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## *Benefactor of Mankind .....*

### **Louis Pasteur**

**S**ECOND in the series of biographical sketches of the Catholic men of science honored by The Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds in the permanent display set up for convention use, *THE LINACRE QUARTERLY* introduces Louis Pasteur, one of the greatest figures in bacteriological learning. He was born at Dôle in France, December 27, 1822, the son of a tanner. Unlike his distinguished compeer, Koch, who began as an obscure country doctor, he was early educated in chemistry and achieved distinction in other lines of research before turning his attention to the study of bacteria, in which field his name is resplendent. In 1847 he was graduated from the *École Normale*, in Paris, and in the following year became professor of physics at Dijon, shortly resigning this post to become professor of chemistry at Strassburg. He had already made important discoveries in chemistry and was at this time absorbed in his studies as to the nature, causes, and effects of fermentation, particularly in relation to the "diseases" of beer and wine, a problem which had long engaged the attention of chemists. He was always an indefatigable worker and after long and thorough experimenting, he proved fermentation to be due to the presence and growth of tiny

organisms, or ferments, and set himself to find a way by which the formation of these organisms might be prevented.

In 1854 he left Strassburg for Lille; three years later he held the important position of director of the *École Normale Supérieure*. Here he continued his work, undiscouraged by the opposition of friends who believed that he was carrying on a fruitless quest, and eventually he was rewarded by finding it within his power to give to the world specific knowledge which has proved of incalculable benefit to mankind. One of the first practical results from his study of fermentation was to revolutionize the industry of beer and wine manufacture, making it possible to abandon the old uncertain methods and carry on the work with assurance of definite results.

In 1865 (at that time, professor of chemistry at the *École des Beaux Arts*) his help was sought in investigating a silkworm disease which was making severe ravages and ruining the silk industry in the south of France. Although he had never seen a silkworm, he attacked the problem, at the insistence of his friend Dumas, and within a few months was able to discover the origin of the disease and suggest means for its cure. He also developed a method of inoculation of cattle to prevent the dreaded

anthrax which took such heavy toll and occasioned severe financial loss to cattle raisers all over the world.

His greatest gift to mankind, however, and the one which is inseparably linked with his name in the popular mind is his treatment for hydrophobia, which was developed after long and patient experiments in inoculating dogs with a virus from the spine of a rabid animal. The treatment having proved successful with dogs, he tried it with human beings in 1885, meeting with equal success. Three years later the Pasteur Institute was founded in Paris. Among early contributors was one, young Joseph Meister, who was the first human being to be treated by Pasteur for hydrophobia, after having been gashed fourteen times by a mad dog. Many thousands of lives have been saved through the Pasteur treatment; by 1912 more than 30,000 cases of hydrophobia had been treated, with a death rate of less than one per cent.

It may be said that, far from taking only an academic or scientific satisfaction in the results he was able to achieve, Pasteur's gratification was always immensely increased when his discoveries were put to some immediate practical use. Certainly in this respect he had repeated rewards, as in the case of the beer and wine industry, the difficulty of the silk growers and, greatest of all, in the saving of human life through his hydrophobia treatment.

On his seventieth birthday, plans were made for a celebration. Delegations of scientists gathered

in Paris from many nations to do him honor. In the hall at the Sorbonne a triumphal march was played and at his entrance the entire audience rose to greet him with applause. In this hour it was given Louis Pasteur to see how much human life owed him and will owe him in the years to come. His speech was read by his son. In addressing the students, who were there in large numbers, he said: "Young men . . . live in the serene peace of laboratories and libraries. Say to yourselves, first of all, 'What have I done for my instructors?' And as you go on further, 'What have I done for my country?' . . . until the time comes when you may have the happiness of thinking that you have contributed in some way to the progress and to the welfare of humanity."

Pasteur's faith was as genuine as his science. In his panegyric of Littré whose *fauteuil* he took, he said: "Happy the man who bears within him a divinity, an idea of beauty and obeys it; an ideal of art, an ideal of science, an ideal of country, an ideal of the virtues of the Gospel." These words are graven above his tomb in the Institute Pasteur. He further states. "These are the living springs of great thoughts and great actions. Everything grows clear in the reflections from the Infinite." Some letters to his children bespeak profound, simple piety. He declared. "The more I know, the more nearly is my faith that of the Breton peasant. Could I but know all, I would have the faith of a Breton

peasant woman." What he could not above all understand is the failure of scientists to recognize the demonstration of the existence of the Creator that there is in the world around us. During his early years, at Strassburg he had mar-

ried one Mlle. Laurent, who was a devoted wife, and we may believe that her life with this simple, affectionate and great-hearted man was a singularly happy one. He died at St. Cloud on Sept. 28, 1895 at the age of seventy-three.



WORD HAS COME FROM THE BROOKLYN CATHOLIC PHYSICIANS' GUILD OF THE DEATH OF DR. RICHARD A. RENDICH, K.S.G. SERVING FOR A TIME AS PRESIDENT OF THIS GROUP, DR. RENDICH WILL ALSO BE REMEMBERED AS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC PHYSICIANS' GUILDS. A GREAT INTEREST OF HIS WAS THE FAMILY COMMUNION CRUSADE WHICH MOVEMENT HE INITIATED SOME SIX YEARS AGO. HE SERVED AS CHIEF ROENTGENOLOGIST OF THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOSPITALS FROM 1919 UNTIL HIS RETIREMENT IN 1950.

TO MRS. CLAIRE RENDICH, HIS WIFE, AND BROTHERS AND SISTERS THE FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC PHYSICIANS' GUILDS EXTENDS SINCERE SYMPATHY.