatius' Order of the Jesuits was the first really modern organization. The *Constitutions* on which it rests consist of five brief statutes. The deep understanding of human nature which inspired this work can be fully appreciated by anyone familiar with Sigmund Freud's revealing study of *Mass Psychology and Analysis of the Ego*. In the light of Freud's findings it becomes apparent that the *Constitutions* were written by a psychologist for whom the deepest depths of the human soul held no secret and who, four hundred years before Freud, had understood the dual longing of man to be free and at the same time to be *allowed* to obey. In them freedom of will and obedience are merged through voluntary subordination of the individual will under a higher collective will.

In September 1540 the Order of the Jesuits was confirmed by

Pope Paul III. In the spring of the following year the first chapter was held for the purpose of electing the general of the order. The choice fell unanimously upon the founder. Yet the position he now held, was not, from Ignatius' point of view, a position of power for his personal glory but rather a responsible office whose grave duties he discharged with realistic strictness. On no one in his army did he make greater demands than on himself. No effort was too strenuous for him, no task too small. He was not only the first soldier of his army, he was also the first servant in his house and took literally the lead in the performance of the lowliest domestic duties. He swept the floor, cleaned the toilets, distributed linen, and helped his men in the kitchen.

At this time his army had already become a world power. His deputies were already in charge of the confessionals at the most influential courts of Europe, they represented their worldly masters on imperial diets and local conclaves of princes, they dealt with the highest dignitaries of church and state and acted as mediators in the most delicate conflicts of international diplomacy, they occupied chairs at the most famous universities and held the reins of government in Italy, Spain, and Portugal, in Germany, where Le Fèvre became the leader of the Counter Reformation, and in France, where Laynez succeeded in winning the queen Catherine de Médicis for his plans. In the Far East they overran one province after another, and nearer home they were about to extend their rule over the negus of Abyssinia.

The headquarters of the powerful general of this order consisted of three little offices—cells rather than rooms—in a Roman tenement. He worked at a rough wooden table and slept on a folding cot. He worked twenty hours a day and slept four. His meals consisted of a handful of chestnuts with a little bread and water. He never sat down to eat but took his food standing up.

Yet the man who led this kind of life was not an ascetic of St. Anthony's clan. He was a general whom the far-reaching importance of his strategic decisions did not permit to give any thought to his personal needs. He ate without sitting down in order to avoid loss of time, he slept little in order to extend his working hours. All day long he read reports that had come in, drew up new plans, issued orders, and conducted negotiations. To maintain

contact with his dispersed staff, Ignatius had worked out a scheme of long-distance control. Everyone of his subordinates had to report in writing on everything that happened and in particular on the qualities and shortcomings of those working under his command. And just as those in command had to report on the conduct of their subordinates, so the subordinates too were advised to report to headquarters on the conduct or misconduct of those above them. This setup enabled Ignatius to address commendation as well as reproof to men whose character and actions were known to him in minutest detail despite the great distance in space which separated them from him.

All the secular sobriety of this highly efficient administrative apparatus, however, served a supernatural goal—the greater glory of God. Ignatius never began his daily work without having consulted with the Lord who appeared before him in the form of illuminations. But these illuminations were not exhausted in self-centered contemplation, they were used to serve Ignatius' practical work. Like everything else, his illuminations too were harnessed by his will and were allowed to appear only during the time set aside for them. He could give them one half hour at the most, and with an hourglass in his hand he made sure that they did not take up more

• At this time Ignatius' personal life had already been totally eclipsed by the general interests of his order. No passion could sway him. Neither vexation nor joy could have disturbed the purposeful efficiency of his acts. He was not devoid of love, but that too was carefully weighed and handed out in equal shares to all the members of the order. A higher form of necessity had assumed permanent control over his most personal emotions and had regulated them in accordance with the interests of the society as a whole.

He could change the expression of his face from one moment to the next. He smiled when smiles were called for and looked forbidding and austere when it seemed to fit the occasion. He was strict or lenient, stubborn or yielding, blunt or obliging, silent or talkative, depending on what the business at hand demanded. And the more the order grew, the more the network of its tasks spread over the most distant parts of the globe, the more did Ignatius' personal life vanish behind the strictly impersonal administra-

tion of the order's innumerable interests and plans Ignatius and the order had become one There was only the work, the work which he had created

As he lived his last years, virtually unnoticed in the welter of urgent duties of administration, so he finally departed

It was on a Thursday At headquarters in Rome the burden of work had been especially heavy The following morning the mail was to leave for Spain, and the entire correspondence with Spain, Portugal, Brazil, with East India and Japan had to be dispatched Accounts had to be approved Lists of new or deceased and expelled members of the order must be annotated There were queries to be answered Incomplete instructions were to be clarified, new decisions and orders to be issued, inquiries about older reports to be made Then there was the delicate matter of letters to the kings of Spain and Portugal, in which every word had to be weighed with regard to the impression it might make, so that Philip II would advise his bishops in Flanders to admit the Jesuits to their dioceses, so that John III would support the work of the mission that had recently been sent out to Abyssinia

In the afternoon Ignatius had been occupied with a long letter, taking great pains to correct every word that had not been sufficiently studied in all its implications, he had studied some documents and had made inquiries about various details regarding the still unfinished correspondence

In the middle of his work a bitter taste had come into his mouth, and he felt that he had to die He called his secretary Polanco and instructed him to go to the Vatican to ask the Pope for his blessing because his end was approaching

Polanco was a model product of his master's school and felt greatly disturbed by this inopportune commission which interrupted his work on the unfinished Spanish mail "Do you really feel so very ill, Father?" he asked "Will not tomorrow morning be soon enough?" And he went on to point out that he had still a number of very important letters to write which simply had to be ready the following morning

Ignatius understood the qualms of his conscientious secretary and dismissed him with the resigned words "I would rather it were today than tomorrow, yet do as you deem best in the interest of our affairs"

And so it happened that the mail to Spain was dispatched on time while the founder of the order died unnoticed during the night from Thursday to Friday without the Pope's blessing and without extreme unction.

During his lifetime Ignatius had refused steadfastly to sit for a painting. After his death his disciples tried to describe his face to a painter so that he might be able to paint a portrait of the deceased master, but to their dismay they had to admit to themselves that they could not recall his features. It seemed in retrospect as though, during the last years of their life with him, they had no longer seen his face.

They had stood before him day after day and had looked into his eyes when he discussed the affairs of the order with them, when he received their reports or issued his orders to them. They had met him as he limped with his shortened leg through the rooms and halls of the building, always busy, always caring, always preoccupied with the smallest or the most important concern. Yet somehow it seemed that the features of his face and the look in his eyes had vanished for them years before his death. During all these years the affairs of the order and nothing else had kept them in touch with their general.

The dead general was replaced by a new one, and when he died, a third one came. And as the generals so the soldiers changed, but only their names and faces, for the army remained the same in structure and goal, in fighting spirit and striking power. So lasting were the effects of Ignatius' exercises, his statutes, his principle of obedience that no change of time could affect them. The inner coherence of the army of the Jesuits was not impaired by its far-flung dispersion in space and proved its perennial firmness throughout the centuries.

As victors the Jesuits have marched on through the last four hundred years of Western civilization, and the same triumphant will that enabled them in the sixteenth century to conquer the globe, helped them later on to exploit for their purposes the many discoveries and inventions of modern times in all spheres of human endeavor. The study of the history of this order becomes a study of the cultural history of mankind throughout the past four centuries.

There is hardly an instance of a political event of any importance, of a national or social movement in the course of the last centuries, in which the Jesuits were not involved as initiators, supporters, or opponents. They were the confessors of emperors, kings, and princes, they ruled the rulers, they exerted their power over the French kings from Henry IV to Louis XV, they influenced James II in England, they brought Christine of Sweden, the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, the greatest Protestant leader, back into the fold of the Catholic church, they induced the emperors and princes of the Far East to tolerate for a century and a half the missionary work of Rome. As diplomatists they mediated between contending rulers, negotiated the peace treaty between Poland and Russia at the time of Ivan the Terrible, and in John II Casimir they even put a Jesuit king on the Polish throne.

When it suited their ends to assist absolute monarchs in enforcing their rule over their subjects, they knew how to work out and apply the most efficient means. When a revolt of the masses agreed better with the plans they pursued, the disciples of Ignatius became leaders of the suppressed against their tyrants. They organized the revolt against the Tudors in England, and when they supported the rebellion of the Ligue in France, they proclaimed, two hundred years before Rousseau, the sovereignty of the people. In Paraguay they established a state on the basis of Communist principles and kept it going for a hundred and fifty years. In the nineteenth century, when the working class began to come to the fore, they supplied labor with many important leaders from their ranks, and at Oxford they founded and administered a Catholic College for workers.

They were active as pioneers in opening up the new world. They took part in the founding of Maryland, were among the first settlers in the woods of Virginia, and pacified in the present District of Columbia the powerful Indian chief Chitomachon who had sworn bloody enmity to all palefaces. They gave him presents of fishhooks, pins and candy, converted him to Christianity and made of him a loyal friend of all white settlers. By similar means they succeeded in winning over the Hurons, the Iroquois, and numerous other Indian tribes in the East, the North and South of America and thus became instrumental in opening up vast territories for the incoming colonists.

They explored the Northern districts of the Colorado River, they were the first to see the Yellowstone River and Hudson Bay, and still today there are in the Capitol at Washington two statues proclaiming the fame of two Jesuits who were the first to reach the Mississippi in the vicinity of the modern city of New Orleans. They made the first maps of Mexico, of Brazil, Tibet, and China and wrote the first ethnographic accounts of all the countries they had explored.

As for the history of cultural progress throughout the past four hundred years, there is hardly a field in which not at least one disciple of Ignatius can lay claim to immortal fame.

Jesuits conducted the first well-planned educational campaign on American soil. Jesuit teachers taught the settlers in New York, Georgetown, in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Arizona, California, and in New and old Mexico.

At all times the Jesuits endeavored to have their share in the various forms of thought and inquiry engaged upon by man. They were theologians as well as men of science, mathematicians, artists, economists, lawyers.

The age of scientific advance has seen a considerable number of extraordinary scientists emerge from the ranks of Ignatius' army. The Jesuit Saint-Vincent laid the foundations of analytical geometry. The Jesuit Boskovich advanced, before Maxwell's electrodynamics, a theory of action and reaction, which, together with the theory of undulation contributed by the Jesuit Grimaldi, came to be of great importance for all of Newton's later work.

One of the most universal inventors of all times is the Jesuit Father Athanasius Kircher, whose name is connected with such varied events as the introduction of rhubarb and vanilla in Europe, the invention of the magic lantern and the speaking trumpet, and the rediscovery of Archimedes' burning mirror. Kircher laid also the foundation for a scientific investigation of hypnotism, he worked out an alphabet for the deaf and dumb and was one of the first to study Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Another Jesuit, Father Francesco Lana Terzi, invented a sowing machine and worked out a method of instruction for the blind. Still another preceded the Montgolfier brothers in carrying out the first ascent in a balloon.

Equally remarkable are the contributions of those Jesuits who took up the study of languages. Missionaries of the Jesuit order are responsible for dictionaries and grammars of practically all the languages of North and South American Indian tribes and also of Indo-China and Japan.

Not less creative in cultural terms were those disciples of Ignatius who employed the media of art to develop and guide the esthetic taste, the imagination, and the delight in things beautiful on the part of the masses. This endeavor inspired their architectural work and gave it that characteristic note which helped to determine the style of the Baroque, often called simply the Jesuit style. One of their painters, Andrea del Pozzo, discovered in the course of his pedagogical experiments, certain basic principles of the science of perspective. Many great artists are indebted to the Jesuits for inspiration and guidance.

The bases of modern stagecraft were laid by the Jesuits whose pioneering work achieved the transition from the religious mystery plays of the Middle Ages to our modern comedy. Their musicians composed and directed the first so-called "singspiels." They influenced the development of the opera, founded one of the first dancing schools, staged the first ballet, were masters in the invention and use of striking stage effects, and introduced the trap door and the revolving stage.

Thus the Jesuits were active with considerable success in practically all spheres of human endeavor. To be all things to all men in order to win all, that was the motto which Ignatius had left to his order as a most precious legacy. And indeed, however varied their spheres of action may have been, whether their work took them to the courts of European princes or of Asiatic tyrants, to the campfires of American Indians, to astronomical observatories, biological laboratories or to the stage, whether they drew up rules of ethics, developed systems of philosophy, painted pictures, built churches, converted heathens, heard confession or taught school, a uniform spirit drove them forward to one uniform goal.

It is obvious that an organization, which from its very inception managed with so much skill to have everything its own way, had to meet at all times with violent opposition. And just as Ignatius' army was self-perpetuating from generation to generation, so the

ranks of its enemies too were constantly being replenished. Devout Christians, men of learning, great thinkers and poets, worldly rulers, diplomatists, historians, and social reformers of all times and in all parts of the globe united in a ceaseless chorus of complaint. They accused Ignatius' disciples "of having carried into the sphere of faith the most cynical principles of worldly shrewdness," of having replaced the spirit of the gospel by the spirit of political machinations, of having falsified science and art, and of having led astray whole generations of Christian youths.

Carlyle condemned the "Gospel of Loyola" as "the most fatal of all time." Napoleon hated and feared the Jesuits to such an extent that he advised his minister of police to forbid every sort of written or spoken reference to their existence. The American president John Adams warned his successor Thomas Jefferson against Ignatius' disciples, "who swarm this country, in as many disguises as only a king of the gypsies can assume, dressed as printers, publishers, writers, and schoolmasters. If ever there was a body of men," Adams said, "who merited eternal damnation on earth and in hell, it is this Society of Loyola's."

Pascal, Racine, Eugène Sue, Quinet, and Dostoevski were among the most radical detractors of the Jesuit order.

Yet the Jesuits were at all times able to match the list of their accusers with an equally long and equally glorious list of defenders. Kepler and Leibnitz were among their devoted friends. Michelangelo expressed himself in their favor and agreed, without remuneration, purely for the love of God, to design for them the church they were planning to build at Rome. Rubens and Bernini served them with their art, Lope de Vega, Calderón, and Molière owed them the inspiration for their first plays, Mozart composed an opera for them, Voltaire, who, like Diderot and Descartes, had been educated in one of their schools, praised their exemplary conduct and their pedagogical methods. Robert Louis Stevenson gave a glowing account of the humaneness of their missionary work in California. Goethe in his *Italian Journey* expressed his admiration for their art, and the great Protestant philosopher Herder wrote that "if the name of the Jesuits has fallen in disrepute everywhere, the good they have done for humanity will always remain worthy of praise, and future generations will certainly benefit by it."

Unaffected by the raging controversy, the army of St. Ignatius

marched on through all the changes and vicissitudes of the political and spiritual development of centuries, it marches on through the present into the future, and what the poet Novalis said about the Society of Jesus more than a hundred years ago, holds true today as it did then "The history of the world knows of no other organization like it No greater assurance of success inspired the plans of world conquest of the Senate of Ancient Rome No keener reason has ever served the execution of a greater idea For all times this society will remain the model of all others which are animated by an organic urge to spread and last without bounds"

This most extraordinary organization is the living heritage of one man, its founder Ignatius of Loyola It is he who gave the Society of Jesus the weapon of disciplined will and the strategy of world conquest, which for four hundred years now have led it from success to success In recognition of his services, the church canonized him in the year 1622 In him the ranks of the pious, devoted, ecstatic, inspired saints, of all the men and women chosen by God, were joined by a "saint of will," a sinner who found his way to God, because his will was searching for God, one who was crowned with the halo of holiness because he fought for it with all his might

The unique greatness of this saint of will power can hardly be denied even by those for whom the Catholic faith holds otherwise no message, for Ignatius established and still represents in ideal perfection the modern type of the man of will power—a type, which since then has become characteristic of leadership in all domains of human endeavor In the course of the last four centuries it has appeared in the persons of many great men, proclaimers of great ideas, conquerors, and geniuses of organization But their achievements survive today merely as memories in the archives of history, while Ignatius' idea and his work of organization have survived through the centuries as an ever-active reality The secret of their permanence lies in the fact that human will chose in their case a goal outside of time and space in the realm of the spirit Ignatius' work survived on earth because it reached out for heaven, it survived in time because it strove for eternity

SAINT THERESA

THERESA *The Saint of Ecstasy*

WITH ST THERESA there appears in the circle of saints a woman whose sainthood was imposed upon her by God. Her experience of God came to her in a state of ecstatic rapture and overwhelmed her with elemental force.

In the extraordinary life of this saint natural events crossed over into supernatural spheres, worldly and heavenly orders met, visions emerged from perception, the sound of human voices was taken up by heavenly calls and the fragile human frame served in ecstatic moments as the vessel of God's abundance.

In Theresa we are confronted with a resident of two realms, at home in heaven and on earth, and constantly moving to and from the spatial confines of a little Spanish town and the infinite space of eternity. The clock of the convent struck the hours, but for Theresa it would suddenly grow silent, time would cease, timelessness would surround her. And often it was but a flash that separated her daily routine from motionless rest in God.

The contrast between the natural and the supernatural which is so strikingly manifest in Theresa's dual existence was further intensified by the time in which she was born. It was a time of progressive secularization.

The castles, cathedrals, convents and monasteries, the fortified cities and towns, which had protected the introspective quiet of

medieval life against the onslaught of worldly interference, were still standing with their ramparts, their turrets and cloisters, but they seemed now to have survived merely as memorials of what they had actually been in the past

Theresa's century was no longer part of the era of transition from the Middle Ages to modern times, it was in every respect the new beginning itself. Within a few decades—and these were precisely the decades of Theresa's life—the expansive energies of modern activism increased the size of the earth by continents. North America had just been discovered. Cortes had conquered Mexico and crossed the Isthmus of Panama. Magellan sailed around the southern tip of the new world and discovered the Philippines. The earth began to assume the shape of a globe, and the treasures which the conquistadors brought home from overseas increased the wealth of the old world.

Power was the ideal of conquering worldliness. It was the time in which the idea of world dominion, of modern imperialism, was born.

This trend of secularization cast its spell also over man's spiritual pursuits. No longer did he look *within* himself. He looked *around* himself, and what he saw there, absorbed his attention and spurred his mind to inquire and examine. The earth, the here and the now, had displaced the heavens beyond.

Undreamed-of continents of human knowledge were discovered. Treasures of learning were brought together for the use of future times.

The sixteenth century saw the world as the tangible reality of conquered domains, continents discovered, oceans traversed and treasures won for carefree enjoyment, but also as a world of science, as the opening up of the truth about things.

And this time, when the outer world achieved such glorious triumphs in all its spheres, was precisely the time when no less glorious triumphs were achieved through Theresa of Ávila by the world that lies within—a world without space and yet more spacious, without gold and dominions and none the less richer, without conquests but yet in possession of greater safety, a world without time but of more lasting permanence, without tangible form but not therefore less real than the newly conquered terrestrial globe.

Magellan's *Vittoria*, the first ship to sail around the earth, had

just returned, after an absence of several years, to its home port in Spain, when a nun, returning from a trip around the world of the soul, emerged in her cell from the timelessness of ecstatic rapture to join her companions in the parlor of her convent at Avila

The conquistadors had seen America, India, Java, Panama, she had seen infinity. Ships laden with gold returned from conquered new worlds to the golden gate at the mouth of the Guadalquivir, she returned to earth from visions of the kingdom of heaven, laden with bliss which the hull of no ship could carry

To a world ruled by power she opposed her inner world, conquered in powerless rapture and ruled by self-deposition. Complete self-deposition was the foundation of her true kingdom of God

To a world that indulged in distraction and chatter she brought news from a world in which utter concentration, unspoken, spiritual prayer imparted the highest bliss

Her truth was an antithesis to the new truth of science. Sense perception was the scientist's road to truth, measuring reason served as his check, experiments offered proof. Vision outside the sphere of the senses was Theresa's road to certainty, immeasurable feeling was her check, mystic experience contributed proof

A world of data and a world of vision confronted each other as rivals. Copernicus had explored the universe by means of his astronomical calculations. He had come to the conclusion that the sun is the center of our world. The earth had been demoted. It was a mere satellite and no longer the center of creation. Man was no longer the lord of creation but merely the ruler of the earth

St. Theresa had explored the universe of the soul by means of her ecstatic visions, and she had come to the conclusion that the ultimate center around which the suns and the earths revolve, lies in the depths of the human soul. In rivalry with the Copernican discovery of the sun as the center of creation, Theresa discovered the astronomy of the soul and found God, the creator and sun of suns, in the soul of man. Man was the A and O of all that exists

Theresa's contemporary Kepler discovered the laws of gravity for material bodies, she discovered them for the soul

Vesalius, the young anatomist at Basle, opened a human corpse and studied the organs within. Theresa, the nun of Avila, laid bare the one imperishable thing in man: his soul. Servet discovered the

lesser circulation of the blood which nourishes the body Theresa discovered the greater circulation of divine enlightenment which nourishes the soul

The first precision clock had just been constructed. The course of time began to be measured in minutes, and for the first time church bells rang out each quarter of the hour But Theresa experienced the indivisibility of time which cannot pass because its measure is eternity

The century, entranced in a delirium of cold reason, was challenged by a Spanish nun who rose to superhuman greatness in the enchantment of timeless visions

The universal power of the church had been severely shaken. In the year of Theresa's birth Luther proclaimed his schism Calvin made of Geneva a second Rome Henry VIII had founded his own church, and Mary Queen of Scots submitted humbly to the dictates of the heretic John Knox

The old forms of dogmatic piety had lost much of their rigor under the onslaught of science and other forces of secularization. In defense of Catholicism kings took up arms and popular preachers tried to fortify the faith by threats of punishment and hellish torture in the realm beyond the grave At the Council of Trent cardinals, bishops and theologians convened in order to settle the question of a new codification of the Catholic dogma An organized army of trained soldiers of God was led by Ignatius of Loyola into the great decisive battle against the forces of the Reformation The doctors of the church cited their sacred authorities or tried, by the more timely means of rational proofs of God, to strengthen the old faith.

St Theresa wrote down what she had learned in the quiet solitude of her cell, beyond the confusion of time and space, beyond dogma and rational demonstration, beyond her own comprehension and the perception of her senses She wrote of the visits of her invisible Lord and of His will which He communicated to her in inaudible words

The declining church derived from it new energies, a new vitality that emanated from the deepest depths of the experience of faith, from the true source of all piety, from direct contact with God

For the church of this time Christ had come to be merely an

allegorical label, an object of the creed and a topic of theological disputes. Through Theresa the church learned once again about Christ as a living reality, about the Christ whom the disciples saw on the road to Emmaus, whom Saul of Tarsus had met on his way to Damascus, the Christ in whom the faith of the church had begun, in whose spirit it had been renewed by St. Francis of Assisi.

Ávila, where St. Theresa was born in March, 1515, was a little town of old Castile, one of those monuments of stone which had survived into modern times as a reminder of the past.

It lay in the hills of the Sierra de Guadarrama on the banks of the Adaja, and with its heavy walls it had been, throughout the Middle Ages, a mighty bulwark of Spanish Christendom against the threatening onslaught of the Moors. Its streets were narrow and winding. Its houses, built of dark stones, had been the homes of knights who slept with their swords at their sides, for they had to be ready, when the tocsin tolled, to ward off the raiding infidels. And in all parts of the town there were churches, monasteries and sacred monuments. There was scarcely a stone which had not been sanctified by martyrdom or miracle. Ávila was a town of stones and saints. *Ávila cantos y santos*, as the saying went.

For a hundred years now the tocsin in the spire had not been sounded. Modern warfare with standing armies and mechanized gunfire tactics had rendered knighthood superfluous. The armor of the knights had come to be a fancy dress for tournaments, and the swords at their sides were part of their gentlemen's attire.

Yet among those who lived behind the heavy walls of the fortress-homes of Ávila, there were many whose hearts had remained bastions of the past. Theresa's father, the Castilian nobleman Don Alonso Sanchez de Cepeda, was one of them. In men like him the knightly fervor of faith, founded in a tradition of centuries, had preserved its ancient fighting spirit and assumed a hostile attitude toward those modern trends in which it recognized a new enemy, arising from within the ranks of Christianity itself.

Don Alonso was a man who lived as his forebears had lived, who clung tenaciously to their devout conception of honor, and ruled his house and brought up his children in accordance with the example which their austerity had set. He thought and judged and acted as his forebears had done, and he cherished the books, by

which they too had been edified, the books of the saints and the chronicles of medieval heroes

Theresa's mother, Doña Beatriz de Ahumada, Don Alonso's young wife in second marriage, was of a different type. The routine of her life, her outward bearing, differed but little from that of her female forebears who, for centuries, had fulfilled the duties of mothers and wives in the fortress homes of Ávila. But in her waking dreams this beautiful and lively woman left secretly the buttressed town and, freed of all domestic burden, traveled the seven seas, saw distant isles and lands, and lived through all sorts of worldly adventure. Her route through unknown realms was charted for her by those fashionable novels which the printing presses, newly set up in Seville, turned out in profusion. Her guide was the "darkly beautiful" knight Amadis of Gaul, whom Cervantes was to dispose of a century later with the deadly weapon of his irony, but who at the time was guiding and misguiding many an adventurous soul. The compiler of the Amadis novels, the Spanish alderman García Ordóñez de Montalvo, mastered the art of endlessly spinning out the adventures of his hero. Doña Beatriz, always ailing and more and more frequently confined to her bed, devoured the installments, as they appeared, with avid impatience.

Don Alonso, in his library, read himself up into heaven. Doña Beatriz, on her sickbed, read herself out into the world. In space the worlds of their dreams were as different as heaven and earth, but the time in which their souls felt at home was the same—the Middle Ages. Absorbed in the *Flos Sanctorum* devout Don Alonso looked up to the heaven of medieval sainthood, and the world through which Beatriz traveled, in pursuit of the adventures of Amadis, was by no means the world of the dawning century, which will of conquest and thirst of knowledge had begun to explore, it was a world filled with frightening and alluring adventures, dangers of travel, monsters of the sea, conflicts of love, exactly as it had been built up in the imagination of medieval minds.

Don Alonso observed the custom of his fathers when he read every night, for the edification of his family, from his stories of the saints. Doña Beatriz indulged merely her inclination when she told her children, in the absence of their father, about the newest feats of her admired hero.

The edifying stories of the father and the entertaining stories of

the mother formed Theresa's awakening imagination to the same extent and marked her character with a certain ambivalence in which heavenly aspirations were combined with the interests of the world.

Theresa was a child of unusually strong imagination. She could transform her entire environment in accordance with her own world of fancy. The colonnaded patio, which was by tradition the center of all the activities of a Spanish household, had to comply with the quickly changing whims of the seven-year old girl, and became, in constant shifts of scenery, now the surging sea or distant land of fancy of Amadis of Gaul and now the field of battle, where pious knights fought valiantly against the infidels, or the hermitage and places of sacrifice of holy martyrs. And her playmates were crews or rulers or fighters for the faith, sea monsters, heathen barbarians or benevolent fairies.

Theresa's inexhaustible skill in inventing new games, her vivacity and boyish boldness, made her the natural leader of her numerous brothers and cousins. She was always the "darkly beautiful" knight, the victorious hero of the faith, the good fairy, or the saint who died a martyr's death, tied to a column in the court.

Until one day Theresa's childish fancy removed the last remaining barrier between reality and play. . . Then she decided to leave home secretly, together with her favorite brother Rodrigo, who was her elder by a few years, and to go to the land of the Moors—which, she was sure, lay somewhere outside the city gates of Avila—to suffer at the hands of the ruler of the infidels the death of a martyr.

The two runaways succeeded in leaving the house unnoticed. They got outside the city walls and took the road to Salamanca. Dusk was falling, and the little feet were painfully dragging along. Theresa would not give up. In her imagination there was no distance that could not be covered. Just in back of the next bush, the white castle of the prince of the Moors would loom into view. But instead of the castle of her imagination the next bush brought the children surprisingly face to face with reality which came riding along on horseback in the guise of a cousin of their father's. He was on his way home from his fields which lay outside the city limits, and when he heard of the adventurous plan of

the children, he reproved them severely and took them safely back to their worried parents.

After this unsuccessful venture Theresa invented a new game about nuns and monks as a substitute for "Spaniards and Moors," which had so far been her favorite game. The colonnade of the patio was the cloister. There was a chapel in the center of the court. On both sides were the cells in which the playmates were sitting, the nuns to the right, the monks to the left. They rejected all nourishment and prayed and were silent.

At the age of ten Theresa was a slender, somewhat awkward-looking girl, with deep black eyes and a serious expression which offset the friendly smile of her dimples in cheeks and chin. She had made a vow that she would actually become the nun whom she now pretended to be in her games, and that she would induce her brothers and cousins by her example to embrace likewise a spiritual life of world-abnegation.

At the age of fourteen, however, she was a precocious young lady and smiled condescendingly at the pious little thing she had been. Her boyishly slender body had lost its angular awkwardness and had developed the soft roundness of feminine forms. Her curly dark hair, her straight and almost reddish brows and her large pitch-black eyes, the seriousness of which seemed now hardly able to withstand the roguish mockery of her dimples, imparted to her youthful face a peculiar charm which it was hard to resist. Her inborn boldness had lost its boyishness and had developed into the quick and ready vivacity of a young girl whose beauty captivated everybody she met. When she laughed, and she liked to laugh and laughed often, her cheerfulness was of such springlike purity, that even the most sullen could not help chiming in.

At the age of seven Theresa had longed for a martyr's death, but at the age of fourteen she could not get too much of life, which meant to her to be courted and admired. At the age of ten she had chosen the nun's garb as an attire for the rest of her life, for she wanted to please God. Now she had no thought but to increase her beauty by finery and frills, for she wanted to please the world. She had a liking for orange and wore it whenever she could, for oranges had just been introduced in Europe and were still regarded as a luxury reserved for the fastidious taste of the few.

Her vivid imagination was applied now to the invention of ever-

new pranks and distractions. The patio was no longer a battleground for fighters of the faith, it had become the playground of handsome *caballeros*, true and real and not just the product of Theresa's wishful fancy. She had matured into womanhood and for a while her life pursued a normal course.

The strict Spanish etiquette, which tolerated no contact between young people of different sex unless they were relatives, was still in force at this time. But it had come to play more and more the role of a funny old chaperone whom the young in her charge managed to fool at every turn. All the handsome bachelor *caballeros* of Avila discovered suddenly that they were somehow related to Theresa and vied with each other for the first dance with their beautiful "cousin," for a smile from her or for an encouraging glance.

The pious little girl had attained perfect mastery in the art of distributing promising looks to each and every contestant, until one day she met the "cousin" who was henceforth to have an exclusive claim to all her looks and all her smiles. This was the beginning of the first love of the much-courted young beauty, and it was quite in accord with the model of the times.

In the sixteenth century love had ceased to be merely a romantic dream of bliss. It had come to be an extremely real affair. The guardian angel of Theresa's first love was not a benevolent fairy but just an older cousin of a less well-to-do collateral line of the Cepeda family. This cousin knew more about life than Theresa and was well-versed in the business of love. Now she took charge of smuggling the first love letters of Theresa's admirer past Don Alonso's vigilance into his fortified home. She delivered Theresa's replies and made arrangements for a secret rendezvous.

Strong walls and Don Alonso's old-time strictness guarded the Cepeda home against the aberrations of the coming age. And now the alien force of modern times made ready to sow its seed right in the soil of the Cepeda patio. Don Alonso's daughter was affected by the new spirit and in carefree exuberance and joy of life surrounded herself with a group of young people whom the splendors of worldliness held under their spell.

In the patio of the Cepedas the new century danced the *lavlota*, that same dance which the youth of Seville, drunk with life, danced at the golden gate. In Don Alonso's home the new era frolicked

and trifled, for it was tired of the solemnity of the past. A new generation flirted and dallied and was not worried by threats of hellfire and retribution. The faces of all these young beauties of Avila glowed in the same unnatural crimson which the women of Seville applied to their cheeks when they went to the Golden Gate to welcome the ships returning with men and gold.

Teresa de Cepeda, the daughter of Don Alonso, was about to sell her virtue to the licentious new age, which had penetrated the inner court of the Cepeda stronghold in the guise of a relative and guest. But before the time arrived which the cousin had set for the first clandestine meeting, Theresa's strict training won the upper hand, and frightened by her own recklessness, she confessed everything to her father.

At this time Theresa's ailing mother was no longer alive. Don Alonso's eldest daughter María, who might have guided her young sister with motherly advice, was about to be married and had her own problems. There was no mature woman in the fortress home of the Cepedas, who could have helped a young girl to avoid all the dangers and pitfalls of the difficult years of adolescence. Don Alonso decided therefore to entrust the care of his daughter to the Augustinian nuns in Avila. Their convent school was one of the few remaining institutions in which medieval discipline and rigor continued to prevail. Forty nuns were vigilantly guarding the well-being and virtue of the pupils attending their school.

The artificial crimson red was wiped from Theresa's face. Her orange-colored dresses were replaced by the plainest convent garb. The dance-trained grace of her gait had to be harnessed to the solemn measure of processions around the cloister. Instead of playful flirtations, there was to be prayer and devotion, and the edifying stories of the lady superior were the only substitute for the delightful little notes from the cousin and the gossip stories of her friends. At first Theresa felt deeply unhappy in her pious prison.

Her lively and spirited nature, however, could not go on for ever in this mood of downhearted dejection, and before long she managed to make the best of what could not be changed. She learned to wear her plain convent garb with good grace. She no longer resented the solemn processions. She prayed as she was told to do. And she listened patiently to the edifying stories of the superior. The charm of her cheerful nature had not deserted her. It disarmed

everyone around her and drew from the sternest face, from the most tightly closed lips, a friendly word or an encouraging smile.

After a few weeks Theresa was the favorite of the Augustinian nuns, she was a ray of light in the somber halls of the convent. And after the first year was over, as the days and weeks of the second year went by, when the end of her term in the convent approached and she was soon to return to the world, the good nuns made use of every kind of pious stratagem to induce Theresa to take the veil and stay with them.

But Theresa planned nothing of the sort. In all her docility she was only waiting for the moment when she might throw off the oppressive convent garb and slip back into a worldly dress and a worldly life. She longed and prayed for the day when the constant prayers would be over and she could take up again her uninterrupted life of an admired beauty with dance and flirtation.

"I was most averse to becoming a nun," she confessed at a later time and added that the mere thought of it had filled her with disgust. It was true, she had grown fond of the convent, but only as one may grow fond of a traveler's rest along one's road. Her home was out in the world, and all she intended to do right now was to be patient and wait until her apprenticeship was over and she could return to her life among people.

Then suddenly this life, which was about to become that of an average Spanish doña, was cut short, and the life of a saint continued in its stead. It did not begin in a flood of supernatural light, nor in heavenly elation, nor in joyous exuberance, it began in a *tremendum*, in "something to be trembled at", it began in the darkness of night, in deadly weakness, in helpless moaning and unbearable pain.

Theresa had just completed her seventeenth year. Until then she had always been a healthy girl of even disposition. She was full of plans for a happy future, and since her days at the convent school were about to be over, she attended to her duties with redoubled zeal.

One day, in the midst of her usual routine, she was suddenly overwhelmed by illness. It began in a fit of unspeakable weakness, she could hardly keep on her feet. Then a piercing pain cut through her chest, spreading swiftly to the pit of her stomach, the

neck and limbs, and finally through her entire body. She thought she must die then and there

There she lay, a wretched creature, shaking with pain and trying desperately to escape its cruel clutches. Her face was flaming red, her breath came short and panting. The life in her body seemed to be ready to throw everything into a desperate final stand. Mumbled words, not articulated under conscious control, came from her mouth, then nothing but painful groans. The nuns were certain that the end had come.

But it was only a first attack. A few minutes later the pains subsided as suddenly and unexpectedly as they had come. The tenseness of her face was relaxed. Her eyes shone brightly. Her breath was quiet as before. Her cheeks had again their normal color. Theresa got up. She spoke as usual. She could take up again her daily routine, which the sudden seizure had interrupted.

On the surface everything followed again its normal course. But in her heart Theresa could find no rest. The memory of the awful experience haunted her. She was frightened by the mere thought that at any time and anywhere her forces might leave her again, that her body might again be turned into a bundle of pain, and that the world around her might again be severed from her senses. The light of day was no longer what it had been. It carried a lining of darkness. And over all her plans for future happiness and joy, there hovered the constant danger of a renewed attack.

Her fears were justified. After a while the attack did come again. And again and again. And every time it overwhelmed her with the same suddenness. Then Theresa knew that she had fallen victim to a malicious disease.

But precisely this dreadful illness was to be the first phase of her holiness. Her torment was the herald of undreamed-of bliss. Theresa had to suffer with the sick and the ailing before she could be one of God's elect.

Just as in the lower processes of nature violent tremors run through the earth to announce the beginning of volcanic upheavals, as the tide goes out before it comes in, as labors precede birth; so, in accordance with the same mysterious law, physical convulsions are often the beginning of spiritual upheavals that mark the start of a higher form of existence, so is weakness the receding tide in the

lives of men and announces the coming of the high tide of God, and so, in saintly and secular lives, sainthood and greatness are often born through the labors of pain and disease

The great poet Novalis asked "Is not illness often the beginning of the best in men?"

Like Theresa, the carefree and cheerful merchant's son Giovanni Bernadone was torn by illness from his worldly entanglements and led on his way to become *il Poverello*, St. Francis of Assisi. The knight Ñigo de Oñz, whose life had been dedicated to the vanities of the world, recognized, in the course of his painful convalescence, that worldly ambitions are worthless and exchanged his secular aims for the heavenly aims of his new life through which he became St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Like Theresa, many a saint prepared himself in the utter darkness of a night of illness and pain for his journey along the shining road to heavenly glories. The Apostle Paul, who saw the Lord in a vision, bore his infirmities as a "thorn in the flesh." A sudden attack of illness had felled the persecutor of the Christians, Saul, on his way to Damascus. Then the Lord had appeared before him. Stricken with blindness he lay in his room in an inn by the roadside. And suddenly the light shone forth from within him, and the blind Saul became a seeing Paul.

St. Hildegard of Bingen, Theresa's great spiritual ancestor in the twelfth century, wrote once "For almost a lifetime I struggled against the visions the Lord sent me, until finally the divine scourge forced me down on my sickbed. Then, urged by much suffering, I began to write, and as I proclaimed my vision, I regained my strength and arose from my bed."

For many a great prophet, reformer and founder of a new faith, pain and suffering were a great gift of divine grace. Mohammed, the prophet who conquered heaven for the infidels, suffered like Theresa throughout his entire life with the scourge of epileptic seizures. But what had begun as unbearable torture, was at last transformed into a blessing, and henceforth every new attack bestowed upon him new revelations and a new grace. A very similar story might be told about Cromwell, Luther, and many others.

In times, which conceived of greatness as greatness in faith, illness produced saints and prophets and founders of new faiths, but in times, in which greatness manifested itself in artistic or sci-

entific achievements, the product of illness was equally often a man of genius in art or science. Pain became a tension which could be released in creative work, and the foreign matter of disease acted as a painful stimulant, not unlike the grain of sand which is introduced into the oyster and becomes the cause and center of a pearl.

For the poet Alfred de Musset illness meant inspiration, and Heine, who spent many years of his creative period as a living corpse in his "mattress-grave," praised it as the prime mover of all creation. The productive power of pain is manifest in the lives of a great number of creative men, and the biography of almost every genius is a treatise on the connection between suffering and achievement.

Pascal's immortal *Pensées* stand out against a dark background of never-ending ills. Behind the bars of his cell, between the most dreadful attacks and long lapses of deepest lethargy, Auguste Comte built up the marvelous structure of thought of his *Positive Philosophy*.

Vincent van Gogh wrote in a letter to his brother "The more I fall to pieces, grow sicker and frailer, the more I become an artist, for through illness I get ideas for work in abundance." And indeed, in van Gogh's case illness was the irritant which made of the formally gifted copyist of Millet the greatest genius of modern painting.

An illness, quite similar to that in which Theresa's sainthood was rooted, gave Dostoevski the blessed power to produce his greatest works. In perusing the history of Dostoevski's illness and production, one might well mistake it for a story of Theresa's suffering and sainthood. "A strange and unbearable illness has always tortured me," writes Dostoevski. "I often felt that I must instantly die, and then something followed that was similar to real death—an attack which usually ended in a state of lethargy." Although Dostoevski suffered greatly with these attacks throughout his entire life, he knew about the creative force that was inherent in them and referred to them as his "sacred illness." "In such moments," he wrote, "I feel as though heaven had come down to earth to devour me. You men of good health, you cannot sense what feeling of bliss such illness can impart. For all the joys of life I would not give up the bliss of one such second."

When Theresa's condition failed to improve at school, Don Alonso took her home, for he hoped that, away from the discipline of the convent, she would recuperate more quickly. The result he expected did not come about.

The fortress home to which the patient returned, was no longer the same. Somber quiet weighed heavily on it. The spirited circle that had surrounded her in former years was no longer there. Most of her cousins, heeding the call of the times, had left Ávila. They worked for commercial houses in Seville or traveled in the wake of the conquistadors in distant lands. Of her brothers only the youngest two, Lorenzo and Antonio, had stayed at home. Most of her girl friends were married and had followed their husbands to the big cities. Juana, her favorite, had stayed in Ávila, but, disillusioned with life, she had taken the veil.

At this time Theresa was just about sixteen years old. The looking glass would have shown her the same fascinating face as of old. With some powder and rouge and a smile she could have filled the patio in no time with a new set of courting *caballeros* and admiring friends. The interrupted frolic of her girlhood might have continued. But her happy look, her carefree smile had been chased away by her illness. There she stood, suffering and despondent, gazing vacantly into the court, which appeared to her as a dark and narrow prison yard. For the court continued to be what Theresa's imagination made of it.

At times she remembered the light and easy conversations of years gone by and saw herself again as the much-courted and spirited beauty. But a moment later her mind would dwell again on her present condition, and a wretched young girl, shaken by illness, was pacing forlornly up and down the prison yard.

The contrast between past and present made her the more painfully aware of her pitiful state. The silence in the fortress house kept reminding her of how cruelly illness had deceived her in all her girlhood dreams and hopes. In her depressed moods, the sick girl fell the more readily victim to the attacks, which recurred now with ever increasing frequency.

Don Alonso was Theresa's only contact and not exactly the most suitable one. The secluded life which he led in his quiet and deserted house, had emphasized his introspective leanings. He spent his days almost completely in his library and devoted himself ex-

clusively to his devotional books. Although he idolized his daughter, he could not, enthralled by stories of heroes and saints, find the way to the heart of a young girl, whose problem was simply that her life was shattered. The edification which he derived from his pious authors could not have been of help to his melancholy daughter. And when the attacks came, he faced them in helpless bewilderment.

He decided to entrust the girl to the care of his eldest daughter María, who lived on a little country estate in Castellanos. He hoped that the rural environment, together with María's loving care, might improve Theresa's state of health.

As soon as her condition permitted, Don Alonso put Theresa on a mule and started on the two-day trip. On the way they stopped in Hortigosa where Pedro de Cepeda, Don Alonso's elder brother, was living.

There, in one of the smallest rooms of his magnificent mansion, Theresa's uncle had lived for years the severely ascetic life of a man of God. Don Pedro was entirely concerned with life beyond the grave, his interest in the life here below had vanished completely, and when he spoke at all of the things of this world, he did so only insofar as they might serve him in his preparation for the great journey to God. His conversation with the unexpected guests was solely concerned with sacred things.

St. Jerome, the learned hermit of the fourth century, was Don Pedro's chosen model. From St. Jerome's admonitory writings he took the standard for all his acts. One of those heavy tomes he handed to his niece and asked her, for the edification of them all, to read a few passages which he had marked.

Theresa felt a certain resentment against these texts, which reminded her of her childhood, and it was at first out of sheer courtesy that she complied with her uncle's request. But while she was reading, her interest was aroused, and before long she listened to her own voice with the same devout attention as her audience. Now the voice which read St. Jerome's words was no longer the voice of monotonous boredom which it had been, it was a voice of pious concentration. A frightened and suffering young girl was reading the message of the kingdom of heaven as a message of solace for the sick and ailing. And when they left the following day, Theresa requested from her uncle a volume of

Jerome's writings, which she wished to take with her on her trip to the country

At first the rural environment did not seem to bring about the hoped-for recovery. Neither the tender care of her half sister nor the distractions of country life could restore her cheerful disposition. The comforting words of her relatives tormented her, and she was happy only when she was left alone in her room, absorbed in her volume of St. Jerome. His words of promise about the kingdom of heaven, addressed to all those who strove here below to lead a life pleasing to God, revived in her the old dream of becoming a nun. Her former love of life and worldliness, however, was not altogether dead, it was only ailing, and as soon as there was the faintest hope for recovery, it put in its claims against the intimidated patient who was ready to seek refuge in a convent.

Then one day Theresa came in her readings across St. Jerome's threats of hellfire and punishment. All the things which her frustrated hunger for life had been craving—the desire to be admired, flirtations, secret love affairs, even the most harmless excesses in dress and make-up, all these things were enumerated there and condemned one by one as infallible guides to hell. And if St. Jerome's rhetoric had been impressive when he described with mellow tenderness what joys the heavens could promise to those who turned their backs on the world, it was even more so, when he began with scolding fury to describe the hellish torment awaiting those, who had devoted their lives to the concerns of the world. Theresa was frightened to the quick.

A short time later she suffered another severe attack. María spent the night by her bedside. She lay there in a coma, and her sister was ready to despair.

The following morning Theresa left her room and to everybody's surprise was a changed person. As though her illness had vanished without a trace she made again the impression of a care-free young girl. Nobody understood the reason for this sudden transformation. Theresa herself explained at a much later time that St. Jerome's threats of retribution in hell had done for her what his promises of heavenly joy had not been able to do. Fear of hell induced the wavering girl to choose between heavenly and worldly joys. She chose to turn her back on the world and start on her road to heaven. Once she had resolved to become a nun, her pain and

her suffering left her It was as though the "little deaths" of her illness had only been meant to serve as a poignant reminder of the imminence of the dangers of hell Her melancholy which had cast a shadow on her soul had disappeared too The heavenly light, toward which she was now moving, knew of no shadows And pain and illness, life and death, everything was transfigured in its radiance

Once before Theresa had been planning to become a nun, but afterwards, when she had grown conscious of her beauty and charm, she had rejected the idea as childish and ridiculous Now, however, when illness had taught her about the transitoriness of the glories of the world, when the threats of hell had filled her soul with unspeakable horror, nothing could make her desist from her vow

For fear that her plan might again be thwarted, she kept it a strict secret After her return to Avila she took only her intimate friend Juana into her confidence, for Juana was a nun herself and would be able to help her attain her end

Not to attract the attention of the devil, who is lurking everywhere in the world, who is lurking in the advice of friends as well as in the doubting moods of well-meaning relatives, Theresa employed a pious stratagem That nobody might suspect her intentions, she participated in social activities and talked and smiled and flirted as in the olden days But she was firmly resolved to bid the world farewell Once a *caballero* expressed in no uncertain terms his admiration for her shapely legs, and she retorted in a quick come-back "Look well, it may be your last chance!" Everyone laughed and assumed that she thought of marriage, and that her remark was an allusion to the imminence of her union with another wooer At that time, however, she had already completed her preparations for donning the modest garb of the brides of Christ.

As soon as Juana had finished the necessary arrangements, so that Theresa would merely have to appear at the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation to be received there as a novice, she decided to inform her father of what she intended to do

Don Alonso was thunderstruck To be sure, he was a good Christian He admired the saints and martyrs, and their lives of sacrifice inspired and edified him. But then he was also a father, who was attached to his child in earthly love The Christian and

the father came into conflict, and the father won and protested vehemently against Theresa's plan. Don Alonso was on good terms with his God. He gave Him everything he owed Him and more, but it was not possible that the Lord should demand the sacrifice of his daughter.

Theresa had always been an obedient daughter, but hell was a serious matter, and Don Alonso's strictest orders could not induce her to abandon her plan. To escape her father's vigilance she did now, at the age of seventeen, what she had done once before when she was seven. She ran away. Then she had persuaded her brother Rodrigo to flee with her to the land of the Moors, and now she took her youngest brother Antonio with her on her flight from the world.

Early one morning Antonio and Theresa left the fortress house. They separated at the gate of the monastery of St. Thomas where the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada lies buried. Antonio entered and asked the Dominican friars to admit him as a novice. Theresa went on to the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation, a few miles away from the town, where her friend Juana was expecting her.

Antonio's plan failed as soon as he had crossed the threshold of the monastery. It was at St. Thomas that Don Alonso went to confession, and the Dominicans were cautious enough to send word to him to inquire whether Antonio's decision met with his approval. A short while later Don Alonso appeared at the monastery and took his runaway son back to his home.

Thanks to Juana's forethought and skill, Theresa's plan was much better prepared. Don Alonso was notified of his daughter's move too, but he arrived at the convent only in time to see how Theresa's beautiful curls were cut off and how she exchanged her worldly dress of orange color for the white veil of the Carmelite novice. He was faced with an accomplished fact, and all he could do was to give his belated blessing.

At the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation, isolated from the world by heavy walls, Theresa believed herself safe from all temptations. "I was filled with the greatest of joys," she wrote at a later time about her entrance into the convent, "and God converted the acidity of my embittered soul into the greatest tenderness." She was zealous and cheerful in the fulfillment of her duties as a novice.

Obedience to her meant liberation, her cell was a real home, and renunciation filled her with consummate joy

The initial happiness of her novitiate, however, did not last. The fear of hell which had driven her to take the veil, and the zeal with which she pursued her road to heaven sharpened her eyes for what was going on around her. To her great dismay she found that the place to which she had fled lay still in the world from which she had meant to escape

The chief enemy was the changed spirit of the times. To be sure, the walls of the Incarnation were thick and high, but they separated the convent from the world outside only in space, not in time. And then as now, time meant change, it meant change of things and of thoughts, it was an all-pervading, all-embracing power. Within and without the Incarnation, time had changed from the Middle Ages to Modern Times. No wall and no rampart could shut out time. There was no place beyond its reach. Nobody could escape it. The busy life of the world and the life of contemplation in the convent, distraction and renunciation occurred in the same century, were keyed to the same tenor of life.

The walls of the Incarnation were medieval, but those who lived behind them were children of modern times. The veil belonged to the Middle Ages, but the women who wore it were of the sixteenth century. The prayers, masses, devotions, observances, all the elements of the routine regulating the daily life of the Carmelites, came out of medieval times, but the life thus regulated was the life of nuns in the year 1536. The spirit of the Middle Ages had dictated the forms of prayer, medieval music had composed the hymns of the choir. But those who prayed the prayers and sang the songs were nuns of a modern era.

The little chapel with its leaking roof, through which the rain could drip down on the heads and shoulders of the praying nuns, kept faith with the old vow of poverty and abnegation. But in the cells of the Incarnation, which were really little two-room apartments, the sisters knew how to live a life of renunciation with ease and in comfort. They owned nothing, but they accepted little favors. Their robes were mended, but they wore necklaces, bracelets and rings. Before God they were all equal as brides of Christ, but those of noble birth retained the title of "Doña." The meals were made to conform with all the prescribed fasts, but they were

appetizing and ample, and in between the nuns had all sorts of titbits and dainties

The pious sisters served the Lord in chastity and obedience, but from time to time they had their day out or even a long vacation which they could spend as they pleased with relatives or friends out in the world

And just as the inmates of the convent could go to see the world, so the world could come to visit the convent. Seclusion from the world was no longer a genuine withdrawal from the world but rather a game of hide and seek. The home of the silent Carmelites had opened its doors to the modern cult of talk and conversation. One of the rooms of the Incarnation had been sublet to the world. Upstairs were the cells, and just a few steps led down to the parlor below where the nuns could receive guests of both sexes. To be sure, there was in the *locatorio* a metal grate which separated the nuns from their worldly callers, but it was a partition which separated only the bodies in space and could be crossed by sight and hearing. Through it the silence of the convent and busy worldliness, renunciation and greed could engage in amicable conversation. And in the restless mirror of gossip the world was reflected with all its vanities and temptations.

In her quiet cell Theresa conversed with God and felt secure. But whenever she had to appear in the parlor, she found herself confronted with the world she had meant to flee. Soon she came to recognize that her heart too was such a convent with cells and devotion upstairs and a parlor one flight below. Her peace of mind was gone. She saw that she was still within the range of the powers of hell.

In such moments she began to doubt the wisdom of her selection of the Carmelite Incarnation as a homestead for her religious life. And these doubts in her mind were the first indication that the great reformer of the order of the Carmelites that Theresa was destined to become at a later time was beginning to stir in her. For the moment, however, she was only a little novice whose duty it was to be humble and to obey. The concessions which the Carmelite order made to the ways of the world had been sanctioned by the Pope in the so-called mitigated rule, and a little novice could not be more papal than the Pope. What happened in the Incarnation, was the consecrated custom of the times, and all the sisters, from the

prioress down, paid homage to it. The force of convention smothered Theresa's doubts, and it is probable that she would have submitted to the established routine, that her life would have become that of the average Spanish nun of her day, if illness had not intervened for the second time and had pulled her out of the rut of the accepted system.

After she had taken her vows as a nun, her former attacks came back with increased violence. They overcame her with the relentless fury of elemental events. No part of her body remained unaffected, no function stayed immune, no limb, no muscle, no nerve was safe from the blazing pain. And the agony of her "little deaths" resembled ever more the real agony of the great death.

The frightened nuns called her by her name. She remained motionless. They shook her, rubbed her, lifted her up. All their efforts were in vain. Her body remained cold and rigid as though she had died.

As the attacks recurred, the illness extended its hold over Theresa's entire life. Some of her organs were never entirely free from pain. And from one attack to the next the respite granted her grew shorter and shorter. At first it was a matter of weeks but finally only of days.

Theresa faced these visitations in helpless despair. Once she had heeded the exhortation which her illness seemed to convey. She had left the world and had gone into the convent, but for a second time, and with increased brutality, it barred her way, thwarted her plans, and threw her out of the quiet ease of convent routine.

Theresa was destined to achieve greater things. She was to become the saint of ecstasy, and her illness was a contributing factor in the development of her sainthood. But as yet this sainthood, maturing under the veil of pain, was invisible to profane eyes.

Don Alonso took his daughter out of the convent and called the best Castilian physicians to her bedside. They came, solemnly dressed in their gowns and caps, Galen's writings in one hand and the indispensable urinal in the other. In keeping with the prevailing methods of diagnosis, they felt the pulse and examined the urine with learned pedantry. Then they proceeded to consult their authority Galen and vied with each other in theoretical discussions.

about the cause of the patient's condition. But with all their protracted talk they could find no organic defect, and their theoretical conclusions and deductions failed to explain the fainting spells, the twitching of muscles, the convulsions and the tonic rigidity which characterized Theresa's case. It was clearly a case not provided for in the handbooks of medicine, and the prescriptions, which the doctors' syllogistic rationale seemed to call for, remained ineffective.

Since science had failed so pitifully, Don Alonso decided to entrust the treatment of his daughter to a lay healer, a so-called *curandera*. The one in Becedas whom he consulted enjoyed the reputation of having cured innumerable hopeless cases. She was a sort of naturopath and practiced only in spring when the herbs began to sprout. It was now the beginning of winter, and so it was decided that Theresa should spend the intervening months with her sister María in the country. The trip was again interrupted in Hortigosa, and again the short stay at Don Pedro's brought about a decisive turn in Theresa's development. It was one of those little coincidences which always seem to play into the hand of a greater necessity.

This time the pious uncle gave his ailing niece a book by a Franciscan monk, the Spaniard Francisco de Osuna. She meant to read it on her journey to Castellanos, but it came to be her guide on her journey to God. Its title was *The Third Abecedarium*, and instead of the verbal prayer which had become a formal routine, it taught an unspoken spiritual form of prayer. "God is without speech, He is the essence of quiet," taught this mystic disciple of St. Francis, "and only those who approach Him in silence can be heard and will be given an answer." It was a sort of spiritual A B C of a silent language, which Osuna called the mother tongue of heaven.

When, during her stay in the country, the attacks slackened at times, Theresa practiced the mystical A B C, and the same joyous excitement overcame her which children experience when they learn how to spell out the letters in their first primer. And her delight was truly that of a child who is about to master the rudiments of spelling and senses vaguely that the letters fall into words and phrases which have meaning and coherence, that they are the key to a world which one may enter by dint of assiduous practice. Her mouth, used to the spoken word, was not as yet able to pray

in silence and to call God by his wordless name Her untrained ear could not as yet understand the unworded language of the Lord Nor had her eye as yet acquired the ability to see what is not seeable The first ray of light which emanated for her from Osuna's book was merely a flicker in the darkness of her sickroom, for in the life of Theresa, illness was still stronger than sainthood

When spring came, Theresa traveled to Becedas The cure was a sort of medieval shock therapy and consisted mainly in drastic attempts to stir up the entire organism All sorts of herbs, vomitives and purgatives were used to clean out the body But since the *curandera* thought of the disease as an evil demon who had settled down in the patient, she added to her natural expellents all kinds of exorcistic concoctions, which she prepared, by means of magical formulae, from the toes of spring frogs, pulverized wings of the first flies and fresh excreta of snakes

The demon of Theresa's illness not only failed to be intimidated by all the sorcery of the *curandera*, he actually redoubled his opposition and seemed to resent the witch's unauthorized intervention in his own private affairs The cure of the *curandera* proved more disastrous than the illness itself

"I do not know how I ever stood it," Theresa wrote in her autobiography "I remained three months in that place, in the most grievous sufferings In two months my life was nearly worn out, and the severity of the pain in my heart, for the cure of which I was there, was much more keen, it seemed to me now and then as if my heart had been seized by sharp teeth There was a great loss of strength, for an excessive disgust for food did not allow me to take anything except liquids The fever never left me and increased during the treatment It seemed to me that a fiery conflagration was consuming me from within My sinews began to shrink The pains I had were unendurable, and I was so overwhelmed by the deepest sadness that I had no rest either night or day All in all this cure left in me but a faint breath of life"

When Theresa's father took her home again to Ávila in the summer of 1537, it was a human wreck that moved into the fortress house of the Cepedas Theresa yearned for death as the only deliverance from her torment and asked to make her confession Superstitious love induced Don Alonso to deny her request He

feared that such a confession, conceived as a preparation for death, might in some magic way accelerate death itself

Deprived of the last consolation, which the sacrament could have given her, the patient got into a state of excitement which neither body nor soul could endure for long. In the same night she suffered an attack which surpassed in fury everything she had experienced before. Her convulsions became a delirium of pain. She raged against herself. Her nails cut deep into her flesh. She screamed in anguish. She bit her tongue. The death rattle broke from her bluish lips. But the horrible torment continued until finally she fell into a coma in which she lay cold and motionless as though she had finally been relieved of all human suffering.

A night and a day passed, and still there was not the slightest sign of life in her prostrate body. The doctors tried to take her pulse but could not feel it. The hand they held was lifeless and icy. The mirror they placed before her mouth remained undimmed by the breath of life. "She is dead!" they said, and for them the case was closed.

"My daughter is not dead!" cried Don Alonso as though he had lost his mind. It was not possible that God should punish him so harshly.

A second night went by and Theresa had not yet recovered. It was high time to begin preparations for the funeral. The body must be washed. It must be wrapped in winding sheets, and candles must be lighted, right and left, at the head of the bier.

Two sisters of the Incarnation prayed and kept the watch. The following morning the nuns dug Theresa's grave in the cemetery of the convent. In the chapel a mass was read for the soul of the deceased, and the sisters sang solemn funeral hymns.

In the afternoon the prioress of the Incarnation appeared at Don Alonso's home to have Theresa's body transferred to the convent. With the stubbornness of a loving father Don Alonso refused to admit her to the bier. "My daughter is not dead!" he cried even now, when the body was ready to be interred. Pain and grief seemed to have robbed him of his senses. The prioress had to leave without effecting her purpose.

The following night, the third since the attack, Theresa's younger brother kept the watch. Toward morning he was overcome by sleep. When he awoke, he saw that the bier stood in

flames. One of the candles had burned down and had fallen on the winding sheet. In a panic he called in the servants who managed to put out the fire. Thus Theresa was saved from burning to death.

For a day and a half Theresa's grave had been ready in the cemetery of the convent. All preparations for the interment were complete. The sisters were angered by this unseemly delay, and for a second time the prioress went to Don Alonso's home to demand the body which belonged to the convent. She resolutely entered the death chamber and, to her amazement, found Theresa, whom she had thought dead and ready to be buried, calmly sitting on her bier. On her lids were still the drops of wax, which had fallen down from the melting candles, but she was speaking to Don Alonso in a clear and natural tone of voice, imploring him to let her make her confession. It was as though she were just finishing the sentence which the attack had cut short, as though the four-day period of absolute lifelessness had not intervened at all. Now the prioress, who had come to claim the dead body of one of her nuns, could do nothing but fulfill the wishes of her who had just returned to life and go to call for her father confessor.

After Theresa had made her confession and had partaken of the sacrament, she felt relieved in her soul. Her physical infirmity, however, remained unchanged. In her autobiography she gives a vivid description of the devastating effects which this latest attack had wrought. "After those four days, during which I was insensible, so great was my distress, that our Lord alone knows the intolerable suffering I endured. My tongue was bitten to pieces, there was a choking in my throat because I had taken nothing, and because of my weakness, so that I could not swallow even a drop of water, all of my joints seemed to be out of joint, and the disorder of my head seemed extreme. I was bent together like a coil of ropes—for to this was I brought by the torture of those days—unable to move either arm or foot, or hand, or head, any more than if I had been dead, unless others moved me—I could raise, I think, one finger of my right hand. As to touching me, that was impossible, for I was so bruised that I could not endure it. They used to move me in a sheet, one holding one end and one the other."

In this state, in accordance with her wishes, she was taken back to the convent on Palm Sunday of the year 1537. "There," she relates, "they received one whom they had waited for as dead, but

her body was worse than dead It is impossible to describe my extreme weakness, for I was nothing but bones”

For eight months Theresa lay in the infirmary of the convent, totally paralyzed and tortured by unrelenting pains. Finally, when the seizure subsided somewhat, when she could at least manage to drag herself about, she was moved back to her cell, where she spent three more years in a state of partial paralysis and severe contractions. There were no signs of improvement. For three years she led the life of an invalid.

Finally Theresa did free herself from the laming grip of her disease, but even then she continued to suffer with all sorts of other ailments and ills. “So weak was my stomach,” she writes, “that for twenty years I could not keep any food until late in the afternoon. The times when I was not harassed by various severe pains were rare, indeed.”

Modern physicians would hold the backwardness of scholastic medicine responsible for the fact that their sixteenth-century colleagues viewed Theresa's illness as an inexplicable mystery. At that time doctors had no very exact knowledge of the structure of the organism, they knew nothing about hormones, they were not equipped with brain-wave detectors, cardiographs, X rays, metabolic recorders and all the other diagnostic helps, which make it possible for modern medicine to track down the most hidden diseases.

But even supposing that none of these means could yield the desired result in the case of an illness like that of Theresa, modern medicine would still not be ready to admit defeat. For when a pathological phenomenon cannot be traced to a physiological cause, the case can still be referred to the science of psychiatry, which may find that a psychic disturbance is responsible for the organic complaint. There are on record in the clinical experience of modern psychiatry a considerable number of cases in which certain states of consciousness or of psychic excitement have caused anatomic or functional changes in tissues and organs.

Our contemporary science would summarize the symptoms of Theresa's illness about as follows: her convulsions were tonic contractions, the rigidity of her muscles was a form of muscular tetanization, the choking sensation, which made it so difficult for her to swallow, was a *globus hystericus*, her unendurable pain is indic-

ative of hyperesthesia, her frequent fainting spells were due to nervous disorders in the circulatory system, and her entire illness, which stayed with her from adolescence to mature womanhood, was a classical example of those psycho-physiological disturbances which can at times be observed in women between puberty and menopause. In the final diagnosis there might at best be some disagreement as to whether, Theresa's case was straight hysteria or hysterio-epilepsy. As for the best possible treatment, there would be no doubt either. It would consist in a cold-water cure with luminal and dilatin as drugs and possibly psychoanalysis.

Yet the most painstaking medical analysis would miss the point. It would label a disease but not the phenomenon behind it. This belongs to a sphere outside the province of medical science. What becomes manifest in the life of St. Theresa, is the interdependence of illness and creative greatness. Hers is one of the cases in which the term illness as such cannot explain anything. The pathological phenomenon merely deepens the miracle. And a mere pathography of St. Theresa is just as inadequate, when taken as an attempt to define her true nature, as all the pathographies which try to explain the greatness of St. Paul, of Luther, Mohammed or Dostoevski in exclusively medical terms.

A really great modern physician, Carl Ludwig Schleich, whose name is not only linked with his epochal achievements in psychiatry but who is famous for his discovery of spinal anesthesia, is among the rare scientists of modern times who have come to recognize that medical nomenclature cannot do justice to the phenomena hidden beneath the symptoms of hysteria. To him hysteria is merely a symbolic expression for something that is otherwise not observable in nature. In his opinion hysteria signifies that the spirit has gained mastery over matter, that it is trying to form an organism after its own image. At the basis of the phenomena to which we apply the term of hysteria, there is a complex of ideas which is conceived in the spirit but acts in the body. The real essence of this illness can be understood, according to Schleich, only on the basis of the metaphysical principle which underlies all of creation. The world with its manifold forms was created after the pattern of one plastic idea. And that is precisely what can be seen in hysteria, through a powerful microscope, as it were, which permits us to study life and growth in nature somewhat more closely than the

naked eye and a so-called healthy common sense are capable of doing.

If one examines Theresa's illness carefully, it becomes unmistakably clear that a higher principle is active in it, and thus to such an extent that illness and sainthood appear at times merely as two different manifestations of one and the same creative force

Theresa's vita represents thus a very peculiar type of saintly existence, in which suffering plays into the hand of greatness, in which the patient gives the cue to the saint. The cutting pains, which sever her from a worldly enjoyment of life, guide her thoughts in the direction of heavenly bliss, and the more often her personal will is eliminated in spells of physical fainting, the more readily does it make way for guidance by the superpersonal will of God

But the function of illness in Theresa's case is not exhausted in purification and change of life. It made all her senses and her entire body more receptive, more sensitive and ready for supersensual experiences. Her illness effected a breach in the bodily ramparts of her existence, and through it higher forces were able to move in. "Sometimes," she writes, "a feeling of the presence of God would come over me, unexpectedly, so that I could in no wise doubt either that He was within me, or that I was wholly absorbed by Him." This sensation came to be more and more the decisive force in Theresa's life and finally culminated in that state of rapturous enchantment which no created being can attain by purely created means. For this state of existence lies outside the realm of the senses. In it Theresa saw what no eye can see, she heard what no ear can hear, and she understood what no mind can fathom.

In her *Interior Castle* Theresa wrote about these things: "One feels that one has been wholly transported into another and a very different region from that in which we live, where a light so unearthly is shown that if during one's whole lifetime one would be trying to picture it and the wonders seen, one should not possibly be able to succeed. In an instant the mind learns so many things at once that if the imagination and the intellect spent years in striving to enumerate them, they could not recall a thousandth part of them."

Trying to describe these raptures Theresa says that in them "an

upward flight takes place in the interior of the soul, and this with the swiftness of a bullet fired from a gun " And in these states such superiority is at times given to the inner forces over those without, to the soul over its body, to heaven over earth, that the laws of nature are suspended, that the earth waives its right to gravity, that, when the soul starts its flight to heaven, the body is weightlessly raised from the ground. Extraordinary events in the soul are coupled with extraordinary events in matter, ecstasy is complemented by levitation

What happens here, is a thing not within nature. The continuity of the physical world is disrupted. Time is dissolved in eternity, and nature makes way for the supernatural. Yet all this occurs within the realm of created space and time. A Carmelite nun of the sixteenth century, in the convent of the Incarnation at Avila, is carried away to heaven, while her body hovers above the ground. The paradox becomes fact. Human existence becomes divine. Illness supplies the tangible dynamics. Illness is the abyss of suffering and death, over which nature achieves its leap into the supernatural.

When the disease suspends all functions of organic life, an interregnum ensues, which gives rise to a new form of existence. It is the existence of ecstasy and is equipped with supernatural powers. When the eyes of the body are blinded to the light of created nature, because the impact of illness has closed the lids over them, then a new eye is opened, which is able to perceive the radiance of God. When illness deafens the physical ear, the soul itself becomes capable of perceiving the inaudible words which the voice of the Creator speaks. When unconsciousness veils the mirrors of physical perception, the ultimate essence of things appears unmirrored and unmattered. When reason is brought to naught by the onslaught of physical illness, then revelation can begin to speak truths which exceed reason. When the heart ceases to beat in the rhythms of this world, then a new heart arises that beats in the rhythms of God.

The suddenness of Theresa's seizures, with their abrupt shifts from life to lifelessness, trained her body for the higher shifts from natural existence to supernatural ecstasies. Resurrection from death, the miracle of all myths, the sequence of lowly dying and higher life, were given the reality of historical truth. Out of the

"little deaths" of a Spanish nun was born St. Theresa, the saint of ecstasy.

Theresa was about seventeen years old when she was overcome by the first attack of her illness. She was forty-three, when she was granted her first ecstatic rapture. She had passed through numberless "little deaths" before finally sainthood could crystallize out of illness, rapturous bliss out of physical torment.

During these twenty-five years of almost continuous suffering and pain, her saintliness was merely a little spark which flickered through the darkness of an interminable night. Even when it finally blazed forth in a brighter flame, its light kept a dark lining as a vestige of the disease from which it had sprung. Her ecstatic raptures displayed all the symptoms of her morbid attacks and differed from them only in that they occurred in supernatural spheres. Eyewitness accounts, as that of the sister sacrist of Toledo, point out that in her ecstasies Theresa had no control over her senses, that her pulse stopped beating, that her breath was suspended, that her entire body was so rigid that it could not be moved, and that her hands and feet were cold as though she had died.

Almost her entire life consisted of days of suffering, of nights of pain and death-like lethargies. In the beginning she sought the help of men in her struggle against the disease. But after a time she abandoned the medicines of the doctors and relied on the "medicine of saints," which does not attempt to remove the disease but teaches how to endure it.

The example of the Biblical sufferer, and still more the words of Christ from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, "And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me," were the source of her strength and made it finally possible that her suffering lost its sting and her illness its power to frighten. She recognized that they were part of her fate and accepted them humbly.

The really great danger in Theresa's life was not lurking in the sickroom but in the parlor. Not pains but distractions obstructed her path to sainthood. Not illness but recovery, which opened the doors of the sickroom and confronted her with the decisive problem: the world.

It came to pass in the year 1540.

Theresa recovered from one day to the next after the doctors

had given up her case as incurable. One morning she awoke and found that her limbs were no longer paralyzed. She was able to get up and walk as before. She herself ascribed this unhopèd-for recovery to the force of prayer, and there are modern scientists, as for instance Alexis Carrell, who agree that concentrated prayer can accumulate curative energies, which affect the organism in such a way that functional disturbances and anatomical defects are removed. The nuns of the Incarnation, who had left Theresa the day before as an invalid in her cell, thought it a miracle of God, when they saw her walking freely toward them.

Theresa was given back to the life of the convent, she could attend to her duties as a nun, she could take part in communal devotions, she could sing in the choir and visit the parlor. She returned, surrounded by the halo of one on whom a miracle had been performed. Everybody remembered the Palm Sunday three years ago, when Theresa, whom the doctors had pronounced dead, came back to life and was carried in a sheet through the streets of Ávila to the convent of the Incarnation. Throughout the time of her total paralysis, the whole town had taken an active interest in the pitiful fate of the incurable nun. And now she could be seen again behind the grate of the parlor, moving about like all the others, thanks to the power of prayer. A miracle had happened in the convent of the Incarnation. Every visitor could see it with his own eyes, could hear how it had all come about from the lips of Theresa herself.

It seems but natural that the whole town came streaming to the convent. They all came, relatives and friends, the faithful who wished to find confirmation of their faith, the curious, and the skeptics who hoped to unmask a pious fraud. At the gates of the Incarnation, long rows of callers were patiently waiting their turn.

The prioress was not slow in recognizing the great advantages which might accrue for the Incarnation from this unexpected turn of events. Theresa was a living example of the power of faith. The convent of the Carmelites was poor, and if God had chosen it as the scene of His miracle, He obviously meant to distinguish it by a special token of His grace. In an age when the wealthy preferred to invest their money in commerce and trade, only an extraordinary occurrence could induce them to be liberal with charitable gifts. So Theresa was encouraged and even ordered to

appear frequently in the parlor, even though it might be to the detriment of her devotional exercises. This pious calculation was correct. Theresa became a sacred exhibit, an important source of revenue for the Incarnation.

She attended to her new duties with ready obedience and even in a spirit of satisfied complacency. Yet the doubts, which, during the time of her novitiate, had been troubling her, came to the fore again too, warning her with ever increased insistence that the world was again laying a snare for her. For in the parlor she was surrounded by people who marveled only at the visible miracle of her recovery, without suspecting anything about the much greater invisible miracle of the mystic visions which could not be removed from the solitude and quiet of her cell.

Her inner experience of saintliness was forced to compete with her existence in the parlor, the indescribable, invisible mystic miracle, known to God alone, was forced to rival the describable and demonstrable miracle of her recovery. It was apparent that the mystic nun in her quiet cell would sooner or later come into conflict with the convent attraction exhibited in the parlor. It was an external factor, a devilish trick of fate, which brought the situation to a head.

The force that brought the people of Ávila ever again to the parlor of the Incarnation, attracting them with never-waning fascination, was Theresa's natural beauty, which her illness had only served to increase. Her delicate smile, in which a twenty-two-year-old girl and an angel seemed to be smiling together, her ethereal charm, and the magic of her words, in which the worldly intelligence of a human being was coupled with the supernatural experience of a soul who had tasted death, were the delights of all visitors. There was, in all this, an element of piquancy which made of the convent parlor a rendezvous of Ávila's social life with Theresa as its center.

But her beauty was not to go scot free. Who pleases will sense the pleasure of pleasing. At first Theresa had gone to the parlor in a spirit of devout obedience. But after a while she stayed there because she found it hard to resist the delight of being admired. In the parlor she was a servant of the world, not only in compliance with her vow of obedience but also for the sake of her own enjoyment. And just then the world with all its happenings, manifesta-

tions and experiences presented the sharpest contrast to what was revealed to Theresa in the seclusion of her cell. Never before had the art of conversation been so exclusively concerned with the things of the earth. Never had it been so exclusively determined by the confusion and evanescence of earthly phenomena. Hardly a day passed without surprising events. The people lived in a constant tension, and the rhythm of their talk was patterned after the tempo of their lives. At one moment the news of the discovery of a new cosmic law filled the intellect with amazed admiration, but a moment later it was the report that a ship with a cargo of gold had arrived in Seville, which excited the imagination. Now people were thrilled by a new mystic poem dealing with the passion of Christ, and immediately thereafter they were equally enthusiastic about an orange which a visitor had brought along and passed around in the parlor as a dainty curiosity. A minute ago these men and women had listened with bated breath to the most recent verdict of the Inquisition, and now they concentrated their amused interest on the latest gossip about town. Reports on adventures in distant lands, the revived problem of Platonic love and the debut of a sportive *gracioso* in some new comedy were eagerly discussed as equally fascinating topics of the day. The conversation of these men and women, just as their lives, shifted from one theme to the next, without rhyme or reason, without continuity or perseverance. The forms of social discourse which have survived to the present day were developed in the sixteenth century. It was Theresa's time which cultivated the light and easy touch and pass of superficial conversation, the quick and witty thrust and repartee, that form of dialog which was no longer meant to clarify, to edify, but merely to give and find distraction in the multifariousness of life.

Yet the spiritual prayer which Theresa practiced in her cell, demanded contemplation of God in concentration upon the one and only essence.

As Theresa's mystic visions increased in frequency, it became ever more apparent that it is not just a difference in degree which separates one whom God has chosen from one who basks in the admiration of a motley group of worldly socialites. Only a flight of stairs separated Theresa's cell from the parlor. Every day Theresa descended this flight of stairs. But from day to day, from time

to time, the distance grew. It continued to grow until it became the abyss which separates heaven from earth. In her cell Theresa sat as an angel in heaven conversing with God in silent prayer. Her descent to the parlor was the fall of an angel. As a fallen angel she listened eagerly to the news of the world and participated in the frivolous gossip in the parlor of the convent.

God did not want to lose his nun, and He was very patient. When Theresa returned to the quiet of her cell, the door which led to heaven was always open. Every time she promised herself never again to go down to the parlor. But when the convent clock struck the hour of worldliness, the nun obeyed its call.

Unwillingly and willingly, unconsciously and consciously, she was guiltless and guilty to the same degree. Her talents and temperament made her excel in conversation. She liked to ask and liked to listen. Her answers were quick and ready. She mastered the art of singling out the salient point and could tell a good story to everybody's delight. She was charming and was charmed herself. She was beloved and loved people herself. The more often she came to the parlor, the more she succumbed to the ways of the world. She had fallen a prey to the vanity of words.

When she realized to what dangers her higher aspirations had come to be exposed, she was frightened and tried to escape. But she failed miserably. "On the one hand," she writes, "God was calling me, on the other I was following the world. I wanted to combine these two opposites—spiritual life with its delights and the life of the senses with its pleasures." And when she recognized that these two opposites were not compatible with each other, she decided in favor of—the world.

Theresa who had remained steadfast in torture and pain, whom no illness had been able to deter in the pursuit of her holy ends, hoisted the flag of surrender before the vain distractions of the world. Her spiritual prayer, her communion with God, the quiet of contemplation, the mystic visions, everything the Lord had given her she now decided to sacrifice to the world.

Desperate helplessness together with pious humility were responsible for this amazing decision. "My soul," she writes, "was then so distracted by many vanities that I was ashamed to draw near unto God in any act of such special friendship as that of men-

tal prayer." Her decision was a sort of self-inflicted punishment. The saint deprived the nun of the gift of grace

Theresa abandoned the prayer of silence. God appeared no longer in her cell. His revelations were denied her. She had no more visions. She took part in communal devotion, heard the mass, sang in the choir and—conversed in the parlor. She shared the routine of everyday life of all the other nuns, but still—she was not submerged in it.

She was destined to be a saint. And destiny is a power which may take a detour but does not lose sight of its goal and moves through the darkness of night clairvoyantly toward fulfillment.

After Theresa had renounced spiritual prayer for a year and a half, her father died. At his deathbed she met the Dominican friar Vincente de Barrone. To the end he had been Don Alonso's father confessor. The trust which her deceased father had put, during his lifetime, into the experience and wisdom of his spiritual guide, was part of Theresa's heritage. At her father's bier she went up to the monk and disclosed to him the worries of her restive soul. How she had abandoned spiritual prayer, the motives that had induced her to do so, all these things she revealed and held back nothing, not even the faintest sin of thought.

It was the confession of a saint. The Dominican friar saw only a contrite Carmelite nun and failed to find in all her self-accusations the slightest trace of sin. Her visits in the parlor were in keeping with an established convention sanctioned by the "mitigated rule." Her conversations through the grate were a form of distraction which violated none of the pious rules. He reassured Theresa, absolved her from guilt by virtue of the authority vested in him by the church, and encouraged her to resume her spiritual prayer.

This good monk of Ávila, who could not see beyond the horizon of his parish, failed to grasp the conflict in Theresa's soul, and yet his advice was decisive in the further development of her sainthood.

The time which Theresa had spent without spiritual prayer she described later as the most miserable time of her life. When Barrone advised her to resume her silent communion with God, she felt greatly relieved, for during her self-imposed exile on earth she had been constantly harassed by nostalgic thoughts of heaven. Yet

the joy of her absolution by the Dominican father confessor was not to remain free from renewed torment. When she did resume her spiritual prayer, her mystic visions appeared again too, but, at the same time and almost automatically, also her former pangs of conscience. Now, when the divine happiness, which she had already given up as lost, came back to her, she became still more painfully aware of the discrepancy between parlor and cell. Vincente de Barrone, to whom the sight of God had never been revealed, could see no harm in her presence in the parlor. But she, whom God had chosen, who had communed with God in immediate contact, felt the crushing weight of the incompatibility of the two worlds. "I suffered much in prayer," she complains, "for the spirit was slave, not master, so that I was unable to withdraw into myself without at the same time enclosing within me a thousand vanities."

In her mental agony she went from one confessor to another. They all listened to her in paternal benevolence, but no one understood her, for what St. Theresa felt to be sinful, the Church had not thought of including in its lists of sins. It lay outside the scope of human laws. Her destiny caused her to be stricter than the rules of the convent, more saintly than the Church, more pious than the most pious of the pious.

"Her conscience was more sensitive than that of her confessors. It spoke the language of penitence, which only those can understand who have experienced the grace of creative concentration and know therefore about the sin against the spirit, the sin of distraction and dissipation. Men like St. Bernard, the saint of contemplation, or the mystic Master Eckart would have been able to grasp it, but also men like Newton, who confessed that he could discover the laws of gravity only because he had learned to resist all forms of diverting temptation. Theresa had to follow her road alone, not understood by even the best among the Christians of her century.

For the present, however, her intentions of renouncing the parlor, were not strong enough. Her human will and all its efforts did not suffice. She might have gone on, stumbling and rising, until, as she puts it herself, "she had fallen headlong into hell," if the prayer of quiet and mystic experience had not accomplished what the most pious exertions of will had not been able to do. Her spir-

itual strength kept growing. It grew in immediacy and vigor and came to play an ever more important part in her life, until it could finally reshape her entire existence, her whole destiny.

One day the clock of the convent was again striking the hour of the parlor. This time it called the nun Theresa even more temptingly than usual out of her cell down into the sphere of worldliness, for one, whom she cared greatly to see again, was waiting there for her. Her love of men was tainted with the weakness which marks all human love. She came to single out one "certain one" among them all and preferred him and liked his conversation best. Now, when the convent clock struck, Theresa left cell and heaven and God and hurried downstairs into the parlor where the preferred one was anxiously waiting for her to appear.

She was up to her ears engaged with him in harmless conversation, so absorbed, so forgetful of everything around her, that it came to her as a shock and took away her breath, when she suddenly perceived right next to the bodily shape of her caller the bodiless figure of Him who often came to see her in the solitude of her cell. "I was greatly astonished and perturbed," she admits. God, in the person of the Saviour, had followed her into the parlor. "Christ stood before me," she continues, "stern and grave, giving me to understand what in my conduct was offensive to Him. I saw Him with the eyes of the soul more distinctly than I could have seen Him with the eyes of the body."

The "preferred one," stricken with worldly blindness, kept up his casual chatter. Theresa answered no more. She observed in utter confusion that while her earthly caller talked on and on, her heavenly visitor persisted in silence. One caller looked at her with courting admiration, the other looked at her sternly and with his wordless reproach attracted all her attention. Theresa's eyes and ears were evermore concentrated on the silent apparition and paid no heed to the loquacious guest from town. He, "the preferred one," had been quite confident that this was the day when his irresistible charm would overcome the chastity of pretty Theresa, and now he found himself face to face with a distraught nun who did not look at him but stared into empty space, who did not answer his questions but stood there in deathlike silence, separated from him by the grate of the parlor, deeply absorbed in wordless conversation with the air, with nobody, nothing. He left,

sorely disappointed Theresa did not see him go. And when the visiting hour was over, she was still standing in back of the grate in the parlor, in empty space, rigid and motionless.

The nuns, who knew about her illness, realized that this was again one of the attacks which visited her from time to time. They carried her back to her cell and put her on her cot.

This incident lasted but an hour in the afternoon of a day in 1542, but in timeless time it measured an eternity. Theresa recovered quickly from the attack, and for a while it seemed as though the convent routine would be continued as usual.

From the beginning books had played in Theresa's life the role of guideposts on her pilgrimage to God. A book showed the girl, enmeshed in the pleasures of life, the road to the convent. A book led the nun, trapped in the motions of formal devoutness, onto the road of contemplation. A book revealed to the patient, ridden by pain, the saving road of endurance which Job had pursued. And now it was to be again a book that led her on. By accident she came across the Confessions of St. Augustine, and reading them she thought, as she expressed it later on, that she was seeing her own self. This saint, who had waveringly and heedlessly moved along on his road to God, and who had yet attained his goal, revealed to Theresa the path of her destiny.

This path led past a column in the convent cloister on which a picture was hung of the Saviour under the crown of thorns. The prioress had had it erected there in memory of the passion of the Lord, in preparation for the approaching Easter procession. In the ranks of the one hundred and eighty Carmelites of the Incarnation on their way to mass, marched the nun Theresa. When the procession reached the column, the nuns looked in pious emotion at the suffering Son of God and made the sign of the cross. But contrary to plans, they had to stop, for one of the nuns, Teresa de Cepeda, fell out of line, broke down on her knees in front of the image and burst into desperate sobs. The sisters tried to calm her and to lead her back to her place in the procession. But Theresa was in the fullest sense of the word "beside herself." She saw what none of the other nuns could see. In place of the image she saw the Redeemer Himself in all His divinity. A few steps away from her He suffered the martyr's death for the salvation of mankind.

The nun Theresa, kneeling before the Lord, wept over her daily betrayal of Him who had taken upon Himself the suffering of all men. Shame, self-accusation and repentance burst forth in a stream of tears. "The very sight," she writes, "so moved me that my heart was breaking. How ill had I repaid these wounds!"

The other nuns saw in this incident only a morbid fit, and that the procession might go on, the saint was led away.

Almost all, who followed the road to God, had to pass through the "dark gate of penitence." St. Augustine, just like Theresa, burst into violent sobs when he crossed its threshold.

To the mystic, repentance is a second birth into a higher world. As the infant greets the light of this world with weeping, so those, who are reborn in the spirit, greet with tears the light of the heavenly world.

The nun Theresa, reborn in repentance, knelt one morning in the year 1558 together with the other nuns, absorbed in prayer, in the chapel of the Incarnation. The nuns intoned the hymn *Veni Creator*. Together with them Theresa sang "Veni Creator, come Creator Spirit." But in her the voice of repentance was singing. The Creator, who hears everything, heard the song of the nuns. He heard their voices and among them the voice of Theresa. But in Theresa's voice he heard also her penitent prayer. Through eons and eternities he heard her call and answered it and came down into time, down to the earth, to the little chapel of the convent of the Incarnation at Ávila. He freed Theresa's soul from her body, led it away from the chapel, away from time, up to its home in the kingdom of heaven and had it look down from there upon life on earth. How futile it looked! Futile the earth and life in time and space, and doubly futile the parlor of the Incarnation! And as Theresa's soul looked down from such angelic heights on the things of the world, she heard a voice that said "I will not have you converse with men but with angels!"

Although Theresa's body with all its natural functions and all its organs and senses had remained here below while her soul was raised into heaven, she not only heard these words more distinctly than ever a bodily ear can hear what is said, she also saw and recognized more unmistakably than ever a bodily eye or physical

perception are able to do, that it was the Lord Himself who spoke to her

—As long as her soul was bound to her material body, she was subject to human weakness and human ambiguities. But now, when the soul was freed from the body, the bondage of matter and with it material weakness had vanished. The Lord Himself had granted her guidance, as none of his servants on earth, no priest, no father confessor, had been able to do, however much she was in need of it. In that moment of ecstasy Theresa's destiny was fulfilled.

—Then her soul returned to its body. Theresa returned to space and time, to the convent chapel in Avila, to the morning of a day in the year 1558, and all her senses were given back to her. Only one thing the Lord had retained in heaven: her will. But this will in heaven continued to be active in her on earth. "From that day," she wrote, "my resolution to give up everything for His sake became unshakable." She had overcome her worldly leanings. She herself divided her life in two periods, her own life and her life of God, which was to begin now. It began in martyrdom. And the Church, enmeshed in the things of the earth, marked out her Via Dolorosa.

Filled with exuberant joy Theresa hastened to her confessor, Fray Gaspar Daza. She had just seen the Lord of the Church, had seen Him and heard Him, more really and more truly than anything in the world. But the confessor looked at her suspiciously and said sternly: "The devil has deceived your senses." And with all the authority of his office as God's vicar on earth, he admonished Theresa to resist henceforth such "visitations."

The pious nun tried to obey. But God was stronger than Daza's command. The next time she appeared at the confessional she had to admit, quite intimidated and fearful: "He has come again." Amazed and terrified by the obstinacy of the devil, who had chosen to settle down in a nun of his own parish, Daza refused indignantly to lend his pious ear ever again to this victim of hellish wiles.

The venerable priest, Fray Gaspar Daza, was a conscientious officer of the church and liked to keep order in his spiritual affairs. To his way of thinking God's revelations had been settled once and for all by the Church Fathers at their councils, and the church had fulfilled them in its creed and doctrine. That God should sud-

denly overthrow this neatly ordered tradition and come out with an irregular extra revelation, that He should choose for this purpose a Carmelite nun who often fell victim to morbid attacks, seemed more than doubtful to him. The whole thing looked much rather like a decoy stunt perpetrated by the devil in his endeavor to compromise the faith.

The refusal of the distinguished pastor to receive Theresa at the confessional entailed grave consequences. Most of the sisters and many of her former friends drew away from her. Used to being courted, she was shunned now, and only a very few remained faithful to her. She would doubtless have become involved with the Inquisition, if it had not been for the fact that at this time the militant disciples of Ignatius of Loyola came to Avila, where they settled down at the monastery of San Gil and took Theresa under their protection.

The Society of Jesus was imbued with an entirely new spirit, and the Jesuit confessors were experts in psychological understanding and guidance. Ignatius, the founder of their order, who at Manresa had at times had visions himself, had taught them that visions are by no means the privilege of chosen saints of past ages, but that God may choose to grant them to anyone, at any time. But Ignatius, who had experienced visions of Christ just like Theresa, had also at times been deceived by devilish tricks, and in order to distinguish truth from deception, he had devised a whole system of controls which he put down in his *Spiritual Exercises*. To those who knew how to apply these exercises correctly, they constituted a most reliable testing device.

The Jesuit fathers approached Theresa without fear or prejudice. That she was a contemporary and just an ailing human being, did not mean for them that God could not possibly have appeared to her in the person of the Redeemer, and whether her visions were of God or the devil would be established by relevant tests.

Padre Diego de Cevallos, Padre Juan de Padranos, one Jesuit father after another had Theresa go through the exercises and devised ever new control experiments. The zeal of the venerable fathers was increased by the benevolent interest which the new general of the order, Francis de Borgia, formerly Duke of Candia, had shown in the visions of the Carmelite nun. For him, who had also been granted many a token of divine grace, one conversation

with Theresa was enough to convince him of the truth and divinity of her visions.

The old-established representatives of the church watched meanwhile suspiciously what the Jesuit newcomers were doing. They even induced the prioress of the Incarnation to refuse the Jesuit confessors access to the convent. But then a well-known and wealthy lady, Doña Guiomir de Ulloa, a devoted friend of Theresa's as well as a liberal benefactress of the Incarnation, intervened and obtained permission to take Theresa for a while to her home, where the Jesuits were free to come and go as they pleased.

At this time Padre Baltasar Alvarez took over Theresa's spiritual guidance. His task was to complete the investigations of her unusual case. He was only twenty-four years old and had but recently been ordained. In spite of his youth he was the pride of the Castilian province of his order, mainly because of his extraordinary learning, his perspicacity and his unrelenting austerity.

Theresa suffered greatly under him, and groaningly she submitted to the mortifications he imposed upon her. This young man was so exacting in his questions and demands, that the feeble middle-aged nun found it hard to keep up with him. "He ordered the affairs of my soul and disquieted me much," she wrote later on. "Yet it was he, who did me the most good." And then she added with that characteristic humor of hers, "I love this father very much, although he has a bad disposition."

At this time Theresa was overwhelmed by visions. Once the resurrected Christ appeared to her in His sacrosanct humanity in unspeakable beauty and majesty, then again He came invisibly so that not even the inner eye could see Him while yet Theresa knew about his presence with unmistakable assurance. At times she saw the Trinity, then again a host of angels. One vision followed another, and after a while they came no longer sporadically but in coherent succession. Often she lived for days and weeks in a visionary trance. She felt at home in the world beyond as others do here below, and the events over there occurred for her with as much reality as for us the events of the earth.

When she gave Alvarez such heavenly reports, he was carried away and had to remind himself that he must not forget his duties as an examiner. From the beginning he had had faith in the divinity

ity of her visions, but since he was expected to supply proofs, he thought of ever-new ways of putting her to the test

In order to exclude even the slightest possibility of deception, he extended the exercises to her spiritual life. He took away from her every kind of edifying book, for he wanted to be sure that her visions were not just the product of her imagination which such reading matter might stimulate. During these spiritual fasts Theresa suffered agonies of want and privation. But then, one day, the Lord appeared and said "Do not grieve, my daughter. I will give you a living book."

To tighten the spiritual discipline still further, Alvarez went so far as to forbid Theresa's spiritual prayers. Then the Lord appeared again and said in an angry tone of voice "This is certainly tyranny!"

These last two visions influenced Alvarez to such an extent that he decided to conclude his exhaustive investigations. But just at that moment the scandal broke loose in Avila. Theresa's visions had become the talk of the town, and the whole place was divided into two camps. The ones saw in Theresa a saint, the others—and they were the majority—an impostor who deceived her confessor and should be tried by the Inquisition. Her adversaries went so far as to compare her to Magdalena de la Cruz, that notorious "visionary of Cordoba," by whom even the Grand Inquisitor and the queen had been duped and who finally, unmasked as a swindler, had stood before her judges in wretched misery with a rope around her neck and a candle in her hands.

When Theresa came again to the confessional, speaking of a vision in which the Lord had appeared to her in a formless form, Alvarez looked at her distrustfully. In a formless form? The gossip about town, the warning case of Magdalena de la Cruz, the threatening shadow of the Inquisition, all these things made him stop, and more severely than ever he took Theresa to task.

"How do you know that it was He, since you did not see Him?" he asked curtly.

"I do not know how. All I can say with certainty is the fact that I did see the Lord near me."

"But how did He reveal Himself?"

"It was no sensory vision and I saw no form. I saw nothing with

the eyes of my body I saw nothing with the eyes of my soul. But I felt His presence at my side "

"If you saw Him neither with your eyes of the body nor with your eyes of the soul, how then can you maintain that it was He? Who told you?"

"He Himself did," she said "But even before He let me know, it was impressed upon my soul with much greater assurance than perception by the senses could have supplied "

"How did you hear His words?" Alvarez asked

"I heard no words It was some other means by which the Lord conveyed His thoughts to me But it was all much clearer to me than a spoken word could ever have been I understood very deep mysteries about the truth which is Truth Itself It has neither beginning nor end O my Lord, what difference there is between hearing these words and comprehending their significance in such a way! I comprehended it all although my words are obscure compared with so much clarity "

Alvarez was utterly confused. He was ready to believe Theresa, but her story was hard to grasp, even for one whose reason was rooted in faith

The venerable representatives of the church with Daza at their head came to Alvarez and insisted, "She is deceiving you! She is deceiving you!"

He called Theresa and asked her, "Do you really believe the things you have told me or have you told them only to deceive me?"

She replied "I have said nothing but the truth "

Before letting her go, Alvarez warned her again "Think twice! Is it really as you have told me or have you allowed yourself to be deceived by chimerical fancies? Probe yourself! You owe it to our holy faith "

Obediently Theresa searched her soul But after a while the formless form appeared to her in a vision and spoke "Be not troubled, my daughter, it is I "

She went and confessed "The Lord has confirmed it "

Alvarez buried himself in learned books and writings He read every authoritative account of visions he could find. He read for days and nights and the books kept piling up on his desk. Once a fellow Jesuit asked him why he had to work through all this ma-

renial and he replied angrily "I must read all these books, because I want to understand the Carmelite nun Theresa." Finally his efforts were rewarded In the Summa Theologiae of St Thomas Aquinas he came across a passage presenting in extremely learned terms an account of visions which are not perceived through the senses but in *species impressa*, by immediate conception through the intellect. He learned that in such intellectual visions and locutions the revelation of the Lord is given, without sensory mediation, into the power of understanding. The Doctor Angelicus called this type of vision even more reliable than any other because the exclusion of the senses excluded also every kind of self-deception. So there were divine visions of the kind Theresa said she had had! His reliance on her truthfulness was justified.

But the pack of doubters did not relent. Now they even insisted that Theresa should be exorcised. Alvarez, however, would not be intimidated. Encouraged by his newly acquired knowledge he set himself up as Theresa's defender. But whether it was merely a coincidence or whether the devil had really a hand in it, just when Alvarez was ready to come out in public with his pleadings on behalf of Theresa, he was sent away on a tour of inspection and a locum tenens took his place.

Now the long-awaited moment for Daza and his group had come. It could not be difficult to intimidate the deputy confessor. On the strength of their rank in the hierarchy of the church they came to him with the demand that he should exorcise the obsessed nun and cast out her devilish hallucinations. Yielding to their pressure the deputy confessor had recourse to a most brutal means. He ordered Theresa to ward off the next apparition by a disdainful and spurning gesture. "Give it the fig!" he said. "If it is the devil, he may take it as an expression of your contempt, and if it is the Lord, He will not hold it against you, for you are merely obeying an order which I have given you to protect our holy faith."

With great qualms Theresa obeyed. "This business of giving the fig," she relates, "caused me the greatest sorrow, for my next vision was one of the suffering Lord. When I saw Him present before me, I could not believe, if they cut me to pieces, that it was the devil, and so it was a heavy penance for me. I begged Him to pardon me, since I did it to obey the one He had put in His place. He

told me not to worry about it, since He would make the Truth understood ”

When Álvarez returned to Ávila, the whole town was in a ferment over Theresa's visions. Her last remaining friends, with the exception of Doña Guiomir, had deserted her. And the scandal had gone beyond the walls of Ávila. All of Spain was discussing Theresa's visions, and in its excitement the public demanded ever more insistently that the case of the Carmelite visionary be investigated by the Inquisition.

Only a few steps away from San Gil, which was now occupied by the Jesuits, stood the Dominican monastery of San Tomas, where the body of the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada lay entombed. The spirit of this man, who had died but a generation ago, was still terrifyingly alive. The machinery of the Inquisition continued to function with swiftness and precision. Everywhere in Spain the pyres were blazing on which heretics and witches were purged by death in the flames.

Those who wanted to see Theresa delivered into the hands of the Inquisition, began to mention the name of Alvarez in connection with hers. Then even he, her last spiritual support, became uncertain, and she feared, as she puts it, that she would have no one to hear her confession, but that everyone would flee from her. "I did nothing but weep," she adds. Yet in the midst of this general turmoil the Lord appeared to her and said "Be not afraid, my daughter. I shall not abandon you."

Theresa knew with absolute certainty that it was the Lord who appeared to her, yet—all the world suspected her. She spoke nothing but the truth, yet—they called her a liar. She saw the Redeemer face to face, Him for whom the bells tolled, for whom the masses were celebrated, whom all of Christendom beseeched in pious prayer, yet—the reverend priests of the church persecuted her, called Him, who appeared to her, the devil, and wanted to drag her before the judges of the Inquisition. Her father confessor heard the confession of her soul, but he did not trust her. How could he fail to understand that the words she transmitted to him had been given her by the One who had ordained him? She had seen the Saviour and brought His message to the Christian world, but the Christian world did not want to listen.

Her human mind could never have grasped all this, it would have had to break down. Her human heart could never have borne all the undeserved pain, it would have had to despair. But Theresa was one of the elect. Her decisions were made in heaven, her knowledge came to her by revelation, her strength was won in ecstasy, her grief was snared by the Lord.

When heaven came down to earth in her visions, when the Lord spoke to her in His revelation, the deep significance of all her suffering became apparent. It was transfigured into heavenly bliss. One day, when she could hardly bear it any longer, it came to pass, while she was kneeling in prayer in Doña Guionir's home, that an angel appeared to her at her side. "I saw him," she writes, "close by in bodily form, on my left hand. He was short of stature but exceedingly beautiful. By his burning countenance I knew him for one of those spirits of the highest rank, who seem to be wholly fire. They must be those whom we call Cherubim. I saw in his hand a long dart of gold, and at the end of the iron there seemed to be a little fire. Thus, I thought, he thrust through my heart several times so that it reached my very entrails. So real was the pain that I was forced to moan aloud, yet it was so surpassingly sweet that I could not wish to be delivered from it. No delight of life can give more content. As the angel withdrew the dart, he left me all burning with a great love of God. So dazed was I with this pain and glory together, that I could not understand how it could be. Yet it is such a delightful language of love that passed then between my soul and God that I beg of His goodness that He may give the enjoyment of it to him who may think I lie."

She did not dare to speak about it to Alvarez, for the splendor of it was too dear to her heart to expose it to doubt and distrust. For days she was totally absorbed by this experience, she spoke to no one and avoided all contact with men. But the pent-up bliss demanded expression and found it in one of her most tenderly fervent poems:

In the very depth of my being
I have been stricken and, oh,
The hand was surely Divine,
Such marvels followed the blow

Though the dart has wounded me sore,
 Though the wound be even to death,
 With a pain beyond any on earth,
 Yet this wound alone gives me breath!

It kills,—how then does it give life?
 It gives life,—how can it destroy?
 How, while wounding, still heal, leaving thee
 Closest union with God to enjoy?

Divine skill must belong to the Hand,
 Whose lance in a combat so dire,
 Passes through, yet gives life to the foe,
 Whom it bends to the Victor's desire

Meanwhile Theresa's concerns on earth had not taken a turn for the better. All the world was against her, but the grace of Heaven was with her. Just when the turmoil at Avila had reached its peak and all were clamoring with one voice, "Take her to the Inquisition! To the Inquisition!" the vociferating voices were suddenly silenced by an unexpected event. Fray Pedro de Alcántara, the town crier of the Lord, had come to Avila, and everybody was streaming to the market place where the emaciated ascetic, bare-footed, a living skeleton clothed in sackcloth, was addressing the crowd. Alcántara was famous throughout Spain, for it was said that in him St. Francis had come back to life. Just like St. Francis he walked through the woods and praised in joyful songs the glories of God's creation. And so deeply was he imbued with the spirit of St. Francis that he had set himself the task of reforming the failing Franciscan order. He had founded several monasteries in which the Franciscan monks were living again as humble servants of their Lady Poverty.

The crowds claimed the attention of the holy man all for themselves, but it seemed that he had come to Avila only to see the one Teresa de Cepeda. When he came face to face with her for the first time, it was as though they had known one another all along. They welcomed each other as citizens of the City of God and conversed with each other in the native tongue of heaven.

Theresa had found her knight. Alcántara shielded her against all attacks and defended her truthfulness. His first victory was a triumph won over the doubts in the mind of Father Alvarez, and

with him many friends, who had fallen away, came back to Theresa. But Alcántara made also new friends for her, among them Fray Pedro de Ibañez, the prior of the Dominican monastery of San Tomás, and Gaspar De Salazar, the rector of San Gil, the new home of the Jesuits. Finally Alcántara's protestations succeeded even in convincing Theresa's archenemy, the distrustful Daza, of the divinity of her visions.

When many of her adversaries persisted in their campaign of calumnies, the moment had come for God to fulfill His promise. "I shall make the truth understood!" had been the wordless words of the invisible vision, and now it was to become audibly and visibly true.

History relates that one day—it was a holiday and many had come to attend mass—Theresa was kneeling before the altar, when she was suddenly carried away in ecstatic raptures. Before the eyes of all present, the kneeling nun hovered above the ground. Her face, the story adds, was transfigured in such supernatural beauty that all were seized in awe and veneration.

At this time the Inquisition was still the domain of the Dominicans. Pedro de Ibañez, the prior of St. Thomas, who was well-acquainted with the proceedings of the Inquisition, advised Theresa to forestall action against her by putting her case up to the Inquisition herself, submitting a written account of her life and her visions. Thus the first version of Theresa's famous *Vida* came to be written.

Ibañez' advice was good. The examiners of the Inquisition studied the deposition of the Carmelite nun with conscientious distrust, scrutinizing it for the most hidden trace of heresy or deceit. But all their prejudiced pedantry could not detect enough evidence to justify proceedings against her. To be entirely on the safe side, they submitted the document for inspection to the Dominican Banes, who was feared for his inexorable strictness. He read it with a trained eye and recognized in it proof of divine revelation. Instead of the expected verdict of guilty, the Holy Office issued a brief of recommendation, in which it was stated that the reading of Theresa's *Vida* would serve to strengthen the faith and to edify the faithful.

The town of Avila, the Christian church and the world at large

might have decided to tolerate and accept the visionary nun. Theresa might have settled down to live in the quiet of her cell, unmolested and fully absorbed by her divine visions. But just as the girl Theresa, upon entering the convent, had not been destined to live the normal life of an average nun, so the visionary Carmelite, in the grace of God, was not destined to lead a life fully contained in mystic contemplation. It was her mission, to know the heavens, be at home among angels, and, at the same time, live on earth and act among men. The last twenty years of her life show us a practical and active woman, untiringly engaged in the reform of her order, and founding, within this period of time, seventeen new convents. Her practical work in the world and her contemplative life, however, must not be taken as two unrelated sides of her nature. In her all was one and of a piece. As her illness and her visions sprang from the same source, so her contemplation and her active life had one and the same origin. Her labors in the world endeavored to build the house of silence and were thus concerned with leading the order of the Carmelites back to the road of its original destination.

To provide silence with a home on earth, the first Carmelite house had been erected on lonely Mount Carmel. When the Carmelite hermits migrated west, they brought with them on their lips and in their hearts the silence of Lebanon, and their first monasteries in Europe were built after the model of Eastern retreats from the world. Since then centuries had gone by, and the homes of contemplation of the old Carmelites had become centers of social life for nuns and monks.

Theresa's plan for monastic reforms had its roots in direct personal experience. She had spent three years outside the walls of the convent. In the home of her pious friend Doña Guomir she had enjoyed the privilege of perfect seclusion, which made it possible for her to be ready, any hour, day or night, for meditation, vision or devotional exercise. During this time she lived in an almost uninterrupted mystical union with God. Now her leave had come to an end, and she returned from the world to her convent. A group of noisy nuns received her. She withdrew to her cell to contemplate God. But the convent bell rang. The hour of the parlor had come. Theresa wanted to remain in her cell. But the

nuns came to call for her. In the parlor visitors were waiting. In front of her, set off by the token bars of a flimsy grate, was the bustle of worldly life, were gossip and trinkets, flattery and gifts. She felt she was roasted on the grates of worldliness. She tried to escape, but in vain. The world was part of the daily routine of the convent. Again and again contemplation was interrupted by idle diversions, humility was misled by vanity, poverty by gifts.

As long as she herself had been a victim of these temptations, her desperate struggles had been merely concerned with her own salvation. She had been weak and had seen nothing beyond her own weakness. She had been guilty and had not looked beyond her guilt. But now she had overcome the dangers of worldliness in her own soul and recognized the greater guilt beyond her individual guilt, the guilt of the secularized convent, of the mitigated rule of the Carmelite order, which tried to please God and the world at the same time.

"Oh what utter ruin!" she exclaimed. "What utter ruin of religious persons, where the same monastery offers two roads, one of virtue and observance, the other of unobservance, and both equally frequented. The poor things are not at fault, for they walk in the way that is shown them. Many of them are to be pitied."

But were the "poor things" of the Incarnation the only ones to be pitied? In all the Carmelite convents and monasteries of the mitigated rule, the souls of nuns and monks were confused by the two roads. Theresa herself had risen above the dangers of such temptation. But she was not one of those who are smugly satisfied with the salvation of their own souls. To have been saved implied for her the duty of trying to save others. God had given Himself to her in secret, so that she might give herself openly to others. On silence was built the house of the Lord, which she had been made to see in her ecstasies, so that she might build it again on earth to help her sisters. In silence she had found the way of redemption, she had been led to find it so that she might be able to show it to others.

If her plan had sprung exclusively from practical considerations, she would have had to abandon it at the very first thought. Here she was, a nun, who had nothing to her name but the clothes she was wearing, and decided to found a convent, quite aware of the fact that it was a venture which called for considerable financial

backing. A visionary, at home in another world, took up the struggle with hard realities, with cunning men, with jealous nuns, intriguing churchmen, with all the caprices, the thoughtlessness and inconstancy of the world. An ailing creature, who had spent the greater part of her life on the sickbed, who had now reached the age of fifty-seven, took on a burden of work, the strain of which might well have taxed the strength of a youthful person in the pink of health. A woman of sixteenth-century Spain, living at an age and in a country whose traditions and conventions excluded women from participation in all public activities, chose a task, which would bring her into the limelight of public attention. The child of an era, which had given itself up to worldliness, undertook a work, which ran counter to the most powerful trend of the times. A nun of the Carmelite order of the mitigated rule was bold enough to break with monastic forms which, since their initiation through Pope Eusebius a century ago, had established themselves as consecrated customs. And all this she did without breaking her vow of absolute obedience.

In the end her passionate wish to succeed won out against all odds. The capital needed was suddenly at hand, unsolicited and as a matter of course, as though it had just been waiting for a chance to be of service to her. Her ailing body proved equal to all hardships, as though the strain of a busy life and the infirmities of age could not harm it, because it had been steeled by the "little deaths" through which it had passed. Untiringly she traveled in her springless cart, on wretched roads, in all directions through the Spanish countryside. She bartered and bargained, complained and protested, arranged and organized, and in the midst of all hazards, the aging woman preserved the smiling courage, the cheerful heart of a girl who takes delight in the prospect of adventure, the challenge of adversities.

She who felt at home in heaven proved to know her way about on earth. The visionary, fighting for her foundation, developed amazing skill in dealing with business men and traders, and none of the intricacies of bills of sale and financial calculations could ever be too much for her. In her negotiations she was an astute diplomat and mastered the art of making friends of adversaries, helpers of persecutors. She had a way of reducing pride to humility, of catching the shrewd in their own stratagems, of turning accusations against the accuser. The keenness of her mind caused a dignitary

of the church, who had entered upon a theological discussion with her, to exclaim in despair "Great God, I would rather argue with all the theologians in the world than with this woman!" And a priest, to whom she had come with a letter of introduction, wrote after her visit to his correspondent "You spoke in your letter of a nun, but you have sent me a bearded man!"

The genius of this holy woman overcame all difficulties, all the confusion and all the treachery of the world. In the end, Spain, the country where women were considered incapable of greatness, prided itself with having given to the world, in the person of Theresa, one of the greatest women of all times, and the church, which had opposed her aspirations, canceled for her sake a papal decree, abandoned old-established customs, and received her, primarily on account of her reform of the Carmelite order, into the community of the saints.

Theresa's career as a reformer, which progressed through risks, adventures and dramatic complications, began as a peaceful convent idyl. In the course of a casual conversation, her long dreamed-of ideal appeared suddenly within range of possible realization. After a holiday mass, which had been read in the chapel of the Incarnation, Theresa returned to her cell with a few fellow nuns and a niece of hers, María de Ocampo, who had come for a visit, and spoke to them about the celebration they had just witnessed. The concert-hall style of music and all the pomp and display, she felt, were made to appeal to worldly guests rather than to God, and the mass as a whole was much more of a public performance than a devotional exercise. The folly of it all deepened her longing for a home of quiet and devotion, undisturbed by the worldly bustle of intruding guests, a home of the kind the founders of her order had had on Mt. Carmel. Now she discussed these things with her friends. But what she said was formulated only as the vague wish of a devout nun. Then Theresa's niece interrupted her in her reveries with the question why such a home could not be established. "Mainly," Theresa replied, "because we have not the means." But that María could not accept as a valid excuse, and with the quick and ready enthusiasm of youth she offered her heritage as the initial capital for the foundation.

The moment the dream struck root in earthly realities, the

dreamer proved that she could stand firmly with both feet on solid ground. To carry out her plan she needed, in addition to the initial capital, the consent of the provincial of the order. She lacked all worldly experience, but suddenly she knew her way about in the affairs of the world. Protection smoothes the way to success. And so she started out by seeking, in pursuit of a well-thought-out plan, the endorsement of three men whom she knew to be favorably inclined toward her and who, respectively, were representatives of three of the most influential monastic orders: St. Alcántara, the Franciscan, St. Francisco de Borgia, the general of the Jesuits, and Fray Luis de Bertran, the famous Dominican. When letters of recommendation from these men had arrived, she asked Doña Guomir to take them to the provincial of the Carmelites and to ask him for his dispensation. In Doña Guomir Theresa had made an excellent choice. She was a generally respected widow, who liked to have a hand in the mediation of holy affairs, and had made a name for herself as a liberal benefactress of the Carmelite order. The provincial, Angel de Salazar, facing this noble lady and seeing the letters of recommendation spread out before him, could not very well withhold his consent, for the petition was a pious one and the funds were at hand.

Now Theresa could begin to look for a house. She found what seemed to her well suited for the purpose she had in mind and proceeded to draw up the bill of sale. Only the signatures remained to be affixed. Then the storm at the Incarnation broke loose. "What dreadful treachery!" exclaimed the prioress when she heard of Theresa's plans for a rival foundation. "That arrogant little fool!" the nuns chimed in. "This convent of ours is not good enough for her, she thinks."

Soon the excitement of the convent affected all of Ávila. Amongst the townspeople the nuns found ready allies in their wrath. "A nun trying to draw up bills of sale! Let her stay in the convent where she belongs," jeered the men. And the women added, "As for that patroness of hers, that Doña Guomir, she had better take care of her orphaned children!" The whole town was in a rage.

When the prioress went to remonstrate with the provincial, her protests were supported by a delegation of vociferating burghers. Under the pressure of public opinion Salazar withdrew his

consent, using a technicality as a pretext. He had overlooked, he said, that the available funds were not at all sufficient to support the new convent after it had been founded.

Theresa was disappointed but not discouraged. The provincial had not the last word in the matter. Above him, at the head of the entire hierarchy of the Church, was the Holy Father in Rome, and a papal dispensation would overrule any decision of a provincial. This nun, who looked out at the world from the secluded safety of her cell, was amazingly shrewd in her understanding of practical matters and knew immediately of a way of bringing her problem to the attention of Rome. She enlisted the help of Fray Pedro de Ibañez, the prior of the Dominican monastery of St. Thomas. Ibañez had not deserted her when all of Avila had suspected her visions. Ibañez would help her now to realize her plans for a home of truly Christian devotion. The Dominican order was the most reliable support of Roman power in Spain. And then there was the personal reputation which Ibañez, one of the most eminent Thomists of his time, enjoyed at the Papal See. A suggestion from him was sure to be favorably received by the Holy Father.

The Carmelite provincial sensed new complications when he heard about the frequent visits which the Dominican prior paid to Theresa, the black sheep among his nuns. He could not object openly to the interest which so high-ranking a churchman took in Theresa's ideas, but he ought to be able to think of a move, which would quietly eliminate the Dominican's unwelcome interference. He was an absolute master within his domain, and if he chose to do so, he could simply remove the embarrassing nun from the scene. It did not take him long to find a satisfactory pretext.

In Toledo the Duke de la Cerda had just died. His wife Luise, of the ducal house of Medina Celli, was so overwhelmed with grief that no one in her environment could console her. Her relatives were looking throughout the land for a person able to revive and comfort her. Suddenly it seemed to the provincial that the unbearable grief of the noble and wealthy lady could no longer be tolerated by the Christian world. To relieve her sorrow was the most urgent need of the hour. Now it was a remarkable coincidence that the convent of the Incarnation, which stood under his rule, had a nun whom God visited in her visions and whom many considered a saint. This was surely the person best suited as a companion

for the noble lady, who was fastidious in her tastes and would not have thought of receiving an ordinary nun. Luise de la Cerda and all her ducal relatives deigned to be most graciously enthusiastic about the generous offer of the Carmelite provincial and were impatiently waiting for the arrival of the visionary. It was in the middle of winter, shortly before Christmas, the roads were impassable and covered with snow and ice. But the duchess was impatient, and the provincial could not wish to prolong the sorrow of so great a lady. Theresa had to leave immediately for Toledo.

Her whole heart was in her projected foundation, whose prospects of realization had grown brighter again through Ibañez' support. All her thoughts were concerned with the question of how she could build her own convent in accordance with the rules of silence and evangelical poverty. But here she went jogging along in her squeaky little cart, on dangerously ice-bound roads, through howling storms, over desolate passes, across the frozen Adaja, was impeded by mountains of snow, and finally, after four days of terrible hardships, arrived in Toledo at the residence of the duchess.

Well-groomed footmen helped her out of her wretched little cart and vied with each other for the privilege of carrying her miserable little box, which contained all her possessions, up into the ducal mansion. Theresa herself was escorted inside with due ceremonies and was taken to the room where the duchess, exhausted by grief, received her in bed. There she lay, surrounded by her deeply concerned relatives who watched anxiously every twitch in her face, every sigh from her lips.

After these introductory ceremonies Theresa was taken to a suite of rooms which was to be henceforth her apartment. In her heart the ideal of a modest convent cell with bare walls, she found herself condemned to live amidst the luxuries of a ducal palace. Imbued with the spirit of Christian humility and the desire to serve, she saw herself persecuted by servile lackeys whose sole duty it was to wait for her orders. She, who required merely a hard crust of bread, had to take part in festive banquets and eat at tables which bent under the burden of food and drink.

The duchess treated her with condescending charm. She read every wish from her eyes and fulfilled even her weird desire for frugal meals and a certain amount of solitude. She allowed her to live in one little room and excused her from all excessive etiquette.

Yet Theresa felt like a prisoner in the midst of all this lavish pomp. With her characteristic keenness of observation she summarized her impressions in these terms "I saw," she said, "how little the power of nobility ought to be esteemed, and how, the greater it is, the more cares and troubles they have,—care to keep the etiquette suitable to their estate, which does not allow them to live or to eat without a fixed time or plan, for everything has to go according to their position and not to their constitutions, many times they have to eat food suitable to their position but not to their taste . . . This is a subjection, and one of the lies the world tells is to call such persons lords and ladies, for to me they seem only slaves of a thousand things"

Theresa rejoiced like a freed woman, when her six months of comforting service were over and when, released from the palace, she traveled again in her springless, squeaky little cart over the roads of Spain, which were now covered with dust and scorched by the sun. For these roads were taking her back to Ávila.

Six months seemed to have been lost, but the stratagem of the provincial had not succeeded in weaning her from her plan. On the contrary, her sojourn in the Toledo palace had only increased her determination. The experience of grotesque riches had demonstrated to her only the more poignantly that the true life in God is possible only in frugal poverty and humble devotion. This excursion into wealth had taught her to appreciate the true freedom which voluntary poverty can bestow. What she has to say on this score shows her deep insight and great wisdom. "Poverty," she writes, "is a strong wall. It is a wealth which includes all the wealth of the world, it is complete possession and dominion. What are kings and lords to me if I do not envy them their riches? True poverty, undertaken for the sake of God, bears with it a certain dignity, in that he who professes it, need seek to please no one but Him, and there is no doubt that the man who asks no help has many friends. If poverty is real, it guards purity and all the other virtues better than fine buildings."

Theresa's return to Ávila coincided with the arrival of a letter from Rome. It brought the reply of the Holy Father and was a papal bull in which Pius IV gave his permission for Theresa's convent

Theresa's joy was premature. Cardinal de San Angelo, who had drafted the dispensation in the name of the pope, had inadvertently failed to specify under what jurisdiction the new convent should be placed within the organization of the church. Thus the papal dispensation remained legally invalid until a definite decision could be obtained from Rome as to whether the foundation was to be placed under the protection of the Carmelite order or of the bishop of Ávila.

During the interval Theresa was not idle. Without leaving her cell, she proceeded with the energy of a "bearded man" to make all the necessary arrangements, so that, when the reply from Rome arrived, the consecration of her convent would suffer no further delay. She had learned her lesson from the furor she had caused among the good burghers of Ávila when she, a woman and nun, had dared to buy a house. This time she conducted the negotiations through the agency of her brother-in-law Juan de Ovalle. He had a home in the country, he was entirely unknown in Ávila, and if he bought a house and managed it for Theresa until she was ready to have it consecrated as her convent, he could easily do so, without arousing suspicion, under the pretext that he and his family wanted to move to the city.

But in spite of Theresa's circumspection there remained a good many difficulties that had to be overcome. The house which Juan had bought proved to be in need of alterations. The funds supplied by Theresa's niece had been used up in the purchase, and nobody wanted to bring upon himself the wrath of the entire town by lending his financial support to Theresa's venture. The papal bull arrived with the requested specification and designated the bishop of Ávila as the protector of the new foundation. But the bishop, fearful of the reaction of his town, shifted for subterfuges. Ibañez, who tried to obtain from him a definite commitment, got nowhere, and when Alcántara, from his deathbed, asked for an audience, the bishop fell conveniently ill and withdrew for a rest to his country estate of El Tiemblo.

It began to look as though everybody and everything were conspiring against Theresa's plan, when suddenly things took a turn for the better. A cargo of gold arrived in Seville, and the ship that carried it brought also a small amount of gold for Theresa from her brother Lorenzo in Peru. It was just enough to finance the

necessary alterations Juan de Ovalle's wife had to go to Alba for urgent family reasons. After she had gone, Juan fell seriously ill, and Theresa, who had to nurse him, was given permission to stay away from the convent. Thus she was in a position to direct and supervise the alteration of her house without attracting notice.

Alcántara, on the verge of death, gathered together his remaining strength, climbed on his mule and followed the bishop, who had run away from him, to his retreat in the country. One morning, when the bishop looked out of his window, he saw to his great dismay a skeleton wrapped in sackcloth approaching on the back of a mule. It was Alcántara. This man, who was imbued with the spirit of reform, who himself had initiated the reform of the Franciscan order, regarded the reintroduction of the primitive rule of the Carmelites as an undertaking the support of which was important enough to be the last great task of his life.

His glowing enthusiasm, coupled with the established reputation of his powerful personality, induced the bishop to promise finally that he would forthwith return to Avila and discuss the matter there with Theresa. After his first conversation with her, the bishop tried no longer to resist the persuasive power of her argument and agreed to place the new convent under his protection.

The consent of the bishop put merely the stamp of official sanction on a plan of reform, worked out by Theresa to the last detail and conceived by her to give to the world the example of a truly God-fearing community. With remarkable circumspection she had thought of all contingencies and worked out a system of defense in depth, which no worldly temptation could pierce. Her institution was to be built on the basis of uncompromising poverty, at a time when all the other monasteries and convents lived on grants and gifts from noble patrons so that they could never be entirely free from a certain dependence on wealth and worldly power. Theresa's new convent was to be supported without grants. Even the begging of alms, practiced by so many religious orders, was banned by Theresa's rules. For begging, too, makes the pious dependent upon the world, and dependence will always generate a spirit of compromise if not of downright obsequiousness. This woman, who had partaken of the highest bliss through a gift of grace, had come to the conclusion that also the lowlier necessities

of life, the daily provisions for her followers and herself, should be left to the grace of Him who provides for the lilies of the field To make possible the highest form of devotion to God and life eternal, the new convent was to have no parlor but only cells, a chapel and a refectory The singing nuns were to have no audience but God, and the mass, devoid of pomp and display, was to be celebrated exclusively as a devotional observance These stringent and simple rules were devised by a woman who knew by experience about the dangers to which the lives of the pious are exposed They were intended for the new convent, but they were conceived as an example for all Christian devotion Their main purpose was the reform of the Carmelite order, which at the time of its inception had been a demonstration of such truly Christian devotion

To recall the original example to the minds of the faithful, Theresa reintroduced also the austere habit of the original Carmelites Dressed in coarse sackcloth and always barefoot, thus her nuns were to serve their Lord A minor change in habit, a little reduction of the importance of material things, but the deeper significance of it was the implied rejection of materiality in all things and all respects

At first the Carmelites had gone barefoot, then they had put on shoes, then Theresa's reform made them barefoot again The story of the entire order is contained in these stages Humility was signified by the bare feet which touched the earth of Lebanon But those who walked west from Mount Carmel put on shoes when they crossed the threshold of modern times, and in doing so they became children of modernity For not only their feet were hemmed in by the shoes of the time but also their souls, their devotion, their prayers, their piety On their pilgrimage to God they wore the shoes of worldliness

The shoe was a symbol of everything else Barefoot the Carmelites had practiced silence. When they wore shoes they conversed with the world Barefoot they lived their lives in fervent devoutness When they wore shoes they looked for relief, for exemptions and relaxation The frugal fare, the continued fasts of the barefoot Carmelites of early times could not satisfy the members of the order at a later period, when they wore shoes and seasoned their meals and made them attractive with all sorts of dainties and delicacies Theresa wanted her order to discard shoes, but with them the spirit of worldliness which they represented, and so

she called her order the order of the unshod or Discalced Carmelites

As patron saint of her convent Theresa chose St Joseph, the father of the Holy Family. It had been St Joseph whom she had implored more often than any other saint to help her in the trials of her illness, and since he had been merciful, she now placed her convent under his protection.

The purpose of the alterations in Juan de Ovalle's "town house" had been kept a secret, and the final consecration of the building as the convent of St. Joseph was similarly managed without attracting public notice. On St. Bartholomew's Day in the year 1562 the barefoot founder, dressed in sackcloth, knelt absorbed in prayer before the altar, surrounded by her first four nuns. Daza, the same church official who had regarded Theresa as obsessed by the devil, had been delegated by the bishop to consecrate in his name this convent of a saint who wanted to restore the true faith. The four nuns took their vows. They sang the *Te Deum*. There were no colorful ceremonies, no pomp and no display. But the enraptured nun, who knelt there surrounded by her four disciples at the altar of the little chapel, was kneeling in heaven. And proximity to heaven was to remain the essence of daily life at St. Joseph's.

The nuns of the parlor at the Incarnation felt tricked by the saint and were in a rage. There was nothing they could do against the foundation of the new convent which stood under the protection of the bishop. But the foundress herself was a Carmelite nun who had taken the vow of obedience and was subject to the jurisdiction of her order. It did not come as a surprise, therefore, when the barefoot nun in sackcloth was ordered by her prioress to put on the shoes of worldliness and the white robe of the mitigated rule to appear at the Incarnation and to account for her deeds.

When Theresa entered the refectory she found herself face to face with one hundred and eighty nuns, a court of one hundred and eighty prosecutors, ready to pass judgment against her. The prioress spoke in their name and accused Theresa on the counts of disobedience, arrogance and treachery. —When the time came for determining the form of punishment to be imposed upon her, the jury found itself in an embarrassing position. More rigorous fasts would hardly be a penalty for one who had a veritable mania for fasting, confinement to a solitary cell was precisely what she longed

for, exclusion from all social life meant happiness to her, hard work was a blessing and even castigation a welcome humiliation. This culprit deprived all current forms of punishment of their force, for she turned them into rewards, and the only way out was to sentence her to wearing the shoes and the white robe of the mitigated rule and to eating in the refectory and appearing in the parlor, to keep her chained to the easy and comfortable life of the convent, until the men of Ávila would find a way of closing the new foundation in spite of papal sanction and of episcopal protection.

The men of Ávila stood united behind the nuns of the Incarnation. Rivalries of long standing were forgotten. The contending parties buried the hatchet and took up arms in the common cause. This renitent nun, who had had the impudence of opening a reformed convent in spite of the explicit disapproval voiced by the local authorities, who had even succeeded in taking the bishop in, had to be dealt with exemplarily.

A first attempt to rid the town quickly and smoothly of the vexatious convent was undertaken by the prefect of the police. He sent four of his most reliable men to take care of the four nuns at St. Joseph's. But this action wound up in a pitiful failure. Those tough fellows knew how to handle thieves and rowdies and drunkards, they knew how to get access to the most dangerous hide-outs of criminals, but all their experience did them no earthly good, when they had forced their way into the convent and found themselves face to face with four meek and humble virgins of Christ who kept repeating, "God wants us to stay, and so we shall stay!" So much calm determination was more than disconcerting to the worthy guardians of peace and order. They departed without ceremony and swore never to return.

But this fiasco of the police served only to increase the wrath of the town and induced the municipal authorities to throw in their full might against the barefoot nuns. The governor convoked the *junta* for a solemn session of protest and invited representatives of all the monastic orders whose attitude was deemed to be safe. A unanimous resolution of the governing body was to bring about the closing down of St. Joseph's.

When the bishop of Ávila saw that his entire flock went over to the opposition, he fell ill again and left for another rest in the coun-

try. Ibañez was away on a tour of inspection, and the prioress of the Incarnation felt obliged to detain Theresa at the convent because of "domestic matters of great urgency" so that it became impossible for her to appear in person and account for her actions before the *junta*. There seemed to be no obstacle in the way of a quick and smooth resolution.

The occasion was an important one, and the *junta* convened in great state. The session was noisy, but it was not the noise of clashing viewpoints, it was the noise of a unanimous fury. The governor himself formulated the charge of sedition, danger to the state and disregard for the budgetary interests of the town. None of the representatives of municipal and monastic organizations, who spoke after the governor had finished, saw fit to ask for proof or substantiation. It was all very clear. The convent had to be closed. Everybody agreed with the governor. There was a storm of applause.

Then the representative of the Dominican monastery of St. Thomas, the influential Fray Domingo Banes, got up and spoke. This was unexpected. His words, like a hailstorm from a cloudless sky, came hammering down with sarcastic precision upon the young crop of hate, in which the whole town seemed to take so much pride. "What is it," he inquired ironically, "that has brought us together here? What hostile army has broken into our city? What conflagration endangers Ávila? What kind of pestilence mows down the population? What famine kills thousands of people? What curse threatens our homes? Or are merely four barefoot virgins the cause of all this excitement? I cannot help feeling that the prestige of our city must suffer when so distinguished an assembly must be convoked on account of so insignificant a cause."

The speech was short but it spoiled the artful scheme of the *junta*. Instead of reaching a decision it had to adjourn in embarrassed confusion. And then it adjourned again and again and again, until the whole matter could quietly be dropped from the agenda.

The bishop returned smiling and in good health. The four nuns at St. Joseph's walked barefoot and prayed and fasted. But the angered provincial of the Carmelites was adamant in his decision that Theresa was to be detained at the Incarnation. She had to obey the orders of her superior, however much it pained her not to be able to share the life of her nuns.

But meanwhile time was working for her, time which brings to men and things insight and maturity. The day came when a humble remark of the prisoner sufficed to change her jailer's mind. With all the humility of a subordinate nun, but at the same time with the superior assurance of one who has had intercourse with the powers of heaven, Theresa said to the provincial Salazar "Look father, we are resisting the Holy Ghost." He surely did not wish to incur such a risk and gave Theresa permission to return to her convent. He even made it possible for her to take with her four other nuns who had come to embrace her views.

One morning in the winter of 1563 five barefoot nuns, wrapped in sackcloth, waded through the snow-covered streets of Avila. Teresa de Cepeda returned with four new disciples to the convent of her choice. At St. Joseph's the four nuns who had lived there like orphaned children, welcomed her back with the jubilant exclamation "Madre!" And from then on all her nuns called her *la madre*. For the world outside, however, Teresa de Cepeda became Teresa de Jesús. Her predicate of inherited nobility was replaced by a predicate of nobility by spiritual descent.

A short time later three additional virgins knocked at the door of the convent of St. Joseph and asked to be admitted into the ranks of the discalced nuns. Then, one day, the deserted street in front of the convent became the scene of an event which set all Ávila astir. A procession of fifteen festively decked-out carriages drew up in front of the modest building. Fourteen of them were occupied by handsome young *caballeros*, dressed in all the splendor of the Castilian nobility of the time. They were the sons of the wealthiest families of Ávila and formed the retinue of Doña María Dávila, the most popular beauty in town, who occupied the fifteenth carriage and had invited all her admirers to take part in this strange parade. She was dressed from head to toe in velvet and silk, her cheeks and lips were beautifully painted, her neck and her wrists were adorned with gold and precious stones. Never, never had she been more beautiful, more worthy of admiration, than now, when she stood up in her carriage, surveying the tense silence in the rows of her suitors. It was the thought of all of them that she would now, in this eccentric fashion, announce her final choice, and each one was filled with fear and hope alike. Once more she looked around with strangely steadied glances. Then she

opened her crimsoned lips. "Farewell, farewell!" she said, and her eyes grew hard and solemn and looked far beyond the things she could see. "World, farewell!" The *caballeros* in their carriages did not find time to recover before Doña María had stepped down from her seat, and hastened to the door of the little convent where she knocked and disappeared never to return.

Inside she was received by Madre Theresa and her eleven nuns who conducted her in silence to the chapel. There, in front of the altar, the nuns took off her costly garments, her precious jewels, piece by piece, and dressed her in sackcloth and left her feet bare. Then brother Julian, the priest of the Discalced Carmelites of St. Joseph, took her vows. The following day the wealthy and respected José Dávila received a bundle to which this note was attached: "These are the belongings of your daughter María." It was signed "María de Santa Jerónima, daughter of *la madre de San José*." The charming girl who had thus turned into a nun was to become one of the most reliable pillars of the discalced reform.

Theresa's dream had come true. She had longed for it, she had fought and suffered for it. But now it had been achieved. The house of silence was a reality. Charity was the only patron of her convent. Poverty was its bulwark, privation its cook and discipline its guardian. The tile-covered floors in the cells were table, chair and bed alike. The panes in the window frames were replaced by pieces of cloth. A revolving disk, the so-called *torno*, which was built into the wall, served to receive gifts of food. Whatever was placed there by charitable souls made up the daily fare of the nuns. At times there was a piece of cheese, a few eggs or a little bread, often just a few stale crusts, and then again the *torno* remained altogether empty. Whatever else the little community could not dispense with, had to be earned by spinning and needle work. The yield was not determined by value or price, it was whatever charity chose to give. The nuns merely put their work outside the convent gate, and the price was left to the discretion of the buyer. There was no parlor, no visiting hours, which could have shortened the working day. There were no gossiping nuns to interfere with prayer and contemplation.

Life was not easy for the inmates of St. Joseph. There was no security, and today none could know what the morrow might

bring. And yet there were twelve nuns living there in happiness under the guidance of their cheerful superior. For the piety of the *madre* was of a cheerful kind. "God deliver us from sullen saints," said the prioress of St Joseph's, and again and again she impressed upon her daughters her deep conviction "A sad nun is a bad nun "

She imbued the convent with the spirit of her own cheerful piety, and when she had invited poverty to live with her and her nuns on the bare tiles of St Joseph's, carefree contentment had moved in too. What the nuns did not have, they did not miss, and since they owned nothing, the urge to own could not enslave them to material things. Since the days of St Francis, the Christian faith in God had never been so joyful, so jubilant

At St. Joseph's Theresa had found for the first time a real home on earth. It lay on a narrow street in the Spanish town of Ávila, but it lay also in the immediate neighborhood of heaven where she was often transported in rapturous ecstasies. When she returned to her nuns, it was no longer a fall to abysmal depths, as it had been at the Incarnation, she came back to her home as from a neighborly call.

For five years Theresa lived blissfully in the serene tranquility of her convent. But this period of contemplative happiness was only an interval of rest in the missionary's life ahead of her

The unexpected visit of John Baptist Rubeo, the Carmelite general, was the prelude to a new phase in Theresa's life. Rubeo had been ordered by the Pope to inspect the Carmelite monasteries and convents all over Spain. At the Council of Trent measures to strengthen the tottering church had been the major topic for discussion. The prevailing view had been that it would first of all be necessary to put a stop to the laxness of life in the monastic orders. And this was the purpose of Rubeo's tour of inspection. Wherever he had been, he had met with difficulties and opposition, for after a century of the mitigated rule a great many abuses had come to be considered as established rights.

At St. Joseph's Rubeo found to his great surprise that all the reforms, which he had been trying in vain to promote elsewhere, were here fully in force. St Theresa had anticipated the decrees of the Council of Trent and had implemented their recommendations long before anyone else had thought of formulating them

Thus it came to pass that Rubeo, before leaving again, gave not only permission for additional houses to be founded in the spirit of St. Joseph's, but actually encouraged and admonished Theresa to extend her activities.

One morning in August 1567, a strange caravan passed through the gates of the town of Avila. It consisted of four covered wagons with wooden wheels and no springs. In the first wagon sat a veiled woman—*la madre*—, in the second and third some of her nuns, the fourth and last carried the belongings of the travelers and their holy vessels. Father Julian, the ordained priest of St. Joseph's, rode on a donkey next to the wagon of the *madre*, and muleteers, in the colorful Spanish clothes of their profession, walked along, left and right, with the teams. It was scorching hot. The road was bad, in places almost impassable. The stubborn mules paid little attention to the encouraging shouts of *arre' arre'* of their drivers, who had to have recourse to their most powerful Castilian oaths, and after the first five miles would have liked nothing better than to give in to the mules and turn back. Medina, the destination of the little caravan, was still seventy miles off. Theresa, who wanted to reach her goal at all costs, had nothing to say to pacify the muleteers but that God had ordered this trip and that they should keep going for His sake. At first her words were drowned in the general swearing. But before long those tough men were gently walking along, listening to Theresa who was talking to them as a mother talks to her children.

In Medina del Campo the little caravan of poverty was anything but welcome. The firmly established Carmelite and Augustinian monks looked askance at the intruders, whose postulates of asceticism might put their lives of comfortable piety in an unfavorable perspective, and whose complete destitution would doubtless absorb much of the charitable potential of Medina's fifty thousand souls. All sorts of obstacles were put in the way of Theresa's plans for a new convent. The only house offered her as shelter for her nuns was a dilapidated building with a leaking roof and cracks in the walls. No one could recall ever having seen it occupied, and even tramps and vagrants would not stay there, because they could always find something better.

The following morning the townspeople of Medina were awakened by the sound of a new bell which came out of the old house

and announced the first mass of the Discalced. That night a few eggs lay in front of the convent gate, and soon there was bread and cheese to feed the nuns. A few days later, right after the matins, St. Joseph's resounded with the loud noise of busy hammering. Workmen had started the job of repairing the leaks in the roof and of filling the cracks in the walls. In the course of the morning a van drew up in front of the building, and tables and wooden benches were unloaded. No one had called in the carpenters and roofers, no one had ordered the tables and benches. Charity had sent them to the home of the discalced nuns. A farmer's wife came to implore the nuns to pray for her daughter who was dangerously ill. A few weeks later the girl, who had recovered, came in herself and stayed as a novice. The people of Medina had sided with the nuns, but for the present the angered monks persisted in their hostility.

Then one day the *madre* was informed that two monks wished to speak to her. She found two calced Carmelite monks, who made an extremely incongruous pair. The one was a man of mature age, of powerful build, a giant in monk's garb, the other a youth of some twenty-four years, of small stature, barely reaching up to his partner's chest, and of such slender and delicate build that there was something ethereal about him, a boy in the garb of a monk. The stately figure was the prior of the calced Carmelites of Medina, Antonio de Heredia, his youthful companion was Friar John, one of the monks of his monastery. The prior spoke for both of them. The example of the discalced nuns, he said, had aroused in them the desire to lead a similarly pious life. By giving them her rules—they had thought—she, Theresa, might help them in their plan to establish a discalced monastery.

This unexpected request fulfilled for Theresa, through a gift of unsolicited grace, what she had not dared to hope for in her boldest dreams: the possibility of extending her work to the male branch of the Carmelites and thus of imbuing the entire order with her ideas of reform and restoration. She consented with joy in her heart. When she looked once more at the strange pair, her innate sense of humor could not repress the roguish observation: "Blessed be the Lord, for I have a friar and a half for the foundation of my new monastery." But after her first more exhaustive conversation with the two Carmelite monks, she recognized that the half-friar

would be considerably more important for the propagation of her ideas of monastic reform than the venerable giant, the converted prior of the calced monks, and that this frail youth in a monk's cowl was sent to her by God and would become her equal as partner in her life's work. For Friar John was no less a person than the Carmelite monk, whom the history of the saints remembers as St. John of the Cross, San Juan de la Cruz, one of the most gifted, most immaculate mystic poets of world literature.

He was of peasant stock, the son of a linen weaver, quite unorthodox, it is true, with his visions befalling him during his walks through forests and fields, and the mystic hymns which he composed. He had turned his back on the world and sought the safety of a God-pleasing life in a Carmelite monastery. But in the worldly bustle of contemporary monasticism he had not found the answer to his quest and was convinced that salvation could only be attained in the spirit of Theresa's reform.

He contributed to her work his enthusiasm arising from a deep longing for true piety, his faith strengthened by mystical experience, and the quietude of his heart which had its source in heaven.

Theresa and John were of different worldly lineage, of different sex and of different age, yet they were both of the same spiritual lineage, of the same spiritual sex and had the same spiritual maturity. They both were mystics, poets, saints. What distinguished them outwardly, was eliminated by an inner identity of purpose and ideal. Their work was enlivened by the same spirit, the same holiness. It was destined to be a unique kind of work, for the quietude of their hearts and the mysticism of their minds united these two visionaries in practical activity and made of stillness and vision an earthly reality.

The first monastery of discalced friars was set up in Duruelo, not far from Salamanca. The former prior of the calced Carmelites, Antonio de Heredia, now Antonio de Jesús, was also the first discalced prior, but it was Friar John's spirit that pervaded the organization of the new institution, that formulated the principles of its discipline and held absolute sway over all its concerns. The building of this first discalced monastery was a dungeonlike structure the furnishings of which consisted of two stones and two bundles of hay serving John and Antonio as pillows and beds. In course of time the monastery of the discalced friars at Duruelo grew in size

But nothing in its organization was changed. Only the number of pillows of stone and the number of bundles of hay were increased in proportion to the increased number of friars, of austere fasters and quiet worshippers.

Medina del Campo, the first stage of Theresa's reform work, signified thus not only the first foundation of a discalced convent outside of Ávila but also the first successful move in her comprehensive campaign for the reform of both the male and female branches of the Carmelite order. It signified—something that had never been heard of before—success and fame for a Spanish woman. Here a woman appeared in the limelight of public attention who not only had broken the ban barring all women from participation in public activities but who had become the founder of an institution for men, in which men of all ages and nations were to participate.

One after the other new convents and monasteries of the reform grew up under the creative hand of this indefatigable missionary. Theresa no longer had to fight for the consent of the communities, she no longer had to be content with dilapidated old homes. From everywhere she received letters requesting her to honor this place or that by the foundation of a discalced convent. The people vied with each other for the privilege of placing at her disposal houses and homes in which her nuns could live their life of pious contemplation. And now, when the fame of this popular saint had reached the court of Philip II, the nobility too did not wish to remain in the background but was eager to take an active part in the reform. The first of the rich and noble, who could pride herself with having dedicated a house of poverty, was Theresa's old acquaintance, the once disconsolate widow Luise de la Cerda.

When the princess Ana Eboli learned that her best-hated rival, the duchess de la Cerda, had stolen a march upon her, she decided to overtrump her and not just to put one of her houses in Pastrana at the disposal of the saintly reformer but to take the veil and move herself into the convent of poverty. She left her sumptuous palace, took leave from her one hundred costly robes and five hundred costly lace mantillas, donned an artistically mended garb of sackcloth, hired a rickety peasant cart, drove, accompanied by two chambermaids, to the house which she herself had dedicated to the

reform, and announced that she intended to live there henceforth as a discalced Carmelite nun

She insisted that her chambermaids be admitted to the novitiate too. Then the "newly baked chambernuns" were ordered to unpack her trunks. Her cell was filled with dozens of carefully patched Carmelite habits of various cuts and patterns, each one for a different occasion in her proposed career as a discalced nun. There was one for the matins, another one for vespers, one for the litchen, one for contemplation, and a very special one for high mass in honor of the holy martyrs.

Her meals, carefully prepared for a discalced faster, were brought over from her palace. She insisted on keeping her predicate of nobility and received visitors from outside whenever she pleased. From the first the nuns and even the prioress were ordered around by her, for she saw no reason why she should not be the mistress of them all.

Theresa was just occupied with the organization of a new convent in Alba de Tormes, when the prioress of Pastrana wrote to her in despair about the antics of princess Eboli. At once she rushed to Pastrana, for what was going on there was even more important than the establishment of a new house of the reform. It concerned the integrity and purity of the reform as a whole. No gift of money, no donation of houses, however liberal, could confound her in the pursuit of her ideal of pious living. And when she arrived in Pastrana and stood face to face with the princess to discuss the situation that had developed, she was not a grateful protégée talking to a generous patron but a determined protagonist of the ideal of poverty fighting the arrogance of a presumptuous representative of wealth. A displeased superior reprimanded an unruly nun, who had dared to violate the rules of silence, poverty and humility. The princess was accustomed to order, not to obey, and in a rage she exclaimed: "This is my house, and I demand that my orders be obeyed!" But Theresa replied: "This is the house of the Lord, and I demand that His orders be obeyed!" The princess had nothing more to say.

She left within the hour. She took her chambermaids and her trunks with her and vowed vengeance upon the ungrateful nuns. In the eyes of the faithful, however, Theresa's fearless demeanor in front of the powerful princess strengthened her reputation and

that of the reform she stood for. She had proved that she knew not only how to found an order of poverty but also how to defend it.

The Carmelites of the mitigated rule watched with growing concern the success of mother Theresa's movement. The houses of the discalced increased in quick succession. The reform had begun to affect the male branch of the Carmelite order as well. It was no longer the convent of the Incarnation alone but the entire order that was in danger. As a Carmelite nun Theresa was still subject to the jurisdiction of the order, although as a saint, whose name was known and admired throughout Spain, she was proof against a direct attack. It was no longer possible, as it had been, to recall her to the Incarnation and have a jury of nuns pass judgment on her, but it was possible to paralyze her work by giving her a position of honor at the mother convent. The Carmelites of the mitigated rule knew how to lay the trap of honorary rewards.

The Carmelite provincial made Theresa the prioress of the Incarnation. Her task was to remedy the prevailing laxness and to lead the nuns back to a stricter form of devotion. What a triumph! What wonderful recognition of her organizational skill! What satisfaction to be placed as prioress over the nuns who had once passed judgment against her! But mainly, what splendid opportunity of taking her away, for three entire years, from her work for the reform and of keeping her imprisoned at the Incarnation!

At first Theresa was shocked by the assignment. She looked through the intrigue which was hiding behind the mask of honor and recognition. At the height of success she was forced to abandon her work as a reformer in order to function as the prioress of a convent of the mitigated rule, where the nuns were protesting in open rebellion against her appointment.

But when Theresa started on her way back to the Incarnation, she did so not only because she was bound by her vows to render obedience to the order, but she meant to devote herself wholeheartedly to the solution of the task that had been entrusted to her. She knew that this newest assignment was a trap of her enemies, but if she had really resolved to serve God, she must serve Him, also in the trap of her enemies, with undiminished ardor. She now had but one end in view—to lead the "poor things" of the Incarnation, who

had once been her fellow nuns, back on the one and only road to God. Misfortune turned into a new task, and in order to cope with it effectively, she appointed St. John of the Cross as father confessor of the Incarnation, for in him the nuns would have a spiritual leader after her mind, of her humility and quietude of soul.

The nuns of the Incarnation received her in a spirit of undisguised hostility. She was greeted with insults and accusations. But after the provincial had confirmed the finality of his decision, the anger of the nuns turned into apprehension, for they feared the retaliatory strictness of their new superior. The first chapter day, when the prioress was to make her speech of acceptance, a worried file of nuns moved into the refectory. But what a surprise was awaiting them there! The rostrum, which they were wont to see reserved for the prioress, was occupied by a statue of the Holy Virgin. Theresa was kneeling before it. When she arose to speak to the nuns, she pointed to the Virgin and said: "This is your new prioress. Her orders you and I will have to obey. I have only been appointed to lead you and be your guide in obedience."

As if by magic, all fear had vanished from the hearts of the nuns, and also all indignation and all hate. Before long the nuns of the Incarnation asked Theresa that the parlor be abolished, they took up the practice of mental prayer in the quietude of their cells and patterned their lives more and more after the rules of the discalced.

Thus the ruse of the mitigation turned out badly for the instigators themselves. Now Theresa had on her side a convent of the mitigated rule, where calced nuns lived in the spirit of the discalced reform. Yet the price her adversaries had to pay was not too high. They profited by the years which Theresa had to spend at the Incarnation and succeeded in inducing Rubeo, the general of the order, to change his mind about her, they won over the Holy See and began to undermine Theresa's reputation in Spain by well organized calumnious propaganda. While she and St. John of the Cross guided the nuns of the Incarnation to a life of quiet devotion, messengers were dispatched to Piacenza where the general of the Carmelites had his seat, emissaries were sent to Rome to influence the Pope, visitators of the church, who favored the reform, were replaced by hostile ones, discalced nuns were stirred up against the *madre*, and the monks were warned against a woman who brazenly usurped the rule over men. When Theresa had completed

her term of office at the Incarnation and came out to resume her interrupted work for the reform, she immediately came up against the solid ranks of the opposition which was all set for an attack of well-aimed blows

Excess of zeal on the part of Theresa's friends had played into the hands of her enemies. The most enthusiastic of her followers, Father Gracian, proved also to be the most harmful. She had met him while setting up a new monastery at Veas. He was her junior by thirty years, bald and stocky, well-versed in theological matters but totally unversed in dealings with men, he was devout and filled with true goodness of heart but unbridled, obstinate and aggressive in the pursuit of his ends. He was a man with many excellent traits but also with an equal number of faults. At first Theresa was blinded by his enthusiasm and saw only his virtues. She installed him as prior of her monastery at Veas and not only entrusted to him the task of organizing additional houses of the reform but even made him her own father confessor.

In his fervent desire to serve the *madre*, Gracian set out immediately to organize discalced monasteries at Granada and Penuela. But Granada and Penuela were in Andalusia, and thus provided the calced Carmelites with an excellent argument against the reform. When the general of the order Rubeo had given his consent for the establishment of new houses, no mention had been made of Andalusia, and thus the reform had overstepped its rights. The foundations in Andalusia were illegal.

Another friend of the reform, the papal visitor Vargas, fanned up the hatred of Theresa's adversaries still further by choosing amongst all possible choices the discalced Gracian as his delegate in Andalusia, so that the Carmelites of the mitigated rule came to be placed under the jurisdiction of a Carmelite of the reform.

This local incident was seized upon by the calced partisans elsewhere and was made the cause for convoking a general chapter of the order at Piacenza, where Rubeo saw fit to withdraw his protection from Theresa in order to calm the excited minds. The chapter voted unanimously in favor of closing the new houses in Andalusia. In case there should be any sort of resistance, it would be dealt with in a spirit of ruthless determination. To avoid every possibility of unwelcome interference, Rubeo obtained from the Pope the prom-

ise that Vargas would be recalled and that the Portuguese Carmelite Fray Jerónimo Tostado, a reliable opponent of the reform, would be appointed to take his place. All this assured the liquidation of the reform in Andalusia, but it did not assure what was really the main purpose of the mitigation, the ousting of the head of the reform, of Theresa herself. For that something more seemed needed, a scandal which would set all Spain astir with excitement.

Theresa enjoyed the reputation of a saint, and this reputation had to be undermined. The mere fact that her life and demeanor was beyond reproach, did not disturb the ill will of her enemies. If there were no facts, calumny had to be relied upon to do the job. And calumny did the job, and did it well.

Gracian had committed grave blunders, yet Theresa refused to relieve him of his post. She even kept him as her father confessor and had him accompany her on her trips. Why did she cling so stubbornly to this criminally stupid monk? Calumny replied with ingenuous cunning. Obviously because he is her lover, because she wants to confess her love to him, because she needs him on her outings of love. Wherever Theresa arrived to found new homes of the reform, slanderous rumor had moved in ahead and waited for her at the city gates and interfered with the execution of her plans.

The next trip took her to Seville. Ten of her nuns and Father Gracian accompanied her. For ten days they had to endure the scorching heat of Southern Spain. Their food was made up of a few salted sardines. For miles around there was not a drop of water to be had. Worn out by thirst and fatigue Theresa broke down in a roadside inn. Drunken ruffians ridiculed the nuns and threatened to attack them, when a band of *caballeros* with drawn swords appeared on the scene and rescued the nuns in a regular little skirmish. Finally Theresa and her group could proceed on their way. After many hardships they arrived in Seville.

This was the city of gold. It was the city where the ships from Mexico and Peru arrived with their precious cargoes. The inhabitants were interested in nothing but gold. Gold was their god and love of life their religion. Here a woman who preached poverty, renunciation and silence could not expect to be welcomed with open arms. It was but natural that the rumor of her amours had fallen on fertile ground. All of Seville was against her. Even the old archbishop, a good and pious Christian, was so prejudiced

against her that he not only withheld his dispensation for a new convent of the reform but even refused to grant her an audience. Still Theresa's enemies were not satisfied. Her mere presence in Seville was a scandal, and the archbishop, they felt, had better order Theresa to leave the city immediately. It was this excess of zeal, which wrecked the whole intrigue.

The archbishop summoned the "impostor" to inform her of the order of expulsion, but by the time she left, he had recognized the saint in her, had permitted her to found monasteries and convents and had assured her of his wholehearted support. When the reformed convent of St. Joseph of Seville was consecrated, the archbishop came in person at the head of a solemn procession, and when Theresa was about to kneel down to receive his fatherly blessing, he prevented her, knelt down himself before her and asked her to bless him with the blessing of saintliness. Together with the archbishop a great many of the faithful of Seville went over to Theresa's side, and many a daughter of many a wealthy merchant left her home of comfort to find refuge in the convent of poverty of the discalced nuns.

This unexpected turn of events roused the anger of the calced Carmelites to red-hot fury. They were immediately ready for the next blow against the hated reformer and felt certain that this time they would finish her off once and for all. They had succeeded in smuggling one of their adherents as a novice into the convent of the reform. One day this "discalced" sister escaped from St. Joseph's and spread the shocking story that the *madre* flogged her nuns and heard their confessions of sin as though she were their father confessor. This latter charge was particularly grave, for it implied illuminism, the most abject crime of heresy in the eyes of the Inquisition.

One morning, when Father Gracian appeared at the gates of St. Joseph's, mounted guards kept him from entering. Mother Theresa, about whom he inquired, had already been taken into custody.

Theresa's case was a special one, for it concerned not only Seville and the Carmelites but Rome and the royal court at Madrid as well.

The Inquisition spared no trouble. It re-examined all previous charges, including the ugly accusations of princess Eboli, for it wished to determine once and for all whether Theresa was a de-

sirable reformer in the spirit of the resolutions of the Council of Trent or an infamous heretic

Quiet and unafraid the accused stood before her judges not uttering a word in her own defense. She looked at the Grand Inquisitor, but she did not see his grim face, she saw only the benevolent face of the Lord who was sitting in judgment over her in heaven. And the Lord looked angrily at her accusers in the judgment hall, but when His eyes beheld her, the accused, he smiled encouragingly. Theresa was carried away in one of her raptures. But when it was over, when she had returned to the judgment hall and faced the Grand Inquisitor again, then it seemed that her vision had become an earthly reality. The Grand Inquisitor looked angrily at her accusers and turning around to look at her, he smiled encouragingly, exactly as the Lord had done in her vision, and said "You are acquitted of all charges. What you have done and what you do is in accordance with the will of God. Go then and continue your work."

But still there were the calced Carmelites on earth who wanted to defend their comfortable ways of serving God against the dangers of the reform. And just when their campaign of calumny seemed to have definitely failed through Theresa's acquittal by the Inquisition, they suddenly received powerful reinforcements. The Portuguese Tostado, the delegate of the Carmelite chapter at Piacenza, arrived in Spain to put into effect the resolutions which the chapter had passed against Theresa. He brought with him various authorizations which revived the hopes of the partisans of the mitigated rule. Now it seemed again as though their plans might come true after all.

Theresa was forbidden to continue her work. Tostado ordered her to retire to a convent of her choice and to abstain from founding new houses of the reform. "It was like sending me to a prison," she remarked. She chose St. Joseph's at Toledo. Father Gracian, who had hastily convoked a chapter of the discalced, was arrested by Tostado's order. Otherwise too everything seemed to take a favorable turn for the mitigation. Ormaneto, the papal nuncio in Spain, who was very well disposed toward the discalced reform, died suddenly, and the calced Carmelites succeeded in inducing the Pope to appoint in his stead Segá, the bishop of Piacenza. The new nuncio was equipped for his office with every conceivable preju-

dice against the disalced. He called Theresa a restless creature and summed up his views regarding her in these terms "She is a disobedient, contumacious woman, who promulgates pernicious doctrines under the pretense of devotion, who left her cloister against the orders of her superiors, who is ambitious and teaches theology as though she were a doctor of the Church, in contempt of the teaching of St. Paul who commanded women not to teach." Whatever Tostado decreed in the name of the Carmelite order, was sanctioned by Segá in the name of the Pope.

When Theresa retired to Toledo, various pamphlets against her had already been put in circulation. But she was inured to distress and disappointments and did not take the matter to heart. "I am amused by all this," she said. "God forgive these people! However, it is best if they make so many accusations at once, as no one can believe all of them."

But then something happened which even Theresa could not take coolly but which forced her to think of immediate counter-measures. St. John of the Cross was taken away from her, and that in a manner which defied all laws of human decency. One day he disappeared, kidnaped and hidden by the calced Carmelites. Theresa's desperate efforts to find him were all in vain.

After the crushing verdict which the papal nuncio had passed against Theresa and which had meanwhile been spread among the clergy all over Spain, there was no one ready to lend her a helping hand in her search. She was faced with a united front of conspirators. Then, following a quick impulse, she turned to Philip II. He was not only the king of Spain but at the time the "most powerful man of Christendom," and his word carried no less weight than that of the pontiff at Rome. If she could win his support, she had triumphed over all her enemies, including the papal nuncio.

As a skilled diplomat, who was keenly alive to the struggle for power among the great, she composed a letter to the king, describing in heartfelt terms the intrigues against the reform and the abduction of the most God-fearing of her followers and imploring the king to act as her protector on earth. Philip II answered without delay. He knew Theresa's *Vida* and kept his copy of it as a precious possession in a special box, the key to which he carried with him wherever he went. In quiet nights the *Vida* had often

afforded him the solace and edification which his soul craved. He, who knew the story of her life, who had read the account of her visions in trustful admiration, needed no further proof to be convinced of her purity and of the injustice of the cause of her persecutors.

He was used to an environment of fawning courtiers and intriguing dignitaries of the church and was fascinated by the idea of meeting a saint. He sent a special courier to invite Theresa to an audience at court.

The trip to Madrid Theresa undertook again in her springless cart. A snowstorm detained her for a few days in Valladolid, and in mid-December, 1577, she arrived at the king's residence. The most powerful ruler of the world and the representative of a realm which is not of this world came face to face with each other. It was an audience, which deviated also in its outer form from the usual etiquette at court. Theresa opened the conversation by quoting the contemptuous remarks the papal nuncio had made about her. "Sire," she said, "you are thinking now, so this is that disobedient, contumacious woman who promulgates pernicious doctrines under the pretense of devotion." But the king seemed to be of a different opinion, for he relaxed unexpectedly in his sternly majestic bearing and made, as Theresa described it, "the most courteous bow I ever saw."

Her petition and his reply were disposed of in a very few words. After she had presented her case and asked him for his support, Philip inquired "Is that all you want?" "I have asked a great deal," Theresa replied, and the king assured her "Then be at peace, for all shall be as you wish." Then the king spoke as one whom the presence of a saint makes deeply aware of the wretchedness of his position on the throne of the world.

When Philip set out to fulfill his promise, he did so as a proud autocrat who resented the machinations which a foreigner, the Portuguese Tostado, had permitted himself on Spanish soil against a Spanish saint. He simply ordered this undesirable alien to leave the country. When Segá asked for an audience, he had to listen to a string of stern reprimands. The very first words the king addressed to the representative of the Pope were these "I am aware of the hostility of the mitigated friars to the reform, and this looks bad, for the discalced lead austere lives of perfection. See that you favor virtue, for people tell me that you are no friend of the dis-

calced" He demanded that Segá authorize immediately an impartial investigation of the reform. The Roman diplomat did not relish the prospect of friction with the most Christian monarch and consented forthwith. The impartial investigation demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt the absolute untenability of all charges against Theresa and the reform. It convinced even Segá that he and the Holy Father had been misled by a malevolent opposition. And then the Holy See itself stopped once and for all, by a radical decree, the intrigues of the calced against the discalced Carmelites. Pope Gregory XIII issued a bull which established the reform by setting up a separate order of discalced Carmelites. Thus Theresa's movement attained independence, and there was nothing that could interfere with its further growth

Then too, Theresa recovered also St. John of the Cross. He returned, steeled by the martyrdom of prison, transfigured in the eyes of all Christians by the miracle of his escape. The calced Carmelites, who had abducted him, kept him for nine months locked up in a narrow chamber inside the wall of one of their monasteries. It was six feet wide and ten feet long and was dimly lighted through a grilled opening which looked out on a fortified passageway. He had one or two rags to sleep on, and his food consisted of two or three crusts of stale bread and half a glass of water, which were given him, at first daily but after a while only twice every week. When he was still not ready to abjure his faith in the reform, the monks thought of even sterner measures and took him every evening to the refectory to flog him. His emaciated figure, stripped to the waist, knelt in the center of the room, while the calced friars, armed with sticks and clubs, walked around in a circle, taking turns at beating him with all their strength, until his bleeding and lacerated body sank unconscious to the floor. Night after night the flogging went on, but St. John of the Cross did not abjure. "Senseless block!" his tormentors shouted in impotent rage, but he looked at them steadfast and silent, for all this torture was for him but one of the stations of his *imitatio Christi*.

And after the ordeal was over, when his pitifully maltreated body, rather dead than alive, lay again in the dark hole of the cloister wall, then suddenly another life arose in him which was

not vulnerable to human hate. For it was a life that turned into song, into verse and stanza, and in it the torment he had suffered was changed into sweetness. And this song of sweetness carried a tone which rang above life and pain in God. He did not want to lose it and memorized it again and again until it was indelibly impressed upon his mortal mind. For seventeen nights the friars flogged him. Every night the flogging added a new stanza to his song. Those were the seventeen nights which gave to the world the seventeen stanzas of the "Spiritual Canticle" of St. John of the Cross, the most sublime and at the same time the most passionate mystical hymn of Spanish literature, of the literature of the world.

The tormentors were thinking of new forms of torture, but the stanzas of divine passion had been brought to perfection. A radiant vision penetrated the darkness of St. John's prison. It emanated from the robe of light of the Holy Virgin who appeared to him and ordered him to get up and leave. Through the grilled opening? Over walls and roof tops? St. John did not query, he did not wonder. He obeyed the order of the vision of light.

His lacerated body got up with athletic strength. His tired arms could bend the heavy rods with perfect ease. Two threadbare rags were fashioned into a rope and St. John slid down over the passageway to the wall below. He then let himself fall. He was not hurt. He landed on a garbage pile, he did not know where. A dog that had been trying to find something to eat there ran off into the darkness. John followed him. The dog jumped over a wall. John climbed over too and found himself in a courtyard. He heard the voice of a woman. Going in the direction from where it came he reached a house and entered. It was the convent of the discalced nuns. And while the calced friars pursued him with lanterns, clubs and shouts of anger, he lay hidden and cared-for in the infirmary of the convent. The dreamer of heaven had withstood the trials of the world and took up again his place at Theresa's side.

Theresa was sixty-three years of age. Four more years, that was all that was granted her to extend and strengthen her work, the last years, as she wrote herself, "of an aged woman, good for little now, very old and weary . . ." But then she added "Yet my desires are still vigorous." To the ills of her younger years were

added now the infirmities of old age. Overcome by a fainting spell, she fell down the stairs on her way to mass on Christmas day at St. Joseph's in Avila and broke her left arm. From then on she was no longer able to dress and undress without help. For a while she was almost completely paralyzed, and when she recovered, she could not move about without a cane. Her stomach kept hardly any food. Heart attacks of ever increasing frequency kept her periodically confined to bed. "I am nothing more than a poor old hag," she wrote to Father Gracian.

And yet, the last years of her life were filled with activity. She kept up her travels. She feared no hardship and shunned no toil. During these years she was indefatigably at work to give her reform firmness and permanence. She visited again her older foundations. She examined and inspected, she improved and corrected. She established a number of new houses of the reform. She drafted a well-thought-out constitution for her order and convoked the first chapter general of the discalced Carmelites.

Illness was only the dark background against which her radiant figure stood out the more brightly. While her ills had once been the earthly source of her heavenly visions, they were now the touchstone which demonstrated the mastery of her will over all human frailty.

During a tour of inspection she was seized by a paralytic fit at Malaga. But no sooner had she recovered halfway than she continued her trip. In Toledo she suffered another attack. Her companions implored her to rest for a few days at least. But she would not listen and insisted. "I am so used to suffer that I can well endure the trip." The following morning she went on to Segovia and thence, trembling with exhaustion and always in her springless cart, to Valladolid where she collapsed. But still she went on to Salamanca and back to Avila. She paid no attention to a grave heart attack and started out again for Palencia where she wanted to establish a new convent. In Palencia her condition grew worse, and she herself had to admit. "I am very ill and it is thought that I cannot live." But once more she left with her little caravan in order to establish at Burgos a last convent to the greater glory of her order. Neither her weakness nor the warning words of her friends, who tried to tell her what great hardships such a trip in late winter would entail, could sway her decision.

Beset with pains but unshakable in her determination and filled with joy at the thought of her new enterprise, she had herself lifted into her cart. She cheerfully ordered the muleteers to start. Torrential rains marking the turn from winter to spring had flooded the roads. The carts drove axle-deep through the mud and finally were stuck altogether. The travelers had to leave the vehicles behind and try to get through on foot. If it had not been for the sick and aged *madre* who plodded on cheerfully, leaning on the arms of two of her nuns, comforting and encouraging her little group with humorous or edifying remarks, they all, like their carts, would have been lost in the mire. With almost superhuman efforts they finally fought their way through. At a point, from where the towers of Burgos were visible, they reached the Arlanzon river, which the rains had swelled to a wild torrent. The bridge had been carried away, but the *madre* would not turn back, especially now when she saw in the distance the outlines of the home of the Cid Campeador. "Come what may," she said cheerfully. "If you faint on your way, if you die on the road, if the world is destroyed, all is well if you reach your goal." And when she saw that some of her companions were still undecided, she added confidently "The Lord who has helped us through the mud will also help us across this river." With these words she went ahead into the icy water. Her determination inspired the wavering nuns. One after the other they followed her into the water. In midstream she slipped. A wave swept her down the river. She did not scream, she was not frightened, she merely asked the Lord in her need. "Oh, Lord, why do you put such difficulties in our way?" Then the Lord appeared over the water and replied "It is thus I treat my friends." And Theresa, never at a loss for an answer, said with her characteristic sense of humor "Ah, my Lord, that is why you have so few."

The nuns meanwhile stood helpless and lost in the middle of the river. Then of a sudden they saw to their joy and surprise the figure of their *madre* waving to them from the other side. How they got across, they could not explain later on. All they remembered was that they had followed the call of their *madre*. That same night they reached Burgos, and the following morning they began work on setting up a new convent. It was Theresa's last foundation, and she called it the "Glorious St. Joseph of Burgos."

If the trip to Burgos had not killed her, she felt certain she could also survive the trip to Alba de Tormes. But in Alba a hemorrhage of the lungs forced her down, and this time forever. The first week she adhered strictly, in spite of her illness, to the convent rules she herself had laid down. She observed the hours of prayer and the fast, she performed all her domestic duties, but finally she recognized that her task now was not to master life but to triumph over death. And more cheerfully, more courageously, more determinedly than she had fulfilled the tasks of her life, she now accepted the task of dying. She was not inexperienced in the art of dying, and death itself, the goal of this last journey, had always been familiar to her. In her mystic experience of death, in her ecstatic poems of death, she had often anticipated its coming. For her, whose life here below had been lived simultaneously in this world and the next, death had no sting. For her, death was but the threshold which she crossed to live henceforth and forever in the realm of Life Eternal.

"Oh death, oh death," she had exclaimed a long time ago. "I know not who should be afraid of you since you are filled with life itself. What happiness to think that we are not going to a strange country but to our own." And in one of her most beautiful poems, "The Yearning of the Soul for a Reunion with God" she wrote

All my life reposes here
In the certitude of death,
For this trust holds promises,
To rejoin us life's own sphere,
Death, you source of life—appear,
All my hopes in you imply,
I'll die because I do not die

Franciscan was the cheerfulness of her acceptance of life, but Franciscan was also the seriousness of her acceptance of death. To the last it remained her great endeavor to do justice to her mission in the world, and when her nuns were assembled around her death-bed, she turned to them and said: "For the love of God I beg that you will take great care with the keeping of the Rule and Constitutions, and pay no attention to the bad example that this wicked nun has given you, and pardon me for it." Then she turned to the other side and said to her Master: "Oh my Lord, the longed-for

hour has come at last, and my soul rejoices in abiding with you forever"

The last nine hours of her life on earth she spent in a coma. Between nine and ten o'clock at night she died on the fourth of October, 1582. According to the calendar of the saints it was the day of St. Francis of Assisi. For the world it was the eve of the inauguration of the Gregorian calendar.

Her soul had finally passed into God's eternal quietude, but her body continued to belong to the restlessness of the earth. After she had been allowed to rest for nine months in her tomb at Alba, she again found herself on a springless peasant cart moving along the rough roads of Spain in the direction toward Ávila. This time the body of the saint obeyed the command of Father Gracian, the general of the order of the discalced Carmelites.

A satyr's play appended to the sublime tragedy of a great life, that is in sum what this trip was like. Theresa had died on her last tour of inspection in Alba de Tormes. She had died in Alba and was interred in Alba. She was born in Ávila and had been the prioress of a convent in Ávila. Scarcely had the news of miracle-working powers in her body reached Ávila when a violent dispute broke out between Alba and Ávila as to which of the two held the better claim to the earthly remains of the saint. Gracian decided in favor of Ávila. Not only because it was there that she had come into the world but also because it was there that the Lord had revealed Himself to her for the first time, so that Ávila was the birthplace of her sainthood as well as of the reform. But Alba de Tormes was in the domain of the powerful house of the dukes of Alba, and they considered the body of the saint as part of their ducal treasure. The people of Ávila had to proceed under the cover of great secrecy if they wanted to get hold of the body. Theresa must be stolen.

Gracian had taken the Carmelite prioress at Alba into his confidence, and she, in order to forestall every possible interference, had all her nuns take part in an early morning choral service. While the nuns were singing, their miracle-working saint was removed from her tomb, loaded on a cart and sent off to Ávila.

No sooner had the body been interred in Ávila than it began to work miracles. They were kept strictly secret because the ducal

house of the Albas must not hear about them. Also the subsequent exhumation of the body, which was undertaken by a special delegation of churchmen, took place behind closed doors, and all the participants had to vow absolute silence. But in spite of all vows the whole town of Ávila knew the following day that the body, when it was removed from its coffin, had shown no signs of decomposition and that one of its hands was stretched out, clearly as a gesture of blessing which she meant to bestow upon her native town. It took exactly as long as it takes a mounted messenger to get from Ávila to Alba, before the nuns at Alba were informed that the tomb before which they mourned and prayed was empty and that the body of their saint stretched out its blessing hand over the town of Ávila. Out of fear of the duchess of Alba the prioress ordered her nuns to preserve absolute silence in this matter. A young lay sister, however, who was working in the kitchen, listened at the door, baked a birthday cake for the ducal patroness, and baked into it a little note in which the whole story of the stolen body and the miracles it had worked in Ávila was reported in full.

The duchess was touched by the simple gift of her devout nuns. She cut the cake with her own ducal hand but got into a frenzy of rage when she read the message of the baked-in note. She forgot her birthday party and all her guests and rushed from her palace out into the street and, running in the direction of the convent, she kept screaming in pitiful lament: "They have stolen my saint! They have stolen my Santa Teresa!" What infamous wrong, crying to high heaven, had been done her! To be sure, Theresa was born in Ávila, but she had died in Alba, and from Alba she had ascended to heaven. Theresa's body was the rightful property of Alba. The duchess of Alba need not tolerate such infamous thievery. She dispatched an express courier to the pope in Rome, requesting him to right the wrong that Alba had suffered. The ducal house of the Albas was a powerful pillar of Roman might. The pope ordered the body to be returned. In order to forestall every possible interference, it was necessary to proceed under the cover of great secrecy. Theresa's body must be stolen again. One night, when the nuns, the bishop and the whole town were fast asleep, a covered wagon rumbled through the city gate of Ávila. It carried Theresa's body back to Alba.

But under the high altar of the church at Alba, where Theresa's

body was now entombed, there was no final rest for it yet. Again and again the tomb was opened by special commissions charged to ascertain that her body was really unaffected by mortal decomposition. And soon the news of her miracle-working powers attracted devout thieves who did not shrink back from plundering her tomb.

Besides this comedy of errors, however, country and church were to bestow more dignified honors on the saint of the discalced reform. The Spanish Cortes and the king of Spain appealed together to Pope Urban VIII, who then declared St. Theresa, jointly with St. James, a patron of Spain. Meanwhile the process of her beatification was well underway. In the year 1614, seventy galleys of the Genoese fleet, under the command of Lord High Admiral Don Carter Porin, arrived at the port of Seville to deliver the decree of beatification of the Seraphic Theresa. Eight years later, forty years after her death, the seraphic *madre* was finally canonized together with Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier.

Among the names of those who supported Theresa's beatification are not only Christian potentates and dignitaries of the church but also the two greatest Spanish authors of the time. Miguel de Cervantes and Lope de Vega. For she, who was here to be admitted into the ranks of the blessed, had been granted, together with the grace of divine visions, also the grace of the word. She had lived the life of a saint and with the genius of a great poet had known how to put her experience into words. The ineffable had befallen her. God had appeared to her in His substanceless essence. And the poet in her had found the words which carried it over into the realm of tangible forms. She found similes for that which nothing resembles, images for what no one imagined and words for what was told her without speech. Her comparisons and her metaphors were considered by Cervantes as "jewels of poetry." She was carried away by ecstasies. In her raptures she was raised into heaven. And the rhythm of her ecstasies and the bliss of her raptures were transposed by her into the rhythm and the beauty of her verses and stanzas.

Teresa de Cepeda, who was now a member of the community of the blessed, was a poet by the grace of God. Her fame as a poet is recognized in the history of letters and lives on through modern

times, while her work as a saintly reformer of the order of the Carmelites is merely a factor in the history of the church. And yet, everything she wrote, with all its immortal beauties, was meant exclusively to be of service to her reform, it has been loved and admired by readers everywhere for close to four hundred years, but it was conceived in all humility for the benefit of a few dis-calced nuns.

Everything in Theresa's life is interdependent. The visionary cannot be separated from the patient, nor the practical reformer from the contemplative mystic. As the one was always caused and determined by the other, so also did the poet come to the fore through the militant nun.

When her plans for the foundation of her first convent became known and started a furious attack of abuse against her, her father confessor made her write down a complete confession which was to supply reliable and detailed information about the outer and inner course of her life. This was the occasion of the first version of her famous *Vida*. The second version, which is the one known today and which differs from the first in that it contains the story of Theresa's dis-calced foundations, was written at the official request of the Grand Inquisitor Francisco Soto y Salazar and was to assist the experts of the Holy Office in their investigation of the disputed case of the dissenting nun of the Carmelite order. This work Theresa composed while she was prioress of St. Joseph's at Ávila, after her day's work, when her nuns had gone to rest. At the time she was almost fifty and still ailing. In her little cell she had no chair, no table, no window panes. It was winter, and the biting Castilian wind blew through the canvas-covered frames. The old *madre* sat crouching on the tile floor, pressing the parchment against the window board and writing in great haste one sheet after another, often hardly able to move her painfully frost-bitten fingers. But she would not give in and sat there and wrote, night after night, often till dawn, often till it was time for her to get up and attend morning mass.

During these icy nights a masterpiece was composed on the window board of the little cell. She did not find the time to polish and cur, to remove grammatical errors and pay attention to correct punctuation. The whole manuscript of the *Vida*, as it is now kept at the Escorial, shows but fourteen corrections, but such flaws are

more than made up for by literary merits, which no other autobiographical work of world literature can claim with the possible exception of St. Augustine's *Confessions*.

The keenness and penetration of her self-analysis amazes modern psychologists and induced the great Danish philosopher Harald Hoeffter to list St. Theresa among the founders of present-day psychology. The conciseness of her account of her illness is not surpassed by any modern pathography, and, aside from Dostoevski, no creative genius has equaled this saintly self-analyst of the sixteenth century in her masterly insight into the functional interdependence of disease and creative powers. Yet all these qualities of her work result simply from the endeavor of a God-fearing nun to present to her confessor and to her judges a factual confession in which nothing is withheld and nothing glossed over. Who reveals himself honestly, reveals himself fully. And thus there emerges from Theresa's *Vida* a complete and lifelike picture of her character—an extraordinary personality, a woman teeming with life, of great determination, humor and sensitivity. And precisely these traits of her character emerge also from her hundreds of fascinating letters, which have been collected in three heavy volumes.

Her confession was written for her confessor and for the Inquisition, for no one else. Her second work was conceived for her nuns. Immediately after the completion of her *Vida*, she began work on her *Way of Perfection*. Here she shows the way which she herself had found after many errors and much suffering. She, who had learned through experience, teaches the inexperienced step by step about the road which leads from vocal prayer to the prayer of silence, from meditation to contemplation, from physical asceticism to the highest form of spiritual asceticism, to the uttermost limits of human existence where the second realm begins in which the Lord Himself welcomes the pilgrim. For although Theresa had been exalted to the noble rank of sainthood by the grace of God, her conception of grace, like that of her contemporary St. Ignatius of Loyola, was deeply democratic, and she held that perfection is attainable for anyone who truly strives after it. She admonished her nuns to seek nothing but the highest. "God deliver you, sisters, from saying when you have done something that is not perfect. 'We are no angels, we are no saints' Though we are not, it is the greatest help to believe that with God's aid we

can be. This sort of presumption I wish to see in this house." And elsewhere "It is true that His Majesty grants His favors to whom He chooses, yet if we sought Him as He seeks us, He would give them to all of us. He only longs for souls on whom He may bestow them, for His gifts do not diminish His riches."

Theresa who had herself been transformed and transfigured by exercises of prayer, imparted in the *Way of Perfection* her knowledge to her nuns. Her directions culminate in her discussion of the Lord's Prayer in which she succeeds in making her readers partake of the whole invigorating power of this prayer. Only Leo Tolstoi, the saint of Jasnaja Poljana, equals Theresa in her grasp of its spiritual immediacy.

The striking imagery, the originality of similes, the passionate eloquence, which are the literary qualities of this work, resulted from the practical endeavor of a prioress to show her nuns the way of perfection. Her mystical experience of God, however, could not be transmitted by the most convincing explanation, by the most exact prosaic description, and since she still wanted to share it with her daughters, she found for it, for their benefit, the poetic form of her hymns. Thus were conceived her most beautiful songs, the "Calls of the Soul to God," and her exquisite "Spiritual Canticles."

In 1577, ten years after the completion of the *Way of Perfection* and five years before her death, Theresa wrote at Toledo her third and last major work, *The Interior Castle*. Thus the story of her soul is rounded off as a trilogy, the mystic directions of the leader of the discalced Carmelite nuns are completed, and the unique art of constructive analysis of the poet Theresa attains consummate and classical perfection. This work, like her earlier ones, was written at the behest and for the benefit of the movement of her reform. Her confessor, Father Jerome Gracian, who meanwhile had been made general of the order of the discalced Carmelites, ordered her to reduce the mystic experiences of her reunion with God to a systematic presentation, suitable for the instruction of her nuns.

By order of one of her earlier confessors at Ávila, Theresa had told in her *Vida* the truthful and detailed story of God's grace and her visions, in her *Way of Perfection* she had showed her nuns the way of prayer which she herself had taken to God. And now Father Gracian requested from her a systematic account of her inner kingdom of God. She was keenly aware of the painful dis-

crepancy between the experience of ecstasy and the verbal rendering of it "Some of it," she writes, "is so sublime that it is not fitting for man, while living in this world, to understand it in a way that can be told, how this which we call *unio mystica* is effected and what it is I cannot tell. Mystical theology explains it, and I do not know the terms of science, nor can I understand what the mind is, nor how it differs from the soul or the spirit either."

When Father Gracian asked her to write *The Interior Castle*, she replied "Why do you want me to write? Let learned men write who have studied, for I am a fool and won't know what I am saying. I will use one word in place of another, and I will do harm. There are plenty of books on these matters. For the love of God, I wish you would let me spin my flax, follow my chores and duties of religion, like the other sisters, for I am not fit for writing." And when she gave in and began her work in a spirit of obedience, she wrote the opening sentence "I know not what to say nor how to commence this work which obedience has laid upon me."

Quite apart from the difficulty of the subject, the circumstances under which she commenced this work were the most unfavorable that could be imagined. The year 1577 was among the hardest of her life. It was a year of desperate struggles which she was forced to wage with tied hands. Her adversaries Tostado and Segá struck blow upon blow against the reform, the mitigation circulated calumnious pamphlets against her, she was exiled to her convent at Toledo and condemned to restrict her fight for the reform to letter-writing. On the 2nd of June she began to write *The Interior Castle*. Two weeks later she had to interrupt and could resume her work only by the middle of November.

All these vicissitudes were aggravated by illness. An epidemic of influenza which had spread all over Spain broke Theresa's power of resistance, and when she finally recovered, her old ills came back with increased violence.

"I must tell you what is going on in my head," she says in *The Interior Castle*. "I suffer from noises which make it almost impossible for me to write about essential business. It seems as though many swollen rivers were rushing within my brain over a precipice, and then again, drowned by the noise of the water, are voices of birds singing and whistling. I weary my brain and increase my headaches by striving to obey."

Yet no sooner had she begun to write than she achieved the impossible and managed to describe the divine events which she had witnessed in her visions. The fitting expression for the inexpressible came with easy precision. The distinction between the various types of vision was carried through by this humble and untutored nun with a degree of lucidity which scholars later on have compared to that of the great scholastic thinker St. Thomas Aquinas. All external troubles vanished, the whole world of external events faded away while she was writing *The Interior Castle*. And even the interruption of full five months, which the struggle for the reform imposed upon her, seemed to last but one second. When she took up her work again, it was as though she were merely proceeding on a new sheet. The whole turmoil of rushing rivers, the singing and whistling of birds in her head, was silenced as soon as she set out to write about divine truth and the meaning of all creation. Let all physical ills torture her, the nun who was describing the treasure of her soul, did not feel her body. But then, was this really an ailing, untutored nun, who sat there writing? Ecstasy was writing for her! Ecstasy, which knows all words and similes and which has the power to express the inexpressible, which knows more about the distinctions between various kinds of vision than the most learned doctors of the church. And such ecstasy is not a thing of this world. Persecutions cannot harm it. Rushing waters and the twitter of birds cannot disturb it. Such ecstasy it was that wrote down on paper Theresa's *Interior Castle* in four short weeks.

Legend has it that a nun once entered Theresa's cell to deliver a message and found the *madre* sitting in front of a blank sheet of parchment. Theresa had not noticed that someone had entered and the nun observed she was in a trance. When Theresa came to again, the sheet was all covered with her forceful handwriting. In one of her letters to brother Lorenzo, Theresa described this ecstatic period in her life in her characteristically impressive style. "I go about these days like a drunkard in some ways."

On November 29th, 1577, the work was finished. "Although, as I told you," she says in the epilogue, "I felt reluctant to begin this work, yet now it is finished, I am very glad to have written it, and I think my trouble has been worth while, though I confess it has cost me but little. If anything in this book is to the point, you must understand that it did not originate in me and that there is no rea-

son to attribute it to me, for with my scant understanding and skill I could write nothing of this sort, unless God, in His mercy, enabled me to do so "

The *madre*, whose only concern in life was to show her nuns the way to God, wrote this book, too, as she says, "only to my sisters, the idea that anyone else could benefit from it, would be absurd." But no sooner had Luis de León, one of the greatest poets of the Spanish renaissance, published her work by order of the king, than fame took it immediately upon its wings. And fame corrected her humbly erroneous verdict and incorporated the work, which was written for her nuns, in the treasure of the inalienable possessions of mankind.

Immortalized by posterity, the *madre* of a Spanish convent became the seraphic mother which we see in her today. Her spiritual descendants grew more numerous as the centuries rolled on. To the ranks of her discolored daughters were added popes and theologians, great poets and thinkers. Pascal and Malebranche, Leibnitz and even Voltaire, the apostle of skepticism, were among them. The truth of her teachings has not been shaken by centuries of scientific thought. She is the seraphic mother, today as yesterday and tomorrow, for all those who wish to transcend the ephemerality of ego and world, to start on the road of perfection to God. That the goal, toward which her road takes us, does actually exist, has been confirmed before and after her time by all the loftiest teachers of mankind: the Brahmins of the Upanishads eight hundred years before Christ, Sakyamani, the mystical teacher of Buddhism, St. Paul, the Neoplatonists, the mystics of the Middle Ages, the poets of Persian Sufism, and painters and poets as el Greco, Milton, Tennyson, William Blake, Francis Thompson.

But what made of the *madre* of Avila the seraphic mother of the great *chorus mysticus*, is mainly her motherliness. In her writings a mother guides with loving hands the novice to the ultimate secrets of God. For Theresa not only knew the way but pursued it as a loving and motherly guide encouraging others to follow.

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INDEX

A

- Abelard, Pierre, 150
 "About the Happy Life" (St Augustine), 132
 "About Order" (St Augustine), 132
 "About the Teacher" (St Augustine), 132
 "About the Trinity" (St Augustine), 143
 Abyssinia, Jesuit power in, 319, 321
 Academicians, 109
 Adams, John, opposition to Jesuits by, 326
 Adeodatus, son of St Augustine, 102, 115, 131, 132, 133
 Aegidius, Brother, 194-196, 203
 Africa contribution to Christianity of, 133, as land of St Augustine, 94, 100, 133, monasticism in, 73, national church of, 136, Vandals in, 138 *See also* Egypt
 "Against the New Academy" (St Augustine), 132
 Agnes, Sister, 220, 221
 Ahirman, 27
 Ahumeda, Doña Beatriz de, 333-334, 337
 Alarc, 138
 Alba de Tormes, Spain, death of St Theresa in, 412-415
 Albertus Magnus, Saint, 82
 Albigenses, 155, 205, 206
 Alcalá, Spain, 293-295, 304
 Alcántara, Pedro de, 376-377, 382, 386, 387
 Alexander, archbishop of Alexandria, 53, 56
 Alexander, Samuel, cited, 423
 Alexandria, Egypt Anthony's comfort of persecuted Christians in, 41-47, archbishops of, 19, 53, 56, contribution to Christianity of, 133, pilgrims to Anthony from, 50, theological conflict in, 53-54, 56-61, 66
 Algeria, *see* Numidia
 Alvarez, Baltasar, 370-373, 374, 375, 376
 Alverno mountain, as refuge for St Francis, 224-225, 260-261
 Alviano, Italy, St Francis' miracle of the birds at, 228-229, 235-236, 250
 Alypius, 118-119, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133
Amadis de Gaula (Garcia Ordóñez de Montalvo), 278, 280, 333, 334
 Amador, 296
 Amanas, 57, 69, 70
 Ambrose, Saint conversion to Christianity of, 126, faith in Christ the God of, 61, hymns of, 81, 122-125, influence on Augustine of, 113-114, 121-125, 132, 133, 137, and monasticism, 75, writings of, 79
 America discovery of, 329, Jesuits in, 323-324
 Amiel, Henri Frédéric, 147, cited, 427
 Amugant, Doña Angélica de, 282
 Amon, Egyptian god, 21
 Ancona, Italy, St Francis' mission to, 195
 Andalusia, Discalced Carmelites in, 402-403
 Angelico, Fra, 62
 Angelo, Brother, 202, 226, 228, 246-247, 260, 261
 Angelo, Fra, 285-286
 Anglade, Joseph, cited, 429
 Anselm, Saint, 82, 150
 Anson, Peter F, cited, 426
 Anthonins, order of, 89
 Anthony, Saint, 19-93, artistic themes based on, 19, 85-93, and Augustine, contrasted, 94-96, 110, 117, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, bibliography on, 426-427, death of, 69-70, love as final fulfillment for, 157-158, monastic movement inspired by, 70-85, renunciation of world by, 23-24, sainthood of, 39-52, 57-70, 93, temptations of, 25-39, youth of, 20-23

- Apis, sacred bull, 42
 Apollo, temple of, 144
 Aquinas, Saint Thomas, 82, 150, 171, 420
 Arabian Desert, St Anthony in, 34-41, 48-52, 65-70
 Arcy, d', cited, 427
 Arevalo, royal residence of, 273, 275, 276
 Ariens, 121-124, 137 *See also* Arius
 Aristotelian tradition, 150
 Aristotle, 84
 Arius, theological doctrine of, 51-62
 See also Ariens
 Arizona, Jesuit teaching in, 324
 Arquilière, Henri Xavier, cited, 427
 Arsac, J d', cited, 430
 Asia Minor, origin of Christianity in, 133
 Assisi, Italy, native town of St Francis, 158 ff, dying return to, 267-270
 Athanasius, Saint and Anthony, admiration for, 19, 71, 72, 128, and monasticism, 75, and music, 81, traditional doctrine supported by, 53-61, works, cited, 426
 Augustine, Saint, 94-152, and Anthony, contrasted, 94-96, 110, 117, 128, 129, 130, 131, 133, bibliography on, 427-429, Christian life of, 133-139, conversion to Christianity of, 113, 120-133, death of, 138, education of, 95-105, faith in Christ the God of, 61, and Ignatius, comparison, 272-273, 284, influence of, 144-152, 290-291, and monasticism, 75, the rhetorician, 105-132, and Theresa, influence of *Confessions* on, 366, and Theresa, similarity to, 367, writings of, 79, 132, 135, 139-144, 147-149, 150, 427
 Augustinian convent, St Theresa's education in, 337-339, 342
 Augustinians, contact with people by, 310
 Aurelius, Marcus, 144
 Avila, Spain, native town of St Theresa, 332 ff, claim to her body by, 413-415

B

- Babylonia, monasticism in, 71
 Bach, Johann Sebastian, 4, 63
 Bacon, Francis, 1, 6
 Bacon, Robert, 232
 Bakewell, Charles Montague, cited, 427
 Ball, Hugo, cited, 423, 426
 Balzac, Honoré de, 4
 Bancs, Domingo, 377, 391
 Barbarossa, *see* Frederick I
 Barbero, Brother, 203
 Barcelona, Spain, 286, 293
 Barkër, Ethel Ross, cited, 427
 Baroque style, 151, 325
 Barrès, Maurice, 17, cited, 431
 Barrone, Vincente de, 363, 364
 Basil the Great, Saint, 71, 75
 Baudelaire, Pierre Charles, 4, 88
 Bavagna, Italy, journey of St Francis to, 226
 Bayle, Pierre, 1
 Bazin, René, cited, 423
 Becedas, Spain, illness of St Theresa in, 351
 Beckwith, Clarence Augustine, cited, 423
 Redouins, journey of St Anthony with the, 51-52
 Beethoven, Ludwig van, 4, 61
 Belisarius, 78
 Benedict, Saint, 75-78
 Benedictine order, 76-82, 87, compared to life of Franciscans, 197-198
 Benedictine Rule, 76
 Berdyacv, Nicolas, cited, 426
 Bergson, Henri Louis, 7, 69, 142, cited, 423
 Bernard, Saint, 82, 87, 150, 364
 Bernardo, Brother, 203 *See also* Quintavalle, Bernardo de
 Bernardone, Pietro, father of St Francis, 158, 159, 162, 163, 173-177, 212
 Bernini, Giovanni Lorenzo, 326
 Bertram, Ernst, 84
 Bertrand, Louis, cited, 427, 431
 Bethlehem, journey of St Francis to, 245
 Betran, Luis de, 382
 Bett, Henry, cited, 429
 Bible, the and Anthony, 22, 23, 24, and Augustine, 104, 105, 114, 120, and Francis, 190, and Ignatius, 303-304, and Marius Victorinus, 127
 Birt, Theodor, cited, 428
 Blake, William, 4, 421
 Bobadilla, 305, 313
 Boehmer, Heinrich, cited, 430
 Boethius, 149-150
 Bollandus, Joannes, cited, 423
 Bologna, Italy, 237-238, 253, 254
 Bombarone, Elias, *see* Elias, Brother

Bonà; *see* Hippo Regius
 Bonaventura, Saint, 82, cited, 429
 Borgia, Francis de, 369-370, 382
 Borgo San Sepolchro, 246
 Bosch, Hieronymus, 27, 87-88, 89
 Bose, Jagadis, 12
 Boskovich, Jesuit scientist, 324
 Bourbon, Antoine, cited, 426
 Boutroux, Emile, 7
 Brahmans, 83, 421
 Branford, Victor, cited, 423
 Brazil, mapped by Jesuits, 324
 Breysig, Kurt, cited, 423, 431
 Brienne, Walter of, 168
 Britain, spread of Christianity in, 81
 Britain, Alfred, cited, 423, 426
 Brou, Alexandre, cited, 430
 Brucker, J., cited, 430
 Brueghel, Pieter, 27, 88-89, 90
 Buber, Martin, 431
 Buddha the Enlightened, 27, 83-84
 Buddhism, 104, 421
 Buhler, Johannes, cited, 423
 Bussell, Frederick William, cited, 421
 Butler, Alban, cited, 423
 Butler, Edward Cuthbert, cited, 426, 428
 Byron, Robert, cited, 426
 Byzantine era, 145

C

Caesar, Julius, 81
 Caesaria, Basilas bishop of, 75
 Calderon de la Barca, Pedro, 326
 California, Jesuit teaching in, 324
 Callot, Jacques, 90
 "Calls of the Soul to God" (St Theresa), 418
 Calvin, John, 84, 291, 331
 Campbell, James Marshall, cited, 423
 Campbell, Thomas Joseph, cited, 430
Cancomere (Francesco Petrarch), 145
 Candia, Duke of, *see* Borgia, Francis de
Cantico de lo Frate Sole (St Francis), 263-265, 267-268, 269
Canticum Fratris Solis, *see* *Cantico de lo Frate Sole*
 Cardano, Girolamo, 146
 Carlyle, Thomas, 61-62, opposition to Jesuits by, 326
 Carmelite convent of the Incarnation, *see* Incarnation, Carmelite convent of the
 Carmelite order, 345-349, reform by St Theresa, 348, 378-410

Carne, J., cited, 430
 Carrell, Alexis, 359, cited, 423
 Cartesian rationalism, 151
 Carthage, St Augustine's years in, 100-105, 107-111, 118, 135
 Carthusians, 87
 Case, Shirley Jackson, cited, 423, 426
 Cassiciacum, St Augustine's retirement to, 131-132
 Cassiodorus, 79, 80
 Cassirer, Ernst, cited, 428
 Castile country of St Theresa, 312 ff., revolt in, 276
 Cathari, 155
 Catherine de Médicis, Queen, 319
 Catholic Church, *see* Church, the
 Catholic College, Oxford, 323
 Cattani, Pietro dei, *see* Pietro, Brother
 Celano, Thomas of, 159-160, 231
 Celina, Joachim da, 156
 Céline, Ferdinand, 147
 Cellini, Benvenuto, 146, cited, 428
 Cepeda, Antonio de, 342-343, 346
 Cepeda, Don Alonso Sanchez de, 332-333, 336-337, 342-343, 345-346, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 363
 Cepeda, Lorenzo de, 42, 386, 420
 Cepeda, María de, 337, 343, 344, 350
 Cepeda, Pedro de, 343, 350
 Cepeda, Rodrigo de, 334
 Cepeda, Teresa de, *see* Theresa, Saint
 Cervantes, Miguel de, 415
 Cetinas, Diego de, 369
 Ceylon, 316
 Cézanne, Paul, 19, 92
 Chapman, John, cited, 426
 Charlemagne, 149
 Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, 276, 307
Chat Noir, artist group, 92
 Chateaubriand, François Auguste René, cited, 423
 Chaumette, Pierre Gaspard, 3
 Chesterton, Ada Elizabeth, cited, 431
 Chesterton, Gilbert Keith, cited, 423, 429
 China, the Jesuits in, 316, 324
 Chitomachon, Indian chief, 323
 Chusi, Orlando di, 224-225
 Christ, *see* Jesus Christ
 Christianity African contribution to, 133, art of, 62-63, 85, 229-231, Augustine's contribution to, 136, 139-152, Augustine's study of, 113, 120-133, Crusades of, 243-245, Francis's con-

- tribunon to, 156-158, 209-211, 231-238, 332, introduction into Egypt of, 21, monastic movement in, 70-85, 87, mysticism in, 150, and the Roman Empire, 41-50, 51, 61, 71-73, and Satan, 27, theological conflict in, 52-63, 121-124, 136-137 *See also* Church, the
- Christine, Queen of Sweden, 323
- Church, the Augustine's contribution to, 135, 136-137, controversies within, 52-63, 121-124, 136-137, 291-292, declining power of, 309-310, 331-332, 'Francis' contribution to, 209-211, power of, 52, 80, 81, 153-155, 205, revolt against, 2, role of, 150-151
- Cicero, influence on St Augustine of, 102-103, 104, 114
- Cimabue, Giovanni, 231, 265
- Circumcellions, 136
- Cistercians, 87, 156
- City of God, *The* (St Augustine), 147-149, 151
- Civitas Dei*, *see* City of God, *The*
- Clair, P., cited, 430
- Clairvaux, mystic of, 82, 87
- Clara, Saint, 217-222, 225, 262, 263
- Clarists, *see* Poor Clares
- Clarke, William Kemp, cited, 426
- Claudel, Paul, 5
- Cluniacensians, 87
- Cochrane, Charles Norris, cited, 428
- Collège Sainte-Barbe, 296, 297-305
- Collegium Romanum, 312
- Colorado River, Jesuit exploration of, 324
- Columbia, District of, Jesuit role in settling, 323
- Coma, Egypt, birthplace of St Anthony, 20-24, 32, 42, 94
- Combès, Gustave, cited, 428
- Company of Jesus, *see* Jesuit order
- Comte, Auguste, 341, cited, 428
- Confessions* (St Augustine), 139-140, influence of, 144-147, 151, 366, quoted, 96 ff, 112 ff, 125-126, 129-130, 140-144
- Confessions* (Jean Jacques Rousseau), 146
- Consolation of Philosophy, The* (Boethius), 149-150
- Constantia, sister of Emperor Constantine, 56
- Constantine the Great, Emperor of Rome, 47-50, 52, 54-55, 56
- Constantius, Emperor of Rome, 57
- Constitutions* (St Ignacius), 317-318
- Conybeare, Frederick Cornwallis, cited, 423
- Copernicus, Nikolaus, 330
- Coptic Christianity, 21-22, 24, 29, 95
- Cortes, Hernando, 329, 415
- Cosgrave, John O'Hara, cited, 428
- Couton, George Gordon, cited, 429
- Council of Trent, 331, 394, 405
- Counter Reformation, 319
- Courtenay, Charles, cited, 426
- Cranach, Lucas, 86
- Crashaw, Richard, cited, 431
- Cromwell, Oliver, 84
- Cros, Léonard Joseph Manè, cited, 430
- Crusades, the, 243-245
- Cuellar, Don Juan Velásquez de, 273, 275
- Cuellar, Doña Maria Velásquez de, 273, 274, 275
- Cunningham, William, cited, 428
- Cynics, 84

D

- Dallas, Robert Charles, cited, 430
- Damietta, Egypt, crusaders at, 244-245
- Dante, Alighieri, 4, 62, 84, 231, 265
- Darwin, Charles, 12, 13
- Dashuell, John Frederick, cited, 428
- Daurignac, J., cited, 430
- Davidson, Henry M P., cited, 428
- Dávila, Doña María, 392-393
- Dávila, José, 393
- Dawson, Christopher, cited, 423
- Daza, Fray Gaspar, 368-369, 372, 373, 377, 389
- De Consolatione Philosophiae* (Boethius), 149-150
- De Magistro* (St Augustine), 132
- De Quincey, Thomas, 147
- De vera Religione* (St Augustine), 135
- De Vita Solitaria* (Francesco Petrarch), 146
- Decius, Emperor of Rome, 24, 63
- Del Pozzo, Andrea, 325
- Delaware, Jesuit teaching in, 324
- Delehaye, Hippolyte, cited, 426
- Delphic inscription, 144
- Der el Memun, *see* Meimoun
- Descartes, René, 3, 151, 326, cited, 428
- Devil, the Anthony's battles with, 25-39, interpretations of, 27-28 *See also* Satan
- Diderot, Denis, 326

- Dill, Sir Samuel, cited, 428
 Discalced Carmelites, naming of, 388-389 *See also* Carmelite order
 Divini, Brother, 234-235
Doctrina Christiana (St Augustine), 150
 Dominic, Saint, 243, influence on St Ignatius of, 278, 281
 Dominican monastery of St Thomas, 346, 374, 377
 Dominican order, 243, contact with people by, 310, and Ignatius, struggle against doctrine of, 291-292, Inquisition control by, 377, and Theresa, aid to, 382, 383, 391
 Donatists, 136, 137, 151
 Dostoevski, Fedor, 4, 62, 147, 341, 355, 417, opposition to Jesuits by, 326
 Dreydorff, Johann Georg, cited, 430
 Duchesne, Louis Marie Oliver, cited, 423
 Duport, Jacques, 3
 Durer, Albrecht, 4, 27, 62, 86, 89, 92
 Duruelo, monastery of Discalced Carmelites at, 397-398
 Dutch art, St Anthony theme in, 86, 87-88

E

- Eboli, Princess Ana, 398-399, 404
 Eckart, Master, 150, 364
 Eddington, Arthur Stanley, 9, 14, cited, 423, 424
 Egan, Maurice, cited, 429
 Egypt and Anthony, country of, 20 ff, 94, conception of the Devil in, 27, crusaders in, 244-245, Francis' journey to, 244-245, 254, 258, 259, introduction of Christianity in, 21, monasticism developed in, 71, orthodox faith in, 56-57
Either-Or (Kierkegaard), 84
 Elias, Brother, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 269-270
 Elizabeth of Schonau, 153, 154
 Ellwood, Charles Abram, cited, 426
 Engelbert, King of Britain, 81
 England confessional literature in, 146-147, Jesuit influence in, 323
Enneads (Plotinus), 119, 127
 Erigena, Scotus, 150
 Eschweiler, Karl, cited, 428
 Eskridge, James Burnette, cited, 428
 Essenes, 84
 Eulenberg, Herbert, cited, 428

- Europe, contribution to Christianity of, 133
 Eusebius, bishop of Nicodemia, 53, 56
 Eusebius, Pope, 380
 Eyck, van, Hubert and Jan, 62, 86

F

- Fabiola, 75
 Faunus, priests of, 136
 Faustus, 108-109, 111
 Feder, A., cited, 430
 Ferdinand the Catholic, King of Spain, 273
 Ferrero, Guglielmo, cited, 428
 Fiesole, Giovanni da, *see* Angelico, Fra Fiore, Italy, 156
 Flaubert, Gustave, 19, 90-92, cited, 426
 Flemish art, St Anthony theme in, 86, 87-88, 90
Flor Sanctorum, 278, 333
 Foakes-Jackson, Frederick John, cited, 424
 Foerster, Th., cited, 428
 Foix, Germaine de, *see* Germaine, Queen
 Fonte Colombo, preparation of Franciscan rule at, 257, 258
 Forbes, Francis Alice, cited, 431
 France confessional literature of, 146-147, Jesuit power in, 319, 323, philosophical trends in, 3, 7-8, twelfth-century influence of, 161, war with Spain by, 275-277, 307
 France, Anatole, 19, 92-93, cited, 426
 Francis, Saint, 153-271, and Pedro de Alcántara, rebirth in, 376, and Anthony, as descendant of, 82, apostleship of, 187-229, the beggar, 177-187, bibliography on, 429, break with old life by, 165-177, contribution to Christianity of, 156-158, 209-211, 231-238, 332, dying years of, 258-271, in the Holy Land, 243-245, and Ignatius, influence on, 278, 281, influence on cultural history of, 229-238, 265-266, love as the essence of, 156-158, 233-251, 259-261, 267, the merchant's son, 158-165, resignation from office in powerful brotherhood by, 251-258, sainthood of, 213, 253, and Theresa, influence on and similarity to, 340, 350, 412-413, works, cited, 429 *See also* Franciscan order

- Francis I, King of France, 276, 307
 Franciscan order burial of Isabella of Castile in cowl of, 273, burial of Pope Innocent III in cowl of, 240-241, contact with people by, 310, early rules of, 204, 236-237, 238, growth and organization of, 242-243, 247-248, 251-258, influence on art of, 231, papal confirmation of, 204-211, reformation by Pedro de Alcántara of, 376, 387, resignation of St Francis from office in, 251-258, and Theresa, aid to, 382
 Franklin, Benjamin, moral system compared to that of St Ignatius, 289
 Frederick I, Holy Roman Emperor, 154
 Freer, Arthur, cited, 429
 French art, St Anthony theme in, 90, 92
 French Revolution, reason made supreme by, 3, 7
 Freud, Sigmund, 142, 318, cited, 424
 Friars Minor, 204, confirmation of, 206-211. *See also* Franciscan order
 Friedell, Egon, cited, 424
 Friedlaender, Ludwig, cited, 424
 Frost, Bede, cited, 431
 Funk, Philipp, cited, 430

G

- Gaiseric, King of the Vandals, 138
 Galen, Claudius, 349
 Galileo, 9
 Garçon, Maurice, cited, 426
 Gaul monasticism in, 73, spread of Christianity in, 81
 Gautama, *see* Buddha the Enlightened
 Geneva, of John Calvin, 291, 331
 Genoa, Italy, Flaubert's inspiration of St Anthony in, 90, 91
 Georgetown, Jesuit teaching in, 324
 Germaine, Queen, 273-275
 German art, St Anthony theme in, 86, 89-90
 Germany confessional literature in, 146-147, Jesuit power in, 319
 Gethsemane, St Ignatius' visualizing of, 288
 Ghent, Belgium, altar by van Eyck at, 62, 86
 Gibbon, Edward, cited, 424, 428
 Gilson, Etienne Henry, cited, 428
 Ginepro, Brother, 217, 241
 Giotto, 231, 265
 Glover, Terrot Reaveley, cited, 428

- Goa, Portuguese India, 313-316
 Gode-von Aesch, Alexander, cited, 424
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 28, 29, 146, 326
 Gogh, Vincent van, 4-5, 341
 Gogol, Nikolai, 4
 Goheim, Eberhard, cited, 430
 Gothic art, inspiration of, 62, 85
 Goths, 61, 78, 79, 136, 138
 Gouvea, Jacques, 297-298
 Gracian, Father Jerome, 402, 403, 404, 405, 410, 413, 418, 419
 Graham, Gabriela Cunningham, cited, 431
 Granada, Spain burial of Isabella of Castile at, 273, monastery of Discalced Carmelites at, 402
 Grandgeogre, L., cited, 428
 Greco, el, 4, 62, 137, 421
 Greek Christianity, 52-53
 Gregorian chant, 82, 124
 Gregory I (The Great), Pope, 80-82, cited, 426
 Gregory IX, Pope, *see* Ugolino, Cardinal
 Gregory XIII, Pope, 408
 Griesinger, Theodor, cited, 430
 Grimaldi, Jesuit scientist, 324
 Grunewald, Matthias, 27, 62, 89-90
 Gubbio, Italy, St Francis and the wolf at, 250-251
 Guido, Bishop, 175-177, 197-198, 212, 267, 268
 Gupuzcoa, Spain, bill of indictment against Ignatius from, 272
 Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, 323

H

- Haldane, John Scott, 13-14, cited, 424
 Handel, Georg Friedrich, 63
 Hannah, Ian Campbell, cited, 426
 Harms, Ernst, 426
 Harnack, Adolf von, cited, 424, 427, 428
 Harrasser, G., cited, 430
 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 2
 Heiler, Friedrich, cited, 424, 431
 Heine, Heinrich, 4, 341
 Heimer, Franz, cited, 430
 Henry, Paul, cited, 428
 Henry IV, King of France, 323
 Henry VIII, King of England, 331
 Heraclitus, 84, 144
 Herder, Johann Gottfried von, 265, 326

- Terencia**, Antonio de, 396-397
Terrera Orta, Enrique, cited, 430
Valarion, Saint, 71, 81
Hildegard, Saint, 154-155, 340
Hindus, asceticism of, 83
Hippo Regius, diocese of St Augustine, 135-139
Hocking, William Ernest, cited, 424, 431
Hodges, George, cited, 424
Hoefler, Harald, 417
Hogan, John Gerard, cited, 431
Holland, as background of Brueghel's portrayal of St Anthony, 89
Holy Land, Crusades for, 243-245, and St Ignatius, 280, 285-286, 306-307
Holy Roman Empire, idea of, 149
Honorius III, Pope, 243
Hopkins, Gerard Manley, 4
Horace, poems transcribed by Benedictines, 79
Hortensius (Cicero), 103, 114
Hortigosa, St Theresa in, 343, 350
House of Martha, 309
Hudson Bay, Jesuit exploration of, 324
Hügel, Friedrich Freiherr von, cited, 432
Hugo, Victor, 146
Huizinga, Johan, cited, 424
Huss, John, 151
Huxley, Thomas Henry, cited, 424

I

- Ibañez**, Pedro de, 377, 383, 384, 386, 391
Ignatius, Saint, 272-327, bibliography on, 430-431, conversion to Christianity of, 278-285, death of, 321-322, greatness of, 327, Jesuit order founded by, 292-293, 305-327, 369, and the Reformation, battle against, 331, as the saint of will power, 283-312, 317-322, 327, and Theresa, similarity to, 340, 417, youth of, 272-279, works, cited, 431
Incarmentation, Carmelite convent of the, and St Theresa, 345, 346-349, 353-354, 358-370, 378-384, 385-387, detention at, 389-392, reform of, 400-402
India ascetic doctrine in, 83-84, Jesuit mission in, 313-316
Indian tribes, Jesuit missionary work among, 323, 325
Indo-China, Jesuit language dictionaries of, 325

- Innocent III**, Pope, 205-212, death of, 239-241
Inquisition, 151, and Ignatius, 195, 196-297, and Theresa, 371, 374, 376-377, 404-405, 416
Institutes of the Christian Religion (John Calvin), 291
Interior Castle (St Theresa), 418-421, quoted, 356-357
Ireland, spread of Christianity in, 81
Isabella of Castile, Queen, 273, 274
Isenheim altar, pictures of St Anthony on, 89-90
Isola Maggiore, fast of St Francis at, 223-250
Italian art, St Anthony theme in, 86, 89
Italian Journey (Goethe), 316
Italic Version, Bible, 104
Italy country of St Francis, 158 ff., Jesuit power in, 319, pilgrims to St Anthony from, 50, struggle against German rule by, 168
Ivan the Terrible, 323

J

- James**, Brother, 217
James, Saint, 415
James, William, 6-7, cited, 424
James II, King of England, 323
Jansenists, 151, 291-292
Japan, work of Jesuits in, 316, 325
Jeans, James Hopwood, 10, 14
Jedlicka, Gothard, cited, 427
Jefferson, Thomas, warned against Jesuits, 326
Jerome, Saint, 63, 73, 75, 79, influence of writings on St Theresa, 343-344
Jerusalem Francis in, 145, Ignatius' crusade to, 280, 285-286, 306-307
Jesuit order basis of, 292-293, 305-306, confirmation of, 318-319, cultural influence of, 322-327, development and organization of, 306-322, and Jansenists, clash with, 151, naming of, 304, and Theresa, aid to, 369-373, 382
Jesus Christ and Anthony, 21, 23, 33-34, Augustine's acceptance of, 130, 133, 137, belief of saints in, 17-18, conflict over nature of, 52-63, 121-124, 137, and Francis, in spirit of, 157-158, 172-173, 188, 193-194, 225, 232-233, 260-261, Ignatius' visualizing of, 288, and Satan, 27, 31, and Theresa, renewal of faith through, 331-332

Job, 27, 31
 John, Brother, the first, 196-197, 212
 John, Brother, the second, 203
 John, Friar, *see* John of the Cross, Saint
 John, Saint, Revelation of, 84
 John of the Cross, Saint, 396-397, 401, 406, 408-409
 John of St Paul, Cardinal, 205-206, 209
 John II Casimir, King of Poland, 323
 John III, King of Portugal, 313, 321
 Jones, Sir Henry, cited, 24
 Jorgensen, Johannes, cited, 429
 Joseph, Saint, as patron of St Theresa's convents, 389
 Jovy, Ernest, cited, 430
 Joyce, James, 147
 Juana, friend of St Theresa, 342, 345, 346
 Julian, Father, 393, 395
 Jung, Carl Gustav, cited, 424, 427, 432
 Juniper, Brother, *see* Ginepro, Brother
 Jusserand, Jules, cited, 429
 Justina, mother of Emperor Valentinian II, 115, 121, 123, 124

K

Kant, Immanuel, 2, 8
 Karrer, Otto, cited, 432
 Kautsky, Karl, cited, 427
 Keats, John, 84
 Kepler, Johannes, 2, 8, 326, 330
 Kierkegaard, Danish philosopher, 84, 147, 152
 Kip, William Ingraham, cited, 430
 Kircher, Athanasius, 324
 Knox, John, 331
 Knox, Wilfred Lawrence, cited, 424
 Kobler, A., cited, 424
 Koehler, B., cited, 430

L

La Cerda, Luise de, 383-384, 398
 La Cruz, Magdalena de, 371
 La Flor, Maria de, 294
 Labriolle, Pierre Champagne de, cited, 424
 Lake, Kirsopp, cited, 424
 Largent, Augustin, cited, 428
 Latourette, Kenneth Scott, cited, 424
 Laynez, 304-305, 306, 307, 312, 319
 Lazarus the beggar, 172
 Lazarus of Jerusalem, Saint, hospital order of, 171, 173

Le Fèvre, Pierre, 298-301, 304, 306, 307, 312, 319
 Lecky, William Edward, cited, 427
 Leibnitz, Gottfried Wilhelm von, 3, 326, 421
 Leon, Luis de, 421
 Leope, Brother, 217, 223, 249, 257, 260, 261-262, 266, 270
 Leuba, James Henry, cited, 432
 Leyden, Lucas van, 86
Life of Christ (Ludolphus), 278
 Ligue, rebellion of, 323
 Lippert, Peter, cited, 430
 Lisbon, Portugal, 313
 Locke, John, 1
 Lombards, 78
 Lomer, Georg, cited, 430
 Lorulot, André, cited, 431
 Lor, Ferdinand, cited, 424
 Louis XIV, King of France, 292
 Louis XV, King of France, 323
 Loyola, Ignatius de, *see* Ignatius, Saint
 Luccis, cited, 431
 Lucius, Ernst, cited, 425
 Ludolphus of Saxony, 278
 Ludwig, Emil, cited, 427
 Luke, Saint, Gospel according to, 246
 Lupercalia, festival of, 136
 Luthardt, Christoph Ernst, cited, 425
 Luther, Martin, 27, 62, 86, 151, 291, 331, 355
 Lybian Desert, St Anthony's years in tombs of, 29-34

M

Marcanus, 49, 50-51, 57-58, 60, 69, 70
 Macellinus, 147
 McGiffert, Arthur Cushman, cited, 425
 Mach, Ernst, 5
 Mackinnon, James, cited, 427
Madame Bovary (Gustave Flaubert), 90
 Madaura, Numidia, 98, 106
 Madrid, Spain, St Theresa's mission to, 407
 Maffei, Giovanni Pietro, cited, 431
 Magellan, Fernando, 329
 Malaga, Spain, paralytic fit of St Theresa in, 410
 Malebranche, Nicolas de, 152, 421
 Malik al Kamil, 245
 Mandonnet, Pierre Félix, cited, 429
 Manes, 104-105 *See also* Manichaeism

- Manichaeism**, 104-106, 108-109, 111, 112, 113, 137
Manresa, Catalonia, St Ignatius in, 281-285
Mara, devil of Buddha, 37
Marcella, Roman noblewoman, 73
Maréchal, Joseph, cited, 432
Manejol, Jean Hippolyte, cited, 432
Maritain, Jacques, cited, 425
Markwald, General, 163
Martha, House of, 309
Martynus, Saint, 172
Mary Queen of Scots, 331
Maryland, Jesuit role in founding of, 323
Mass, the music established in, 81-82
Mass in B minor (Bach), 63
Mass Psychology and Analysis of the Ego (Sigmund Freud), 318
Musseo, Brother, 217, 228, 241, 260, 261
Mathews, Shailer, cited, 415
Matthew, Saint, Gospel according to, 23, 186, 246, 303, 358
Mavennus, 47
Maximianus Dair, Emperor, 41, 43-44
Maxwell, scientist, 324
Mayer, Anton, cited, 425
Macklin, John Moffatt, cited, 425
Medina del Campo, St Theresa's Carmelite reform in, 395-396, 398
Mediations (Marcus Aurelius), 141
Maiamoun, Egypt, 35, 38, 48, 50
Meier-Gräfe, Julius, cited, 425
Melania, concubine of Augustine, 101-102, 115
Memling, Hans, 62
Menschler, M., cited, 431
Mervale, Charles, cited, 428
Mexico conquered by Cortes, 329, Jesuits in, 324
Michael, L. F., cited, 425
Michel, André, cited, 425
Michelangelo, 4, 89, 316
Michelet, Jules, cited, 431
Middle Ages and Augustine, influence of, 290-291, culture of, 1, 2, 150, and Francis, influence of, 229, 235, 238, 265, monastic movement of, 70, 74, 78-83, mystics of, 421
Milan, Italy Augustine in, 112-131, 132-133, edict of toleration issued in, 47, pilgrims to St Anthony from, 50
Millikan, Robert Andrews, 8-9, 14, cited, 425
Milton, John, 421
Missa Solemnis (Beethoven), 63
Mississippi River, Jesuit exploration of, 324
Moerchen, F., cited, 415
Mohammed, 84, 245, 340, 355
Mohler, Johann Adam, cited, 427
Molière, 326
Mommisen, Theodor, cited, 429
Monakoff, Konstantin von, 12
Monceaux, Paul, cited, 429
Monica, mother of St Augustine, 95-97, 98, 99-100, 101, 102, 104, 106, 111, 115, 121, 124, 125, 131, 134-135
Mont Ventoux, 145
Montaigne Collège, 296
Montalvo, García Ordóñez de, 333
Monte Casale, Franciscan hermitage, 246-247
Monte Cassino, Benedictine monastery, 76, 79
Montefeltro castle, sermon of St Francis at, 223-224
Montmartre, oath of St Ignatius and his disciples at chapel, 305-306
Monserat, St Ignatius' consecration at church of, 280
Moore, Virginia, cited, 432
More, Sir Thomas, cited, 429
Morgan, Conway Lloyd, cited, 425
Morico, Brother, 196, 199, 200-201, 202
Moslems, war against, 243-245
Mount Carmel, first Carmelite house on, 378, 381
Mount Colzin, 52, 94
Mount Pispir, St Anthony's refuge at, 34-40, 48, 50, 57, 63, 66
Mount Subasio, 222, 225
Mozart, Wolfgang, 326
Murillo, Bartolome, 62
Murray, John O'Kane, cited, 429
Mussett, Alfred de, 146, 341

N

- Najera, Duke of**, 275, 276
Napoleon, opposition to Jesuits by, 326
Navarra, Spain, 275-276
Navigis, brother of St Augustine, 115, 131
Nazareth, journey of St Francis to, 245
Nebrius, 118-119
Neoplatonism, 84, 119-120, 131, 133, 421
Neumann, Johannes, cited, 429
New Mexico, Jesuit teaching in, 324
New York, Jesuit teaching in, 324

Newman, Cardinal John Henry, 76, 152
 Newton, Isaac, 2-3, 8, 324, 364
 Nicene Creed, 54-56
 Nicodemus, imperial residence of, 53, 54, 56
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 84, cited, 427
 Nile River, 20-21, 24, 94, 95
 Nilsson, Martin Persson, cited, 429
 Nitria, anchorite settlements in, 40, 70
 Novalis, poet, 327, 340
 Numidia, 94
 Nuremberg, Germany, as background
 of Durer's portrayal of St Anthony,
 86, 89, 92
 Nursia, birthplace of St Benedict, 75

O

Ocampo, Maria de, 381, 386
 "Of the True Faith" (St Augustine),
 135
 Oman, John Wood, cited, 425
 Oñez y Ioyola, Íñigo de, *see* Ignatius,
 Saint
 Oratorio (Handel), 63
 Origen, 133
 Ormaneto, papal nuncio, 405
 Ortega y Gasset, Jose, cited, 425
 Osiris, 21
 Ostia, port of, 133
 Osuna, Francisco de, 350-351
 Ould, Robert Fielding, cited, 427
 Ovalle, Juan de, 386, 387
 Oxford, Catholic College at, 323

P

Pachomius, 71
 Padranos, Juan de, 369
 Palencia, Spain, St Theresa in, 410
 Palestine St Ignatius' crusade to, 280,
 285-286, 306-307, monasticism in, 71
 Pamplona, Spain, 272, 275-277
 Papini, Giovanni, cited, 429
 Paraguay, Jesuit influence in, 323
 Parenino, 89
 Paris, France Ignatius in, 295-306, as
 scene of Rivière's portrayal of An-
 thony, 92
 Parkman, Francis, cited, 431
 Pascal, Blaise, 3, 8, 84, 151-152, 326, 341,
 421, cited, 429, 431
 Passion according to St Matthew
 (Bach), 63

Pastrana, convent of Discalced Carme-
 lites at, 398-399
 Patmos, grotto of, 84
 Patricius, father of St Augustine, 95-96,
 98, 99, 100, 101, 102
 Paul the Apostle, Saint, 120-121, 124,
 128, 340, 355, 421
 Paul of Thebes, Saint, 63-65, 86, 90
 Paul III, Pope, 306-307, 312, 318-319
 Pearl, Raymond, 69
 Peers, Edgar Allison, cited, 432
 Pelagius, doctrine of, 137
 Pennsylvania, Jesuit teaching in, 324
Pensées (Blaise Pascal), 152, 341
 Penuela, monastery of Discalced Car-
 melites at, 402
 Perrault, cited, 431
 Persia, monasticism in, 71
 Perugia, Italy, 164-165, 239-240
 Petrarch, Francesco, 4, 84, 145-146, 265,
 cited, 427
 Philip II, King of Spain, 321, 398, 406-
 408
 Philippines discovery of, 329
 Philippus, Brother, 198
 Phillips, Charles Stanley, cited, 425
 Piacenza, Carmelite seat, 401, 402, 405
 Pin d'Arca, St Francis' sermon to the
 birds at, 226-228, 229, 235, 250
 Pica, Donna, mother of St Francis 158,
 174, 212
 Pietro, Brother, 189-194, 195-196, 203,
 255
 Pinturicchio, 86
 Pisano, Vittore, 86
 Pius IV, Pope, 383, 385
 Plato, 84, 150, 152
 Plotinus, 119, 127, 133
 Pluvia, cited, 431
 Poggio Bustone, Italy, 201, 202, 204
 Polanco, 321
 Poland, Jesuit influence in, 323
 Pontifanus, 138
 Poor Clares, order of, 222, 236
 Pope, Alexander, 1
 Porin, Don Carter, 415
 Port Royal, retirement of Pascal to, 152
 Portunula, the as chapel of the Friars
 Minor, 214-217, 220, 221-222, 225, 236,
 239, 242, 243, 257, death of St Francis
 at, 270-271, restoration by St Francis,
 180, 185-186
 Portugal Jesuit mission in colonies of,
 313-316, Jesuit power in, 319

Positive Philosophy (Auguste Comte), 341

"Praises of the Creatures, The" (St. Francis), 261-265, 267-268, 269

Prat, Jean Marie, cited, 431

Prestage, Edgar, cited, 429

Protestantism asceticism of, 84, struggle against doctrine of St Ignatius by, 291-292, trend to, 310

Proust, Marcel, 147

Provence, France heritage of St Francis from, 158-159, 178, troubadours of, 161

Puritans, 84

Q

Queman d' Aroune, *see* Coma, Egypt

Quinet Edgar, 292, 326

Quintavalle, Brother Bernardo de, 189, 190-194, 195-196

R

Rachel, Hugo, cited, 425

Racine, Jean Baptiste, 326

Rand, Edward Kennard, cited, 425

Raphael, 62

Raven, Charles Earle, cited, 425

Ravenna, Italy mosaics of, 62, pilgrims to St Anthony from, 50

Reade, William Winwood, cited, 427

Reformation the, 151, 291, 312, 331

Reich, Wilhelm, cited, 427

Reit, Theodor, cited, 427

Renaissance, the Anthony theme in art of, 85, 86, Augustine discovered in, 145-146, 150, conception of the devil in, 27

Renaissance art, 229-230, 231

Reni, Guido, 86

Ribera, Giuseppe, 86

Rieti, Italy, 200-202, 266

Riley, Isaac Woodbridge, cited, 432

Rivadeneira, Pedro de, cited, 451

Riviere, Henri, 92

Rivo Torto, refuge of St Francis and his disciples, 197-200, 202-204, 213-214

Rodrigo, 305

Romagna, Italy, sermons of St Francis in, 223, 225

Roman Church, *see* Church, the

Roman Empire, Christianity in, 41-50, 52, 61, 71-73

Romanesque sculpture, St Anthony theme in, 85, 86-87

Romanianus, 100, 106

Romanticists, asceticism praised by, 84

Romanzero (Heinrich Heine), 4

Rome Augustine in, 111-112, 135, as city of Christianity, 133, 135, fall of, 78, 138, 147-148, Francis and his disciples in, 204-211, Ignatius in, 307-312, monasticism in, 71-73

Rops, Felicien, 19, 92

Rosa, E., cited, 431

Rouen, France, 296

Rousseau, Jean Jacques, 146, cited, 429

Rubens, Peter Paul, 326

Rubeo, John Baptist, 394-395, 401, 402

Ruffino, Brother, 217, 260, 261

Runciman, Steven, cited, 427

Rupertsberg Convent, 154

Russia, Jesuit influence in, 323

S

Sabatier, Paul, cited, 429

Sabatino, Brother, 196

Sackville-West, Victoria Mary, cited, 432

St Andrew's, monastery of, 80

St Jacques poorhouse, 296

St John Lateran, church of, 210, 211

St Joseph of Avila, first convent of

Discalced Carmelites, 390-395, 410, 416

St Joseph of Burgos, convent of Discalced Carmelites, 410-411

St Joseph of Medina, convent of Discalced Carmelites, 395-396, 398

St Joseph of Seville, convent of Discalced Carmelites, 404

St Joseph of Toledo, St Theresa's requirement to, 405-406

St Mary's of the Angels, *see* Portuancula, the

St Peter's, church restored by St Francis, 180

St Thomas, Dominican monastery, 346, 374, 377

Sainte-Barbe Collège, 296, 297, 305

Sakyamuni 421

Salamanca, Spain, 295

Salazar, Angel de, 382, 383, 391, 392

Salazar, Gaspar de, 377

Salmevon, 304-305

San Angela, Cardinal de, 386

San Angelo, convent of, 220

- San Bastian, convent of, 220
 San Damian church refuge of St Clara and her sisterhood at, 220-222, 236, restoration by St Francis, 173-176, 179-180, 181, 185, 186, 214, sickness of St Francis at, 262-266
 San Francesca della Pace, 251
 San Gil monastery, 369, 374, 377
 San Giorgio, church of, 212
 San Giovanni monastery, 156
 San Rufino, cathedral of, 212-213, 217
 Sanchez, Beata Isibulla, 294
 Sanford, Hugh Wheeler cited, 425
 Santayana, George, cited, 432
 Sapienza, University of Rome, 307, 312
 Sasso Spicco, vision of St Francis at, 260-261
 Satan, 27, and Ignatius, battle with, 283, 288, 294, in Manichaeism, 105 See also Devil, the
 Saxony, Ludolphus of, 278
 Schilpp, Paul Arthur, cited, 425
 Schleich, Carl Ludwig, 355
 Schoel, F., cited, 431
 Scholastica, 77
 Schonau, Elisabeth of, 153, 154
 Schongauer, Martin, 27, 89
 Schopenhauer, Arthur, 5, 84
 Schurmeyer, Walter, cited, 427
 Sciffi, Favorino, 217, 220
 Sciffi family, followers of St Francis from, 217-221
Secret, or the Soul's Conflict with Passion (Francesco Petrarch), 146
 Sega, papal nuncio, 405-406, 407-408, 419
 Sencourt, Robert Fisonde, cited, 432
 Serapis, Egyptian god, 42, 84
 Sermon on the Mount, effect on Anthony of, 23
 Servet, 330
 Seth, 21, 27
 Seth Pringle-Pattison, Andrew, cited, 425
 Seville, Spain, 333, 342, 415, St Theresa in, 403-404
 Shann, George, cited, 425
 Sheen, Fulton John, cited, 425
 Shiva, Hindu god, 83
 Sicily, Benedictine monasteries in, 80
 Siena, dying St Francis taken to, 266-267
 Sumplicianus, 126-127
 Sketus desert, anchorites of, 70
 Society of Jesus, see Jesuit order
 Socrates, 144
Soliloquia (St Augustine), 132
 Sorokin, Pitirim Aleksandrovich, cited, 425
 Soto y Salazar, Francisco, 416
 Spain country of Ignatius, 272 ff, country of Theresa, 328 ff, Jesuit power in, 319, war with France by, 275-277, 307
 Spanish art, St Anthony theme in, 86
 Spencer, Herbert, 13
 Spengler, Oswald, cited, 425
 Spinoza, Baruch, 84, 151
 "Spiritual Canticle" (St John of the Cross), 409
 "Spiritual Canticles" (St Theresa), 418
Spiritual Exercises (St Ignatius), 286-292, 317-318, 369
 Spoleto, Italy, dream of St Francis in, 168-169, 173, 186
 Stael, Madame de, 146
 Stend, Francis Hubert, cited, 426
 Stevenson, Robert Louis, 326
 Stoics, 84
 Strindberg, Johan August, 5, 147
 Subiaco, first monastery of St Benedict, 75-76
 Sue, Eugène, opposition to Jesuits by, 326
 Sufism, 421
Summa Theologiae (St Thomas Aquinas), 150, 373
 Sweden, Jesuit influence in, 323
 Sylvester, Brother, 216, 225
 Symachus, 112, 113
 Syria effect of St Anthony in, 40, 50, monasticism in, 71

T

- Tabennisi, monastic community of, 71
 Tagaste, Numidia, native town of St Augustine, 94-95, 98, 99, 105-107, 118, 135
 Tancredi, Angelo, see Angelo, Brother Tasso, Torquato, 265
 Tarham, Edward Henry Ralph, cited, 429
 Taylor, Henry Osborn, cited, 432
 Temptations of St Anthony (Pieter Brueghel), 88-89, 90
 Teniers, David, 90
 Tennyson, Alfred, 421
Tentation de Saint Antoine (Gustave Flaubert), 90-91
 Teresa, Saint, see Theresa. Saint

Ternaries, Franciscan order of, 236-237, 238

Tertullian, 133

Terzi, Francesco Lana, 324

Teutons, 138

Thais (Anatole France), 93

Theatines, contact with people by, 310

Thebaid region, anchorite settlements in, 40, 51, 57

Theodoric the Great, 79

Theophrastus, 114

Theotocopuli, *see* Greco, cl

Therapeutics, 84

Theresa, Saint, 328-421, bibliography on, 431-432, canonized, 415, death of, 412-415, illness begins sainthood of, 338-377, influence of, 328-332, 421, the reformer, 377-413, writings of, 415-421, 412, youth of, 312-318

Third Abecedarium, The (Francisco de Osuna), 350-351

Thode, Henry, cited, 425

Thomas of Celano, 159-160, 271

Thompson, Francis, *cf.* 421, cited, 431

Thoreau, Henry David, 251

Tibet, mapped by Jesuits, 324

Todi, Jacopone da, 231

Toledo, Spain, St. Theresa in, 383-385, 410, 419

Tolstoi, Lev Nikolaevich, 84, 147, 418

Torquemada, Grand Inquisitor, 346, 374

Tostado, Jerónimo, 403, 405, 406, 407, 419

Troeltsch, Ernest D., cited, 427

Trueblood, David Elton, cited, 426

Tudors, revolt against, 323

Tunis, 100

Turks, and the Holy Land, 285-286, 306, 307

Tuscany, sermons of St. Francis in, 217, 222, 236

Typhon, 27

U

Ugolino, Cardinal, 242, 253, 255, 256, 257-258, 266

Uhlhorn, Gerhard, cited, 426

Ulloa, Doña Guomur de, 370, 374, 375, 378, 382

Umbria, St. Francis in, 158 ff

Underhill, Evelyn, cited, 432

Urban VIII, Pope, 415

V

Valencia, Spain, 273-274

Valentinian II, Emperor, 115

Valerianus, Bishop, 135-136

Vandals, 61, 78, 136, 138

Vargas, Papal visitor, 402, 403

Vauluse, retirement of Petrarch to, 146

Veas, monastery of Discalced Carmelites at, 402

Vega, Lope de, 326, 415

Velazquez, Diego, 86

Venice, St. Ignatius in, 306-307

Vevecundus, 131

Vergil influence on St. Augustine of, 98, 104, 131, poems transcribed by Benedictines, 79

Veronese, Paolo, 86

Vesalius, 330

Vézelay abbey, sculpture of St. Anthony in, 86-87

Victorinus, Marius, 119, 127, 133

Vida (St. Theresa), 377, 406-407, 416², 417, 418

Vigny, Alfred de, 146

Vincent, Saint, 324

Virginia, Jesuit settlers in, 323

Vita St. Antonii (St. Athanasius), 19, 71-73, 128

Voltaire, François de, 3, 326, 421

W

Waddell, Helen Jane, cited, 427

Waldensians, 155

Walsh, William Thomas, cited, 432

Walter of Brienne, 168

Way of Perfection (St. Theresa), 417-418

Weber, C. J., cited, 431

Wellesz, Egon, cited, 429

Wells, Herbert George, cited, 426

Werner, Karl, cited, 429

West, Rebecca, cited, 429

Whitehead, Alfred North, 10-11, 14, cited, 426

Whitman, Walt, 265

Wilde, Oscar, 146

Wycliffe, John, 151

X

Xavier, Francis, 302-304, 313-316, 415

Y

"Yearning of the Soul for a Reunion
with God" (St Theresa), 412
Yellowstone River, Jesuit exploration
of, 324
Young, T S, 69

Z

Zoeckler, Otto, cited, 427
Zoroaster, 104
Zoroastrians, conception of the Devil
by, 27
Zurbarán, Francisco de, 86

